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## A peoples history of the united states review

(Note: I read the original edition of this book; now there is a revised edition that adds to the 1980s and early 1990s.) This is a book read critically and accompanied by other historical texts, but I wish that everyone in Orthodox education in U.S. history would read this book. The People's History of the United States is an attempt to balance the scales by writing parts of U.S. history that are often not covered thoroughly. It focuses in particular on the impact of government policy on the poor, women and non-whites throughout U.S. history, documents the labor movement and the equality movement more thoroughly than one normally sees, and draws attention to the confusing and disappointing records of U.S. cultural heroes. In other words, it is an attack on assumptions and accepted wisdom about heroes and important events in history and the stories we tell ourselves as a culture. It is also openly biased. Zinn deals with this directly at the beginning of the last chapter: It makes a biased account that leans in a certain direction. I'm not worried about that because of the mountain of history books under which we all stand leaning so strongly in the other direction - so shakily respectful of states and statesmen and so disrespectful, neglected, human movements - that we need some counter-force to avoid being crushed for submission. It's a feeling with which I strongly agree, but that doesn't mean you already need to know U.S. history quite well to read this book. Zinn writes his subject study, but not a study of U.S. history. Many well-known verstanads are left without a direct description and simply taken for granted as part of the shared knowledge of the reader while Zinn dives into the details relevant to his intention. Moreover, this book is clearly not balanced in itself, but is intended to balance ordinary history. Reading people's history without that background would leave you with a skewed and incomplete picture. All that is said is the amount of information transmitted this is one of the most informative books in U.S. history I have ever read. Bias does not prevent a thorough investigation, and a significant part of the text is the quotations of the original materials. Zinn is a professional historian and behaves like one. And the pieces and details that he digs up are fascinating and felt like stretching and plumping out my image of US history. People's History is great at providing a sense of what life was like for a poor and working-class citizen of the country and what their political troubles were (and what events were creating those troubles). Surprisingly, such a serious history book. People's History is also very readable and engrossing. I was expecting to push myself through it, and I found myself making excuses to pick it up, and postpone other hobbies to read more about it. The text is dense and thoughtful, so this book takes time to read thoroughly, but it's not boring. Even quotations from source materials do not interrupt the workflow. It's impressive and remarkably hard to handle. Usually one either can be a mild but readable popular treatment or a deep but difficult instructive treatment, and while Zinn's writing is more aimed at the average reader than not, it doesn't lose that depth. I don't think there was a bad chapter in that book, except for the last two. It's hard to deal with the second half of the 1970s in any uniform fashion history written in the 1980s, and the final chapter is an essay about Zinn's hopes for the future, which, while interesting reading, doesn't hold up standards of informative detail for the rest of the book. I was particularly impressed with the meat of the book, the civil war, reconstruction, the 1920s. I never understood Malcolm X and the call in the history of the civil rights movement until I read this book, and I came away realizing how pathetically unknown I was in the history of the working movement. It's a very controversial book. It's partly as partisan as Zinn stands quite far from the centrist-right position in terms of fashionable U.S. politics, but I think more zinn's refusal to give lip service shibboleths in U.S. history. This is a book that reminds you that the Revolutionary War was not wildly popular; that the much-recognized founders were almost all wealthy, white property owners and created government by, for and for all, by wealthy white property owners; that Lincoln gave campaign speeches in favour of slavery, and his public stance was much more ambiguous than one might want to believe; that the FDRs were under intense pressure from the left and many of his actions could be seen as a compromise in order to maintain some of the political status quo and to pursue even more extensive reform; and that the Second World War was wildly beneficial to the profits of corporations and saw an abnormally high number of labor strikes. These are not the sides of the stories that are usually presented. You often don't hear about pre-revolutionary and early U.S. politicians playing poor whites against blacks and Indians as premeditated political manoeuvres, or about slaves released from the reintroduction of economic slaves immediately after the Civil War (with labor contracts that differed only in detail from slavery). This is also why this book is important. One may not give that information the same weight zinn, but anyone studying U.S. history should know about it. On the other hand, it must be said that Zinn doesn't always play fair. I've never seen him do this with a central fact. When it comes to additional information around the history he speaks, he occasionally picks up and picks the details to support his claims. Those I considered especially jarring included a discussion about the flaws of the nationalist Chinese government and a comment on the popular nature of the Chinese Communist Revolution without mentioning the policies the Communists then imposed, and the discussion of the popular call for the Vietcong in Vietnam and the problems with the U.S. presence in Laos without mentioning Cambodia and the atrocities that happened there. The places where he gets into trouble tend to be those like the one where he's wandered the afield of U.S. history at the heart of the book to follow some of the way, but then gets a little selective in how he follows it. Again, this is not a book to read critically; one should have to mentally adapt to Zinn's political position. I think it's much easier to do, though, work like this where that position is obvious and open than an account that claims pure objectivity. Another contentious mistake is that the history of the People is also depressing. Part of it is that the history of the poor and the oppressed is depressing, but I think Zinn is more depressing than he needs to be. He is very reluctant to take much hope or joy even from the benefits that were made and popular movements that had some success. The chapter of the civil rights movement of the 1960s is one of the best in part because Zinn doesn't let some enthusiasm and triumph show there. I think there were other parts of the book where he could have done the same. On the other hand, it can also be a shock to see history from a very different perspective. I don't like the feeling that the success of the women's suffrage movement is something of a non-event and let down, but it can be an accurate picture. I am not a historian, and have an idiosyncratic and strangely biased education in U.S. history (mostly contrary to bias in my current politics), so I'm not the best person to appreciate the detailed accuracy of this work as a whole. I'm confident enough, though, to recommend it as a great book that makes you think. These are bits of U.S. history that I wish I'd been exposed to long ago; meaning and meaning are highly contentious, but without information, even debate and evaluation cannot begin. A joint presentation of U.S. history whitewashed by national mythology and glorifying cultural heroes is no one's favor. Rating: 8 out of 10 Review: In 2005-10-12 The country famous for its historical ignorance, Howard Zinn sold two million copies of the 700-page history book. In a country that is famous for its allergy to the left, Howard Zinn wrote a best-seller from a staunchly left-wing perspective. Every evaluation of his book must begin and end with this achievement. Whatever you want or don't like Zinn, obviously, he did something right. As you set out to judge this book, you must first decide whether it is the work of investigating or advocating. In a country known for its historical ignorance, Howard Zinn sold two million copies of a 700-page history book. In a country that is famous for its allergy to the left, Howard Zinn wrote a best-seller from a staunchly left-wing perspective. Every evaluation of his book must begin and end with this achievement. Whatever you like or didn't like about Zinn, he obviously did something right. As you set out to judge this book, you must first decide whether it is the work of investigating or advocating. This difference has worn thin in our postmodern era, as we have become hyper-aware of the inesability of bias. However, I think that differentiation is good in theory, no matter how vague it is in practice. The questioner seeks truth, even if the truth contradicts his initial opinion; the lawyer tries to motivate people, bring some action, even if the action is somewhat vague or far removed. The Inquirer risks dense and dry writing to get your point over; the lawyer risks simplifying and generalisation to get his point across. The questioner shall highlight information which his thesis does not take into account and shall contain counter-arguments and consider their merits; the lawyer reduces the inconvenient information and knocks down the straw of the counter-arguments. This book is clearly the work of advocacy. And it's important to remember, because if the work of investigating the People's History of the United States is almost no favor at all. Zinn relies mainly on secondary sources and does not attempt to address counter-arguments or address different views. His goal is not to explain American history, but to use American history to provoke resentment. Given that this book is advocacy, we must then ask two more questions: whether it is responsible or irresponsible and whether it is altruistic or selfish. Responsible advocacy uses careful research, searches for impartial sources and recognises these sources; irresponsible advocacy uses lies to lie lies or serious distortion of facts, or simply lies inaction. Altruistic advocacy works on behalf of many people, not just in the name of narrow interest; selfish advocacy does the opposite. For example, from responsible altruistic advocacy, Rachel Carson's Silent Spring addresses great concern using careful research. On the other hand, the fight by the cigarette industry against scientists who discovered the negative health effects of smoking was an example of irresponsible and selfish advocacy, fighting on behalf of a small group using direct lies. It is worth noting that these two values can be conflicted. In such situations, the lawyer faces a choice: what is better, distort the truth or tell the truth at the expense of the cause? You can say that if dishonesty is necessary, the cause cannot be worthy; but the fact is that careful scholarship is often at odds with popular success and popular success is what advocates aim for. I think Zinn faced just this dilemma in this book, forced to choose a job that would satisfy academics and would sell well, and he chose popularity. Given the constraints of the folk book, I think he's being properly honest with his sources. And it is worth noting that Zinn is honest about his political prejudices and goals. Nevertheless, I think it is clear that he relies on books – again, mostly secondary sources – which are broadly sympathetic to his views; that it selectively quotes those who are not; and that he doubts the motivation of anyone who disagrees with him. So what we must ask is this: does Zinn's moral purpose excuse this approach? I think it is in general. At the time, Zinn first wrote this book, the history books used in public schools were astonishingly nationalist, excluding labor movements, the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and pushing aside atrocities against indigenous Americans. In other words, the history that was commonly taught and known was the history of presidents and elections, wars and victories, a history that ignored the great strays of disadvantaged people. Of course Zinn didn't change it alone; he benefited from the entire academic movement. But his book, with its popularity, played an important role in changing the status quo. By the time I went to school, we had units on women's movements, labor movements and barbaric abuse of black and Native Americans. It's also largely due to Zinn, I believe there's a growing movement against the celebration of Columbus Day (a person who I don't think we should celebrate). It is eminently true that the injustice, oppression, injustice and injustice of American history are being put to the public. Because history is never a neutral line of facts. Every political ideology rests on a historical narrative. Thus, the systematic exclusion of episodes of history is tantamount to squelching certain political views. And while I do not always agree with this ideology, I think the United States will suffer from the absence of a strong left-wing movement. Until recently, the political power of history has been dramatically demonstrated through the conflict of civil war figures. I think more and more people are coming to the conclusion that owning statues of Confederate generals is not politically neutral. Of course, we must learn and commemorate history. But it's impossible to remember and remember everything. We always face choice, and this choice has been passed on to ideological issues. What we choose to remember, and we choose to remember this is a moral issue; and I think Zinni has the right to remind us of the un privileged and powerless struggles against the privileged and powerful - not for them, but for us. In short, there is a reason why I generally approve of this book. But I have a lot of criticism. Most superficially, I think this book suffers from the lack of organization. Many chapters feel like hastily cut and paste jobs, jumping from topic to subject, total and quoting from various sources, without anything more than a sense of resentment to tie it together. In this way, the book is strangely reminiscent of Bill Bryson's work: hodgepodge stories, thrown together in bulk. I also think that Zinn should have featured more individual stories and condensed some annoying lists of movements, if only the dramatic effect. More seriously, I think that Zinn makes a moral mistake for many on the left: by keeping people to a strict standard, important moral differences between groups are minimized. It was most noticeable in his chapters of the Civil War and World War II, where Zinn goes to lengths to undermine the moral superiority of the North and the United States. I totally agree with Zinn that the North was hardly a utopia of freedom and equality (racism was almost universal), and that the United States was hardly a shining beacon on the hill (think Japanese internment camps, Dresden bombings, or nuclear bombing). Nevertheless, I think that with all its injustices and injustices, the Union and the United States were clearly preferable to slave-owning confederations or Nazi Germany. Minimising this difference is dangerous. I am also opposed to the way Zinn makes it seem as if the United States is controlled by a great conspiracy, or that all elements of power together in one seamless system (one of Zinn's favorite words). At one point, he acknowledges that this system was subconsciously created, in need and in stages, and is not used, for the most part, by the powerful. But this, then, leads to the question: What is subconsciously advanced and inadvertently used as a control system and does the system at all? Or think about this passage: the American system is the most brilliant control system in the history of the world. With a country so rich in natural resources, talent, and a labor power system can afford to share just enough wealth to simply have enough people to limit dissatisfaction with a troublesome minority. This is a country so powerful, so great, so pleasant for so many of its citizens that it can afford to dissent to a small number who are dissatisfied. Zinn's message is clear: that this is an unreasonable situation created by powerful people. But think about what he says: The United States is a country where most people are and where dissatisfied are allowed to express themselves. So worded, the observation frees its outraged and semi-conspiratorial edge; it doesn't feel that bad at all. I will only point this out as an example of Zinn's use of rhetoric and insinuations to make political points, unfair habits. Another bad habit is his tendency to question the motivation of the people he intends to criticize. Any reform or government action aimed at equality is only a concession for Zinn aimed at promoting the long-term stability of the system. Again, this leads to the question: what is really the difference between a self-interested concession and an honest attempt at reform? I would also like to point out that Zinn's efforts to rewrite people's history became at times a thin pretense. This was evident when the general opinion did not correspond to his own. Zinn wasn't just chronically human; he chooses to consistently focus on those who shared his ideals, whether they represented a majority or a small minority. It was the most obvious chapter of the Second World War, which focuses on a small group of people who disapproved of it. But it was a tendency throughout. Here's a typical journey: After the bombing of Iraq began bombing public opinion, polls showed overwhelming support for Bush's actions [Bush sr.] and it continued through a six-week war. But was it an accurate reflection of a citizen's long-term feelings about war? The split vote in the polls just before the war reflected the public still thinking his opinion might have an impact. If the war was, and clearly irreversible, the atmosphere was blamed for patriotic fervor ... it was not surprising that a large majority of the country declares their support. It's a special begging at worst. People's opinion, unless zinn agrees with the opinion, is of course not their opinion; It's just manipulation. But if people don't agree with Zinn, that's of course their true opinion. This, by the way, is another nasty habit on the left: pretending to know the true interest that is un privileged, even if the privileged self does not agree with the left and each other. Thus, all the differences that divide the disadvantaged – racism, sexism, xenophobia and homophobia among the poor – are both excusable and then dismissed as superficial differences that conceal true unity, perhaps even instilled by the powerful who divide the poor. In some ways, it's a disrespectful view of people, because Zinn probably thinks that most people are much more easily manipulated than he is himself, and thus should be judged by a gentler standard than an insidious powerful. I'm gathering a lot of criticism from Zinn; but I think that despite all this, Zinn is almost always morally on the right side: because pacifism and democracy. And while largely thanks to Zinn, many of the episodes he covered in this book have made my way into school curricula and national awareness, I still learned a lot from reading it. Both the Mexican-American War (which, in protest, Thoreau spent the night in prison) and the Spanish-American war (which resulted in a protracted, brutal struggle in the Philippines), two American power grabs, still getting little coverage in classrooms. And the long, ignorance of the history of U.S. intervention around the world, supporting up dictators and plotting to overthrow governments, is not yet widely known and it should be. I think Zinn is already quite successful in changing people's perception of history. But is this book inspiring or motivating? On the one hand, Zinn is a powerful writer whose every line leads to a sense of legitimate outrage; and resentment, as Zinn shows, is what motivates many to fight for change. On the other, Zinn portrays movement after movement tries and can't-only about one in ten even partially succeed, it seems-which can easily create fatalistic cynicism. I was often reminded of the Onion article: Humanity surprised it still didn't think of a better alternative to letting Power-Hungry decide everything. It's a joke, I know, but I'm surprised. In some ways, it's a question raised - heaven to help us - by Game of Thrones: Is it really better, morally speaking, to be an idealist like Ned Stark when it leads to your defeat at the hands of less careful parties? This is one of the oldest questions in politics; and how you respond to it determines to a certain extent where you fall on the political spectrum. Zinn represents one answer, and I think it's one that we too often forget about in our cynical age. ... More... More

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