

Chapter 1: Columbus, the Indians and Human Progress

“The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks)-the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress-is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders.” -

Howard Zinn

A People's History of the United States begins with a retelling of the first encounters of the indigenous people of the Caribbean with the expedition of Christopher Columbus. Zinn's view of these first encounters are radically different from the traditional accounts of the popular historical figure, in which Columbus is portrayed as an enlightened, peaceful explorer who, after “discovering” he was in a new land, befriended the native people. Drawing from Columbus' own journals as well as the writings of other contemporaries, Zinn exposes Columbus as an agent of conquest with a lust for gold and other resources who also had willingness to torture and kill others to obtain these goals.

It is from this primary point that Zinn's narrative in *A People's History* diverges from much of what had preceded him. Zinn goes on to state that much of what had been presented to students as “history” in the past was in reality was a prepared agenda focused on preserving the power of social elites. Columbus and his motivations represent the first clash of values that took place in the New World. In his writings, Columbus sees that the inhabitants of the Bahama Islands are peaceful, accommodating and have no organized elements of self-defense. In Columbus' mind, these factors make the native people ripe to be conquered by Spain and the other European powers.

In Zinn's analysis, this worldview shaped the behavior of Europeans and their descendants for centuries. The idea of exploitation-- of resources, of people, of cultural differences-- was the primary factor in the influx and conquest of the New

World. The settlers and conquerors of Europe were prepared to use all avenues of force and coercion against a population whose worldview, in many instances, did not include ideals of conquest, forced labor or mass punishment (Zinn, p.5, 1995).

The consequences were profound. Drawing from a variety of sources, both from the period and modern, Zinn estimates that perhaps 3 million people perished in the Caribbean alone from raids, forced labor and disease (Zinn, p. 7, 1995). While the total number of people in the Americas before 1492 is uncertain, by the time of the permanent settlements of Jamestown in the early 1610's, the native populations of the Caribbean had been so depleted that the European settlers had need of another source of menial, permanent human labor.

Chapter Two: Drawing the Color Line

"...slavery developed quickly into a regular institution, into the normal labor relation of blacks to whites in the New World. With it developed that special racial feeling—whether hatred, or contempt, or pity, or patronization—that accompanied the inferior position of blacks in America for the next 350 years—that combination of inferior status and derogatory thought we call racism."- Howard Zinn

It was in response to the human labor shortage of the Americas that the African slave trade was expanded by the European powers. The slave trade had progressed gradually in Europe from the mid-1400's until the time of the North American settlements in the 17th Century. By 1800, some estimates had 50 million Africans seized or killed by the European slave trade. Many of these same estimates calculate that only about 10 million Africans survived the horrors of the Middle Passage to the New World (Zinn, p.29 1995).

The ruthless practice was enhanced by the tribal divisions of the African continent which pitted differing ethnic and cultural

groups against each other to aid the European slavers. As the growing need in North America for labor became evident, the first enslaved Africans were brought to Jamestown, VA in 1619. There, they were sold off to English settlers to be used for a variety of tasks, mostly encompassing the Colonists' cultivation of tobacco.

Zinn also documents the emergence of institutionalized racism to deal with the issues of the social ordering of whites and blacks as well as cross-racial sexual relationships. Race mixing was strictly limited by law, with harsh punishments for both whites and blacks. Slaves who attempted to escape bondage were subject to whippings, disfigurement and even hanging. Whites who aided in attempts of escape for slaves could also be subject to these punishments. (Zinn p. 33-34, 1995).

Despite the severe punishments, there were consistent disruptions and rebellions against the slave system during its first century in North America. By the 1730's, there had been about 250 accounts of slaves organizing attacks against slave owners and authorities (Zinn, p.36, 1995). Coupled with this threat was the possibility that blacks would unite with the indigenous inhabitants to mount a common attack against the white settlers. To counteract this, the penalties for harboring runaway slaves were also extended against the Indian nations (Zinn, p.37, 1995).

Another growing danger was an alliance of slaves with sympathetic European indentured servants, who also began to arrive in great numbers in the mid-1700's. To combat this, the slave owning elite began to emphasize the racial differences between Europeans and Africans in order to cement the idea of white supremacy. There were also various laws and policies created to refuse access and education to the enslaved, entrapping them in the position of a permanent underclass.

Chapter 3: Persons of Mean and Vile Condition

“In the 1600s and 1700s, by forced exile, by lures, promises, and lies, by kidnapping, by their urgent need to escape the living conditions of the home country, poor people wanting to go to America became commodities of profit for merchants, traders, ship captains, and eventually their masters in America.” -Howard Zinn

By the 1730's, the English Colonies had been witnessed a large influx of economically disadvantaged peoples from England, Ireland and other parts of the British Isles. Labeled as “undesirables” by the English system, many of these people were put into the indentured servitude system which required them to work for their freedom over a period of years to repay their transport to the Colonies. Their voyages were perilous, often marked with the same horrors as the African Middle Passage (Zinn, p. 43, 1995). Once in the Colonies, they were subject to harsh punishments, bad working conditions and other abuses.

This influx of poor whites led to growing tensions in the years before the Revolution. Rigid land ownership laws in the South ensured that landed, slave owning elites could exclude poor whites from advancing up the social ladder (Zinn, p. 47, 1995). Despite their growing numbers, property-less whites were excluded from voting and holding elected offices, creating a second social class between elite whites, blacks and Indians. This group began to populate the cities of the emerging nation, creating a call in some corners for a social welfare system (Zinn, p. 49, 1995).

The years following the French and Indian War added tension to this equation. As a provision of the peace agreements between the English and the French and to reward the Indian nations who had fought on the British side, the British government had made a treaty that declared they would not enlarge their territory in the Americas. This brought dissatisfaction with the elite of the Colonies who had made plain their intentions to settle Indian lands. The western

frontier was also seen as the solution to re-settle the growing number of urban poor away from the Eastern seaboard (Zinn p. 59, 1995). The roots of this discontentment with England sowed the seeds that would blossom in the American Revolution.

Chapter Four: Tyranny is Tyranny

“When we look at the American Revolution..., it was a work of genius, and the Founding Fathers deserve the awed tribute they have received over the centuries. They created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command.” -Howard Zinn

The years preceding the American Revolution were turbulent for many reasons. The population of the Colonies had grown immensely, England was in greater need of America's natural resources and their tax revenue and the landed elites in the emerging nation desired expansion (Zinn, p. 60-62, 1995). Conflict between the elites and the lower class in the Colonies began to be shaped into a movement for independence from Britain. Other social problems were also placed on the back-burner as the fervor for independence began to dominate public debate.

At the same time that elite landowners were organizing against the British, poor whites were sporadically attacking the rigid rules concerning land ownership and tenant farming. The first “anti-tax” uprisings in the Colonies actually were tenant farmers attacking American elites over unfair pricing policies and corruption (Zinn, p. 63, 1995). These outbreaks of dissatisfaction continued through the 1760's, coming to a fore with the rioting that engulfed Boston after the passage of the Stamp Act in 1767. While the anger was first directed at the British, many American elites suffer reprisals for their perceived exploitation of the under classes. It was then that the upper classes of American turned the

debate fully from internal reform to independence (Zinn, p. 67-68, 1995).

The battles over quartering of British troops and the subsequent Boston Massacre led to more public anger at England. This anger was shaped by elites into an eventual movement against British rule, despite the reality that many of the social conditions for the lower classes in the Colonies would remain unchanged. Middle class organizers such as Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine were instrumental in selling the Revolutionary movement as mass movement, as not just a war for elites (Zinn, p. 68-69 1995).

The failed British attempts to disarm the Colonists at Lexington and Concord lit the fuse for independence. In 1776 the Declaration of Independence was written, full of Enlightenment rhetoric and anti-royalist accusations of class warfare and the promotion of slavery (Zinn, p. 71-72, 1995). The irony of the Declaration's drafter, Thomas Jefferson, also being a slave owner was not lost on many readers at the time.

Chapter Five: A Kind of Revolution

"Here was the traditional device by which those in charge of any social order mobilize and discipline a recalcitrant population-offering the adventure and rewards of military service to get poor people to fight for a cause they may not see clearly as their own."- Howard Zinn

The calls for independence left the elite organizers of revolution with a dilemma. Future president John Adams estimated perhaps only a third of the Colonists were strongly for independence, with another third opposed and the last third indifferent (Zinn, p. 76, 1995). To combat that this the Revolution's organizers began to recruit poor whites and black freedmen in the North with promises of advancement and land ownership. This promoted the revolutionary cause amongst the lower class, but uprisings and mutinies

continued at various times until the winning of the War in 1781.

The framing of the U.S. Constitution also exposed further divisions in American society. Groups from across the spectrum, blacks, poor whites, recent immigrants, all began to petition the newly formed Constitutional Congress with grievances, large and small. Despite the promises of a newly found freedom for the Americas, the social order that existed before the Revolution continued uninterrupted.

Zinn describes the position of the white working class, as so: "It seems that the rebellion against British rule allowed a certain group of the colonial elite to replace those loyal to England, give some benefits to small landholders, and leave poor white working people and tenant farmers in very much their old situation" (Zinn, p.85, 1995). The Framers shaped the Constitution accordingly; making allowances for the suppression of rebellion, permitting use of force to break up protests and furthering the legalization of slavery. The repercussions of protecting the landed elites had its first effects in the Shay's Rebellion of 1786 where disaffected tenant farmers rose up to expel landlords and their law-enforcement proxies. The former revolutionaries acted quickly to suppress this new revolt, creating new punishments for those who incited "riots" and suspending habeas corpus (Zinn, p. 93, 1995). In the end, some twelve participants in Shay's Rebellion were put to death and some thirty others were found guilty of treason (Zinn, p. 94, 1995). In the aftermath of the rebellion, the Framers completed their work after crafting several compromises to ensure federal power. One, on individual liberties, which became the Bill of Rights, another with southern legislators became the Three-Fifths Compromise which wrote slavery into Federal law. These contradictions continued to shape the young United States as the nation entered into the 19th Century.

Chapter Six: The Intimately Oppressed

"It is possible, reading standard histories, to forget half the population of the country. The explorers were men, the landholders and merchants men, the political leaders men, the military figures men. The very invisibility of women, the overlooking of women, is a sign of their submerged status."- Howard Zinn

The new United States also faced the changing role of women. While women of the outer classes-- blacks, Indians and the newly arrived-- most directly faced the threat of oppression, women of the elite also began to organize for political rights. Some elite women, such as Abigail Adams, directly petitioned their husbands to include aspects of women's liberties in their new Constitution (Zinn, p. 109, 1995). However it was with women of the working class that the movement grew its roots.

The emerging industrial economy of the North became fertile ground for the women's movement. Young women forced into the workplace due to economic need faced wage discrimination, poor working conditions and societal prejudice. In the factories and sweatshops, women began to organize for shorter powers, better pay and safer working conditions. Middle class women also fought to expand the boundaries of their educational opportunities, with women such as Dr. Harriot Hunt and Elizabeth Blackwell fighting to attend medical school in the U.S and elsewhere (Zinn,p. 117, 1995).

Women were also at the forefront of the abolitionist movement that arose in the 1820's. Abolitionists such as Lucy Stone and Margaret Fuller began speaking out against slavery in public forums across the country. Women also began to organize to obtain voting rights in many of the same forums (Zinn, p. 118-120, 1995). Many of these same figures were involved with the first Women's Rights Convention in 1840, which laid the groundwork for much of the later women's movement.

Chapter Seven: As Long as Grass Grows or Water Runs

“The white men do not scalp the head; but they do worse—they poison the heart.. . .

Farewell, my nation! . . . Farewell to Black Hawk.” From Chief Black Hawk’s surrender address, 1832

The demands to settle of the western frontier by whites grew after President Jefferson completed the Louisiana Purchase from France. The land deal doubled the size of the United States and created a demand for white settlement of Indian lands. While initial discussion centered around the belief that white settlers and Indian nations could co-exist, the policy of Manifest Destiny soon took center stage. Those who advocated co-existence with Indians were soon overcome by those who called for the U.S. to dispossess them from their lands.

This full-scale move towards dispossession of the Indians was embodied by the policies of Andrew Jackson. As he ascended the political ladder, from military commander, to governor of Florida, to President of the United States, Jackson pursued all out war against the native people of the Americas. He fought the Creeks in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. He attacked the Seminoles for harboring runaway slaves in Florida. As President he broke treaties with the Sac and Fox Indians in Michigan and Illinois and banished them from the Midwest.

Most notably (or notoriously) his successor to the Presidency, Martin Van Buren ordered the Trail of Tears relocation of the Seminole, Cherokee and Choctaw nations from their ancestral homes to the western frontier (Zinn, p. 128-137, 1995). Over 20,000 people were displaced by the Trail of Tears relocation. Over four thousand of that number died on the way to the west (Zinn, p. 146, 1995). By 1838, the majority of the Indian nations had been relocated past the Mississippi River.

Chapter Eight: We Take Nothing by Conquest Thank God

“There were calls among Americans to take all of Mexico. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed February 1848, just took half. The Texas boundary was set at the Rio Grande; New Mexico and California were ceded. The United States paid Mexico \$15 million, which led the Whig Intelligencer to conclude that “we take nothing by conquest.... Thank God.”-Howard Zinn

With the Indians of the east subdued, the nation turned its attention to the Mexican holdings of Texas, California, New Mexico, Colorado and other areas that would form the eventual U.S. Southwest. Texas had achieved independence from Mexico in 1836 after the Alamo incident. In 1845, the U.S. annexed Texas and then president James Polk moved troops to the Rio Grande to provoke an incident with Mexico. U.S. forces were then commanded to forcibly expel Mexicans from the Texas side of the border, despite the fact that the Rio Grande had not traditionally been the dividing line between Southern Mexico and Texas (Zinn, p. 148, 1995).

As the newspapers of the day called for the completion of the Manifest Destiny policy, several members of the U.S. Army forces at the “border” came under Mexican attack. Despite the misgivings of some in the military over the legitimacy of the U.S.’s actions, by May of 1846, Polk had secured a declaration of war against Mexico. The war proceeded with popular favor at first, despite some opposition in Congress which included newly-elected House member Abraham Lincoln (Zinn, p. 151, 1995).

Opposition to the war grew as the U.S. advanced deeper into Mexico. Attacks on civilians, destruction of non-military targets and anti-Catholic bigotry led to troop rebellions and defections from the U.S. Army (Zinn, p. 158-161, 1995).

Further attacks in California by Anglo loyalists also shrunk Mexican territory. After almost two years of warfare, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war and seeded all

Mexican territory north of the Rio Grande to the United States. The dreams of Manifest Destiny were fulfilled as the United States now stretched from “sea to shining sea.”

Chapter Nine: Slavery without Submission, Emancipation without Freedom

“Liberation from the top would go only so far as the interests of the dominant groups permitted. If carried further by the momentum of war, the rhetoric of a crusade, it could be pulled back to a safer position. Thus, while the ending of slavery led to a reconstruction of national politics and economics, it was not a radical reconstruction, but a safe one- in fact, a profitable one.”- Howard Zinn

The issue of slavery reached a boiling point in the 1850's. The changing economy of the North coupled with the growing abolitionist movement caused deep division between the North and South. Black led resistance and rebellion in the South had emerged at various times during the preceding 80 years and revolts led by men such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner had heightened the fear of southern slaveowners of an all out slave revolt (Zinn, p. 169-170, 1995). Harriet Tubman and her Underground Railroad system also attacked the southern plantation system by helping southern slaves escape to the North and Canada (Zinn, p. 171, 1995). Black figures such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth spoke of forcefully for the end of slavery as survivors of the inhuman system.

After several decades of compromise, the path was set for war when white abolitionist John Brown and his loyalists raided Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1853 in an attempt to arm slaves in an all-out rebellion against the southern slaveowners. While the rebellion was unsuccessful, the battle lines were drawn and by 1860, after various battles over the expansion of slavery into the newly conquered frontier, the southern states of the Union seceded. Newly elected president Abraham Lincoln, despite an inconsistent

record on opposing slavery, was now tasked with saving the Union and settling the U.S. policy on slavery (Zinn, p.180-185, 1995).

The Civil War started with a relatively small attack on South Carolina's Fort Sumter, but would end up claiming over a half a million lives on both sides. While the war enjoyed support amongst elite whites in the North, they would, for the most part, not be the ones fighting. Those who could afford to pay \$300 dollars to could send a surrogate to fight in their stead. The general draft, targeted at poor whites and recent immigrants was met with riots, the most famous of which took place in New York in 1863, leaving hundreds of black civilians dead and requiring Union troops to suppress it (Zinn, p. 187, 1995). The South faced its own class questions as the majority of whites who fought for the Confederacy did not come from the slave- owning, plantation-running strata (Zinn, p.232, 1995).

In order to weaken the South, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, freeing the slaves of the Confederacy. This led to defections and resistance behind Confederate line, aiding the Union military effort. Blacks, from both the North and South, enlisted in the aftermath of the Proclamation to the Union cause. After the South's surrender, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery for the reformed Union.

However, after the Reconstruction period, the issue of black civil rights was abandoned by the North and the southern states established the policy of segregation and Jim Crow to re-establish the separation of the races. This policy would legally continue the legacy of racial discrimination in the South for nearly another century. Extra legal terror groups such as the Ku Klux Klan were formed to enforce segregation and terrorize the black population of the South and elsewhere. Despite the desires of some that the Civil

War would create true equality, the agenda of the political was to preserve the Union, not change the social order.

Chapter Ten: The Other Civil War

“The stories of the Anti-Renter movement and Dorr's Rebellion are not usually found in textbooks on United States history. In these books, given to millions of young Americans, there is little on class struggle in the nineteenth century.”- Howard Zinn

During the same period that the U.S. was dividing over the questions of slavery, significant battles were being fought over the right for workers to organize. The 1830's and 40's featured large scale strikes, shutdowns and even riots over unionization, rent reform and shorter work days. The 1850's coupled the tensions over slavery with a recession, causing upheaval in the North's large urban centers. Large scale bank failures and panics were part of this era (Zinn, p. 218-222, 1995).

Women in the workplace also made strides, organizing in massive numbers. By 1850, women comprised about a third of the nation's 6 million workers (Zinn, p. 223, 1995). They formed their own union, published newspapers, started educational reform for young girls and pushed more forcefully for their voting rights. The end of the Civil War brought an influx of displaced unemployed and by 1877, the U.S. was in the throes of its first Depression. Large scale strikes against the railroads were a feature of this period, mostly centered on achieving better wages (Zinn, p. 243-246, 1995).

Chapter Eleven: Robber Barons and Rebels

“...the industrial and political elites of North and South would take hold of the country and organize the greatest march of economic growth in human history. They would do it with the aid of, and at the expense of, black labor, white labor, Chinese labor, European immigrant labor, female labor, rewarding them differently by race, sex, national origin, and social class, in such a way as to create separate levels of

oppression-a skillful terracing to stabilize the pyramid of wealth."- Howard Zinn

The opening of the West also allowed for the rise of a new type of American; the Industrialist or "Robber Baron." Names like Rockefeller, Carnegie, Gould, Morgan and Stanford became part of American culture, building immense fortunes in banking, coal, oil and transportation. Zinn notes that this industrialization era also brings the dawning of the Multinational Corporation, as U.S.-style capitalism began to go worldwide (Zinn, p.247-251, 1995).

While the elites saw their fortunes rise, the working and lower classes of the U.S. continued their struggle to receive an equitable piece of national wealth. The conditions for railroad workers tended to be extremely brutal, with over 22,000 worker killed in 1889 alone (Zinn, p. 250, 1995). Strikebreaking and intimidation by the railroads themselves was commonplace and workers were often subjected to unfair changes in pay or issuance of company "script", useless anywhere except in company-owned stores (Zinn, p. 270-272, 1995).

Perhaps conscious of their public image as "Robber Barons," many industrialists moved to enhance their reputations through public works and charity. Zinn notes their social legacy as so:

"Conwell was a founder of Temple University. Rockefeller was a donor to colleges all over the country and helped found the University of Chicago. Huntington, of the Central Pacific, gave money to two Negro colleges, Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute. Carnegie gave money to colleges and to libraries. Johns Hopkins was founded by a millionaire merchant, and millionaires Cornelius Vanderbilt, Ezra Cornell, James Duke, and Leland Stanford created universities in their own names." (Zinn, p. 256, 1995)

However, Zinn goes onto to note that the motivation for these public works was not necessarily an attempt to have

solidarity with the less fortunate or improve American society.

“These educational institutions did not encourage dissent; they trained the middlemen in the American system—the teachers, doctors, lawyers, administrators, engineers, technicians, politicians—those who would be paid to keep the system going, to be loyal buffers against trouble. (Zinn, p. 257, 1995).”

The need to communicate elitist American values grew in importance during the 1880’s as the nation grew from 31 million to 75 million between 1860 and 1900 (Zinn, p. 277, 1995). The economic conditions along with the lack of available credit caused great pressures on the family farmer and small business owner alike. Concerns grew about the influence of large industry over certain sectors of the economy, including the formation of monopolies in the oil, coal, railroad and textile industries. Corporate collusion and price fixing also caused push-back from the working class (Zinn, p. 279, 1995).

In the face of these realities, Populist movements such as the National Farmers Alliance, The People’s Party and the Colored Alliance attempted to organize segments of American society. Though flawed in many areas, these movements fought several important battles for workers right as the 20th Century dawned.

Chapter Twelve: The Empire and the People

“And would not a foreign adventure deflect some of the rebellious energy that went into strikes and protest movements toward an external enemy? Would it not unite people with government, with the armed forces, instead of against them? This was probably not a conscious plan among most of the elite -- but a natural development from the twin drives of capitalism and nationalism.” -Howard Zinn

By 1890, the final battles of the Indian Wars had been fought and the U.S. turned its eyes toward international

expansion. The Hawaiian islands were annexed in 1898 and in that same year the U.S. went to war with Spain over Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The desire for expansion and new economic markets partially drove these actions, but amongst many there was also a belief that the time was ripe for the U.S. to take its place with the colonial powers and build a foreign empire. One of these proponents was future president Theodore Roosevelt, who believed that conquest was an essential part of the American character (Zinn, p.293, 1995).

In February, 1898, the U.S. warship Maine was mysteriously attacked and sunk in Havana harbor. Though no evidence was ever brought forward proving who sunk the Maine, President McKinley convinced the country to go to war with Spain on the basis of revenge and Cuban independence (Zinn, p.297-300, 1995). The war fully served to seize much of Spain's remaining colonial holdings, giving the U.S. free reign in the Caribbean and a gateway into the Pacific as a bloody war to take the Philippines was fought, first against the Spanish and then against the Filipinos who wanted independence.

While the U.S. did not annex Cuba, it did gain widespread concession in the country, such as rights to mining, fruit harvesting and military bases, such as Guantanamo Bay. Other former Spanish colonies were directly brought in as territories of the U.S. By 1900, America was a worldwide, colonial power.

Chapter Thirteen: The Socialist Challenge

“By 1900, neither the patriotism of the war nor the absorption of energy in elections could disguise the troubles of the system. The process of business concentration had gone forward; the control by bankers had become more clear.”-

Howard Zinn

Empire abroad did little to fix the problems of the working class at home. Large social reform movements aimed at

improving wages, healthcare, education and sanitation grew rapidly. The age of the journalistic “Muckraker” came with the 20th Century. Writers such as Upton Sinclair, Jack London and Frank Norris began to write popular news articles about abuses in the food and sanitation industries, leading for calls for greater government regulations (Zinn, p. 314-315, 1995). Socialists and Communists also began to make inroads with American workers, organizing native born and immigrant workers. This growth of class consciousness in the U.S. led to a backlash against socialism, creating the first of several “Red Scares” in the nation’s history.

It was during this era that the two largest trade unions, American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), entered onto the scene. As separate entities, the two labor movements organized workers and fought for better working conditions for their membership, though both were beset by internal problem. The socialist Industrial Workers of the Work (IWW, nicknamed the ‘Wobblies’) also became a powerful force for worker’s rights (Zinn, p. 322-330, 1995).

Chapter 14: War is the Health of the State

“...as the nations of Europe went to war in 1914, the governments flourished, patriotism bloomed, class struggle was stilled, and young men died in frightful numbers on the battlefields-often for a hundred yards of land, a line of trenches.”- Howard Zinn

By the middle of the 20th Century’s second decade, the European powers were at war. The conflict of World War I was encompassed the crisis of the colonial powers battle for resources and territory. Though nominally started due to political tensions between Europe, the crux of the battle was over land, territory and influence in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Zinn, 354, 1995). The U.S remained on the sideline for the war’s beginning in 1914, but by 1917 after the sinking

of the British passenger ship *Lusitania*, the nation had its pretense to enter into the battle.

The lack of volunteers for combat caused President Woodrow Wilson to call for a general draft, leading to protests in many major cities. The Espionage Act of 1917 was also made law, which made it a crime to encourage or support interference with the enlistment process of the armed forces. This particular act had long reaching consequences as it has been enforced during all the conflicts since World War I and had profound implications for the draft resistance during the Vietnam War. (Zinn, p. 357-359, 1995). Many opponents of the first World War were imprisoned for speaking out against the draft.

The period also saw the suppression of the Anarchist movement, symbolized by the notorious prosecution of two anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in 1920 (Zinn 367, 1995).

Chapter Fifteen: Self Help in Hard Times

“Many Americans began to change their thinking in those days of crisis and rebellion.” -Howard Zinn

The end of World War I temporarily brought prosperity to the United States. With its influence growing in the world, the mixture of big business and government was increasingly looking to expand American power overseas. There was still dissatisfaction at home with the pace of reforms. The AFL and the IWW staged a general strike in Seattle in 1919, that resulted in 100,000 workers walking off the job. This strike was put down by violence despite the worker's adherence to peaceful protest. Several prominent labor leaders were imprisoned and a mass lynching occurred (Zinn, p. 368-371, 1995).

While the 1920's saw an increase of prosperity at the top of the elite chain, there were more reversals for the working class. Socialists were imprisoned in large numbers.

Communists failed to attract the general population to their

cause of world-wide revolution.. The gap of rich and poor continued to increase, until the shock to the system that was the Stock Market Crash of 1929. (Zinn, p. 378, 1995).

The stock market crash and the run on the banks that followed led the nation into the Great Depression. Some 15 % of the nation's adult workforce was unemployed after 1931, leading to mass levels of homelessness, crime and mass migrations in search of work (Zinn 381-390, 1995). These desperate conditions brought huge scale demand for social reforms, which resulted in large scale victories for the Democratic Party who had absorbed much of the platform of the Populist Party of previous decades.

The Democrats, led by President Franklin Roosevelt, enacted the New Deal, which was aimed at increasing the social safety net for the working class. General welfare programs such as Social Security, Unemployment Insurance and federally subsidized housing came into being..

Desperately needed at the time and welcomed by the majority of Americans, Zinn argues that these reforms were brought about by Roosevelt and the Democrats to save American capitalism rather than to replace it with a more worker-friendly system (Zinn, p. 394-396, 1995). While perhaps preserving order, the New Deal's policies did not end the Depression.

Chapter Sixteen: A People's War?

"But could this be considered a manufactured support, since all the power of the nation-not only of the government, but the press, the church, and even the chief radical organizations-was behind the calls for all-out war? Was there an undercurrent of reluctance; were there unpublicized signs of resistance?"- Howard Zinn

The Depression ushered in the conditions that made the conflicts of World War II possible. Fascism and Totalitarianism ignited the flame of war in Europe and Asia in the 1930's with Germany, Italy and Japan starting wars of

conquest. As with World War I, popular support for the war was low in the U.S, until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Historians have long speculated about Roosevelt's foreknowledge of the Pearl Harbor attack including Zinn, however, no fully credible evidence has ever been uncovered that the U.S. let the attack proceed to shatter the Isolationist movement (Zinn, 401-403, 1995). World War II enjoyed the highest level of support of any war in American history after the U.S.'s entry. However, many were still critical of the U.S. conduct of the war, especially those black servicemen who still faced segregation and discrimination at home after fighting for freedom abroad. Women made gains during the war with employment, but much of that was lost when the war ended and men returned to reclaim their civilian jobs. Perhaps the most notorious policy of the U.S. government during World War II was the internment of the Japanese-Americans population in camps in the Southwest without trial or hearing, indeed without any well-founded suspicion of their loyalty to the United States. Beginning in 1942 until the end of the War, 110,000 Japanese-American men, women and children were interred (Zinn, p. 407-408, 1995).

The conduct of the war overseas came under criticism as well. Massive bombing campaigns (similar to the ones that Zinn was involved in) were undertaken against civilian populations in Europe and Japan. The necessity of using of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was questioned by later experts, who pointed to the general weakness of Japan's ability to wage war by 1945. More than 100,000 people, the vast majority being civilians not involved in the war effort, died in the two blasts (Zinn, 412-414, 1995). Several American prisoners of war were also killed in the Nagasaki blast Despite foreknowledge of this fact, Roosevelt's successor, President Truman ordered the

bombing, based on a desire to test the weapon's real life effectiveness (Zinn, p. 414, 1995).

The end of the war established the U.S. as the world's dominant power, filling the void left by European powers. But the U.S. was soon to be challenged by the Soviet Union for world influence and in the early 1950's the second "Red Scare" took place. Loyalty oaths and public hearings on the increasing presence of the Communist Party became commonplace, culminating in the Senate hearing of Sen. Eugene McCarthy and his Committee on Un-American Activities. Though McCarthy was eventually defused, The Cold War replaced the overt battles of the colonial powers with proxy wars between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R in what was now called "The Third World."

Chapter Seventeen: "Or Does it Explode?"

"The black revolt of the 1950s and 1960s-North and South-came as a surprise. But perhaps it should not have. The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is always an inch below the surface."- Howard Zinn

Nearly a century had passed since the Civil War and Reconstruction by the late '50's. However, the question of segregation and discrimination toward blacks and other minorities had not been resolved. The Civil Rights Movement had been a presence in U.S. life since the 20's. It was in the 50's however, that the movement made its largest gain. The Supreme Court's 1954 decision in the case of Brown v.s Board of Education, Topeka KS, ended the legal policy of segregation from the Federal level. It then fell to the Federal Government to enact the policy at the state level, setting the stage for almost two decades of battles with the states over the desegregation of schools, public places and public transportation.

Large social movements focused on the treatment of African-American began in the North and South. The Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed to protest segregation in schools and businesses that provided public accommodations such as restaurants and hotels. The group organized the movement of anti-segregation black and white students called “the Freedom Riders” began confronting racist policies across the nation, especially in the South. Prominent leaders arose from protest movements from across the spectrum of black America: leaders such as the Southern Christian Leadership Council’s Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Nation of Islam minister Malik Haji El-Shabazz (also known Malcolm X), SNCC founding member Kwame Toure’ (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael), NAACP voting rights activist Medgar Evers and NAACP activist Rosa Parks all played a role in attacking the “separate but equal” policy that had reigned in the U.S .since the end of slavery. The U.S. government moved slowly to end segregation, fearful of a sweeping social movement changing the face of American power. Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy took only small steps to change the system during their administrations. After Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, then President Lyndon Johnson pushed for passage of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 as legacy legislation for the murdered president. Zinn argues that Johnson and the Democratic Party pushed for this policy, after a century of more or less openly supporting segregation, in order to gain favor with an emerging population of voters (Zinn, 446-452, 1995).

Still, even with government legislation, progress toward desegregation was slow and dissatisfaction by black and other minorities was high. Riots and other public disturbances reached the highest levels since the Civil War. White dominated legislatures and police forces, especially in the South used force to resist change to the policies of the previous hundred years. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Medgar Evers were all assassinated. By the end of the 60’s,

groups such as the Black Panthers were calling for revolution instead of reform.

By the end of the 60's, the battle for Civil Rights had coupled with other widespread social movements, most notably the movement against the Vietnam War, to shake up the equation of elite power in the U.S.

Chapter Eighteen: The Impossible Victory: Vietnam

“From 1964 to 1972, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the history of the world made a maximum military effort, with everything short of atomic bombs, to defeat a nationalist revolutionary movement in a tiny, peasant country-and failed.”-Howard Zinn

The 1960's ushered in many changes and challenges to elite power. One of the largest challenges for elite power were the massive protests against U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam. The U.S.'s role in Vietnam grew at the end of the 1950's as the Southeast Asian country's former colonial ruler, France was defeated by a guerilla, grassroots army lead by Northern Vietnamese communist Ho Chi Minh. . Given the belief in the anti-communist Domino Theory that had also led to U.S. involvement in the Korean War, the United States put its military might in support of a southern Vietnamese authoritarian regime, first headed by Ngo Diem Diem, and after his 1963 assassination, by a number of military leaders.

The U.S. presence ramped through the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations until American forces became directly involved in the hostilities. In 1964, the Johnson Administration used the Gulf of Tonkin incident (an attack that in Zinn's view was wholly fabricated) to obtain the War Powers Act from Congress, allowing the President to use military force without an act of war (Zinn, p. 466-469, 1995). All U.S. conflicts to date have been fought under this legislation as Congress has given no formal declaration of war since 1942.

The controversy over the role of the U.S. in the Vietnam war grew as the American involvement grew. Protests came from all corners. From those who believed that the war was immoral, to those who believed that the U.S. had no valid reason to intervene in a foreign dispute, to those who objected to the conduct of the war by the military, to those who refused to serve in yet another war for other people's rights as the U.S. struggled to provide equal rights at home. These forces, coupled with other social protests such as the Civil Rights, Women's Liberation, Farm Workers (lead by the United Farm Workers), American Indian and Gay and Lesbian movements all combined to make the 60's one of the most volatile decades in American history.

Massive protests against the U.S. presence in Vietnam arose by the end of the 60's. Horrific reports concerning the casualty rates of the civilian population of Vietnam reached the American public., including the 1968 killing of over 400 civilians in what came to be called the My Lai Massacre (Zinn, p. 469-470, 1995). Ill prepared to fight a guerilla-style war against a foe who knew the home territory, the U.S. also began to suffer military defeats. The Tet Offensive, undertaken by the Northern Liberation Front of Vietnam and their southern allies in the same year of 1968 overran U.S. positions in south Vietnam, including the U.S. Embassy. Though the U.S. eventually held its ground, the outcry against the war intensified and a clear majority of Americans turned against further involvement (Zinn, p. 469-47, 1995). Under widespread public pressure, then President Johnson opted not to run for a second term.

By 1969, the social movements had seemingly forced the elite powers of the U.S. to end the war in Vietnam. Both of the Republican and Democratic candidates for the Presidency stated they would end the war, though the most public outspoken anti-war candidate, Sen. Robert Kennedy, was assassinated before the nominating conventions.

However, For the U.S., a straight path to peace would not be easy to find.

Chapter Nineteen: Surprises & Chapter Twenty: The Seventies: Under Control?

“Never in American history had more movements for change been concentrated in so short a span of years. But the system in the course of two centuries had learned a good deal about the control of people. In the mid-seventies, it went to work.”- Howard Zinn

The beginning of the 1970's brought emerging social movements the forefront. The largest of these was the Women's Movement (or Women's Liberation Movement) which fought for equal pay, better education, birth control and abortion rights for women. The 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe vs. Wade*, legalized abortion., allowing women more options for dealing with unwanted pregnancies.

Divorce laws were amended in many states, allowing women the ability to seek divorces and obtain spousal support.

Women joined the workforce in huge numbers and by the end of the 80's outnumbered men on college campuses (Zinn, 497-505, 1995).

Perhaps the most surprising uprising of the 1970's was the American Indian Movement(AIM). Described as the “Vanishing People” at the turn of the 20th century, American Indians organized in large numbers in the 70's to address the wrongs done to them since the time of Columbus. In dramatic fashion, members of AIM occupied the former island prison of Alcatraz in 1969 to draw attention to their grievances against the American government.

In 1973, an even more dramatic event garnered the nation's attention. After several battles with reservation police, AIM members engaged in an armed standoff with the FBI and other law enforcement officers at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, symbolic to many Native Americans as the spot of the last large-scale Indian resistance of the 1890's. Though

there was violence between AIM and the FBI before the end of the seventy-one day standoff, the world spotlight was turned again to the injustices committed against the native people of the Americas by the U.S. government.

Many gains were made. But this was still a time of upheaval and reverses. The direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war end in 1974, but not without widening of the violence into neighboring Laos and Cambodia. By 1973, then President Nixon was entangled in the Watergate scandal and was forced to resign before facing impeachment. Public faith in traditional institutions such as government began to waver. Despite the fact that elites had lost influence, this did not instantly transfer into power flowing to the lower and middle classes. A general dissatisfaction with both the establishment and the social reformers set in. Many of the social movements of the era lost steam by the beginning of the 1980's

Chapter Twenty One : Carter-Reagan-Bush: The Bipartisan Consensus & Chapter Twenty Two: The Unreported Resistance
“Despite the political consensus of Democrats and Republicans in Washington which set limits on American reform, making sure that capitalism was in place, that national military strength was maintained... there were millions of Americans, probably tens of millions, who refused...to go along.” -Howard Zinn

As the 70's ended, the “general malaise” commented on by then President Jimmy Carter had seemingly taken root. Despite the dramatic changes that had taken place in the preceding twenty years which had made American life more open and pluralistic, many felt the country was on the wrong track. It was this feeling of a nation adrift that brought Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980. Reagan promised the nation a return to traditional American values and economic recovery. Though his presidency was plagued with high unemployment for the majority of his first term, Reagan's

favorable tax policies toward business led to large increases in corporate profits. During his years in office, the gap between the bottom wage earners and the top scale earners grew immensely (Zinn, 569, 1995).

The union movement suffered wide scale defeats as the U.S. pursued a system of Free Trade that diminished the power of American products by importing cheaper goods from nations abroad. During the Reagan years, widespread attempts were undertaken to limit the social welfare programs of the 30's and 60's, leaving many outside the social safety net. Conflicts in Latin America increased as the U.S. fought proxy battles in El Salvador and Nicaragua and invaded Grenada. The Middle East also increasingly became an arena for intervention (Zinn, 574-579, 1995).

Chapter Twenty Three: The Clinton Presidency and the Crisis of Democracy

“Half of the eligible voters stayed away from the polls, and of those who did vote, only 49 percent chose Clinton over his lackluster opponent... One bumper sticker read: ‘If God had intended us to vote, he would have given us candidates.’” -

Howard Zinn

Under Reagan's successor, George Bush, the U.S. invaded Panama to further the War on Drugs. President Bush also fought the Gulf War against Iraq in a seeming prelude to the future. Despite the popularity surge that came his way for winning two successive wars, Bush lost re-election to William “Bill” Clinton in 1992. Under Clinton, the U.S. became a signatory to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which ended tariff and custom restrictions for goods in U.S., Canada and Mexico. This agreement also damaged the ability of American workers to compete with goods and services coming from the cheaper labor force of Latin America. The ending of tariff protections and the deregulation of national industries in Mexico also displaced workers in that country, leading to an influx of

workers across the still-controversial border of the U.S. and Mexico (Zinn, p. 631-633, 1995).

Despite the interchangeable policies of the elites, many still continued to resist blanket acceptance of their policies. New social movements gain momentum. The largest of these was the Environmental movement, whose roots had been laid in the 70's. By the 90's the movement had grown to millions worldwide and was bringing attention to the problems of Global Warming, the need for Clean Energy and the use of Renewable Resources. Gays and Lesbians had also grown in influence, organizing around the issues of Marriage Equality, Equal Spousal Benefits and the ability to openly serve in the Armed Forces.

Chapter Twenty Four: The Coming Revolt of the Guards

"The title of this chapter is not a prediction, but a hope..."-

Howard Zinn

The shortest chapter of the book is perhaps the most provocative. In it, Zinn predicts a new social movement based on the widening gap between what he calls the 99%, the non-elites of America and the 1%, who represent the super-elite capital interests of the nation (Zinn, p. 619-621, 1995). Zinn's prediction of a strange inverse equation, where the number of millionaires and billionaires doubles at the rate millions fall into poverty was attacked at the time by conservatives and even other progressives. However, given the events of the last five years, the banking crisis, the Great Recession that followed, and the rise of the Occupy Movement in 2011, Zinn's thesis concerning the 99% and the 1% seems to be amazingly perceptive, even prescient of 21st Century times.

While careful to not make too broad a prediction about the outcome of such a movement, Zinn's analysis of the problems between rich and poor, elites and workers continues with us in 2012. It will take a future generation of

historians to determine the full clarity of his predictions for the people of the United States.