



# **The Chocolate Trust: Deception, Indenture and Secrets at the \$12 Billion Milton Hershey School**

*Bob Fernandez*

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A hugely successful businessman and entrepreneur, American candy magnate Milton Hershey and his wife Catherine were unable to have children of their own, so the couple set up a trust in 1909 and created the Hershey Industrial School for fatherless, healthy, Caucasian boys. Ever since its creation, the huge legal trust has poured profits from the candy business into this charitable venture, and is legally stipulated to do so in perpetuity. Since the inception of what is now known as the Milton Hershey School, the institution has become the nation's richest residential facility for impoverished youth and the richest private school.

As Bob Fernandez reveals in *THE CHOCOLATE TRUST: Deception, Indenture and Secrets at the \$12 Billion Milton Hershey School*, the school was established to help poor children in need. In fact, Milton Hershey forced widows to sign indentures, or contracts, for their boys so that they could benefit from his charity. The boys themselves lived and worked on the dozens of dairy farms integrated into Hershey's milk chocolate empire. The author also divulges that through the years, the school has been laden with scandal, racism and sexual misconduct, and plagued with a myriad of political and financial conflicts.

Throughout this thoroughly researched work, Fernandez poses serious questions about the quality of care offered over the last century by this multi-billion-dollar institution. The author also discloses how monies generated by Hershey's assets have created temptations for those overseeing the Trust, including when Trust and state officials diverted tens of millions of dollars earmarked for the students' welfare into a medical center for Pennsylvania State University, claiming there were not enough orphans in America to help.

*THE CHOCOLATE TRUST* also reveals that, for years, no national experts on at-risk children, residential education, childhood education, child psychology or poverty were appointed to the Trust's board. A number of chapters in the book explore the unfortunate circumstances and scandals that have taken place throughout the school's history with response to admitting children of color, rejecting a student with HIV for admission, as well as various tragedies that occurred involving students due to the school's policies. In an ironic twist, the book's last chapter examines the role of charity-controlled Hershey Chocolate in sourcing its cocoa from African farms that utilize forced child labor.

*THE CHOCOLATE TRUST* is full of hard-hitting stories. But the saddest truth of all is that it also sheds light on the corruption, and the complicity of the government and court officials in that corruption, within one of the world's richest philanthropies. The Milton Hershey School claims to spend \$100,000 a year on each pupil. In reality, it is a revolving door of poor kids controlled by a politicized and underachieving board whose members personally benefit from the positions they hold.

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