

## Book Notice

Zinn, Howard, Mike Konopacki, and Paul Buhle. 2008. *A People's History of American Empire: A Graphic Adaptation*. New York: Metropolitan Books. 273 pp. ISBN-10 0-8050-8744-3.

What happened to the American Indians at Wounded Knee? What was the reason for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba? What caused the Vietnam war? What was behind the Iran-Contras affair? When and why did the war against terrorism in the U.S. really begin? The answers to these and many other key historical questions can be found illustrated and explained in a very accessible way in this new graphic book, which has been published by an alternative debate forum—The American Empire Project—in the United States.

The author is the famous radical American history professor and peace activist, Howard Zinn, who died this year at the age of 87. Zinn is best remembered for his comprehensive account, *A People's History of the United States*, first published in 1980 and continually updated. It is a book that has taught millions of Americans and others about the alternative tradition of popular activism and resistance in the United States, something that is often hidden by more conventional history books. Zinn's book has sold over two million copies and is almost unique in the publishing world for continuously selling more copies each year than it did the year before.

This new graphic adaptation, dramatically illustrated by Mike Konopacki depicting the development of the American empire, can be seen as a radical response to the debate since 9/11 about the role the United States has adopted of policing the world in an endless war against terrorism. In a much more visual way than in his classic people's history, Zinn seeks to reach out to new categories of readers who are perhaps not aware of the much longer and violent history of the American empire in this context: from the colonial genocide of native Americans to repeated neocolonial military interventions in countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Panama and Guatemala. At the same time, since this is a people's history, Zinn wants to shift the focus back to all the thousands of ordinary people who were directly affected by this aggressive American policy of expansionism—both as forgotten victims, but also as active resistance fighters. The basic conclusion of Zinn's

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historical account, however, is that it does pay to protest. Thus, Zinn draws a parallel between support for the liberation movement in Vietnam to today's anti-war protesters. This new album utilises in a powerful way modern graphic book techniques to depict a radically different view of American politics. Compared to most other histories of the United States, this graphic account is a popular cultural alternative that is visually engaging, critically thought-provoking and politically inspiring.

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