

*A People's History of the United States.* by: Howard Zinn

A review by Joseph R. Orozco

I had this book on my reading list for years. The book was first published in 1987. Howard Zinn past away in 2010. At a recent Media Reform Conference a local book store had many selections of books relating to social change, social media, environmental issues, corporate justice and books by social opinion writers. I saw this book and purchased it. Zinn was one of the most social conscientious thinkers and writers of our times. I have seen several PBS shows about his efforts to raise awareness of the needs of everyday people, their struggles and our rights as citizens. He watched people and wrote about social behavior, but he also gave thought to how that behavior came about. He took part in social/political events, he marched with Martin Luther King. He and the late Dr. Jack Forbes are two of the college professors I wish I had taken just one semester of classes.

In his forward he explains that he had thought about writing this book off and on for years, but did so only after being encouraged by his wife and friends. It proved to be a major undertaking. The stories we never heard in grade school and high school come out in this book. Of course my first interests lean toward stories involving Native People. What is written in the *People's History* as opposed to the US History classes?

These sections and chapters I read first. I was not too surprised by the content. Although some details were new to me. Considering the action taken by Native people of that time I was not surprised. What was new to me was the degree of disagreement of some non-native people of the times when the US government made decision to forcefully remove some tribes off land the government wanted. Reading these accounts made me more interested in what else I did not know. So I turned to page one.

What I found out is this is one of the most important books every printed. The front jacket reads, "more than one million copies sold." But there are over 200 million American citizens. There are over two thousand adults in eastern Humboldt county. The pace needs to be picked up.

Who were America's Founding Fathers anyway? What amount of land did these people hold compared to the common everyday colonist? How did the economy based on slave labor divide the states to a point of Civil War. How did big business become so powerful over the rights of workers and consumers. How did the economic theory of supply and demand create the demand of a world economy? What gave the rise to the need of worker unions? What other political standards were pushed aside to create today's two party system? How did the 2000 Presidential election end up putting George W. Bush in office? What roles did former American Presidents play in the way we live now? What choices did they not pursue?

Some people say, if you don't know history you are doomed to repeat it. In some cases this may be true. To me I see history going further than America's 235 years, or the landing of Columbus 519 years ago. If history repeats itself I am waiting for the time for those who have over stayed their welcome to go home. But that is not a real option either. What this book points out is how we everyday people got put in the position we are experiencing today. If one looks at history as a sort of health conditions, one could understand that during some seasons we experience more viruses than in other times. When we get sick we feel discomfort. If we understand how this virus works we may have a better chance to get over it. We may then experience better times again. This book is not about finding reasons to get angry, it is about finding cures.