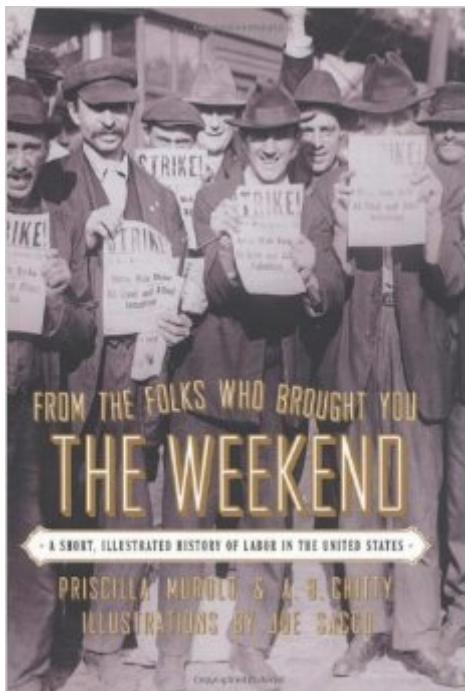


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From The Folks Who Brought You The Weekend: A Short, Illustrated History Of Labor In The United States



Synopsis

Hailed in a starred Publishers Weekly review as a work of impressive even-handedness and analytic acuity . . . that gracefully handles a broad range of subject matter, This is the first comprehensive look at American history through the prism of working people. of illustrations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Clearly the theme for this book is that life has been and continues to be a struggle for working people in the United States. The upper class, whether the pre-Revolutionary landed aristocracy or the more recent industrial or post-industrial capitalistic class, through its power, privilege, and wealth, has largely dominated and controlled the working class irrespective of wage or slave labor. The democratic promise of the nation's founding has taken a beating in this arrangement. The authors attempt the impossible: the description of working class life in general over the last five hundred years with snapshots of countless names and events to provide the sustenance. The tone for the laboring class was set early on in our nation's history. The brutal and deadly nature of both indentured and permanent servitude is vividly brought home by the authors' careful description of their conditions and often futile resistance. Yet the fissures within the working class itself are evident throughout the book. Immigration and slavery and resulting ethnic conflicts and racism are shown through any number of positions taken and violent incidents to have been devastating to working class solidarity. In addition to ethnicity and race, the authors do not shrink from gender and sexual orientation issues. And the trampling of Native Americans fortifies the authors' arguments for the

abuse of power. To counter power and to assert their own voice, workers have formed countless organizations such as political parties (Socialist, Greenback), advocacy and reform groups (Ten Hour Leagues, producer and consumer cooperatives), community groups (Black Panthers, fraternal orders), as well as labor unions. The authors provide enough detail for the reader to see a U.S.

I was excited to purchase this book and was eager to get a strong historical overview of history of labor in the United States. The book is quite handsome looking, and the writing style is clear and engaging. However, I was no further than page 2 before I started getting nervous about the academic integrity of the work. The first statement that raised warning flags for me was "the Arawak population had dwindled from about ten million to a few thousand at best (p.2)" I am not a scholar myself, but I thought that starting population number seemed unusually high. I spent part of a day researching it and could find no reputable historian willing to cite a number even close to that. Here is a comment on the matter from Bob Corbett, Professor Emeritus at Webster University: "There is a great debate as to just how many Arawak/Taino inhabited Hispaniola when Columbus landed in 1492. Some of the early Spanish historian/observers claimed there were as many as 3,000,000 to 4,000,000. These numbers seem to be based on very little reliable evidence and are thought to be gross exaggerations. However, since nothing like a census was done, the methods for estimating the numbers are extremely shaky, whether by these early historians or later critics. One long technical article on the population comes in with the low estimate of 100,000. Several other modern scholars seem to lean more forcefully in the area of 300,000 to 400,000. Whatever the number, what happened to them is extremely tragic." So there is not much scholarly agreement...but ten million? Where is the support for that claim? As a reader of this book, you will never get to know; oddly, there are no footnotes, endnotes, or references to back up any claims being made.

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