

Howard Zinn - Voices of a People's History of the USA2006 MVD / 120 Minutes / <http://www.mvdb2b.com> / Reviewed 20 March 2006

At first glance, there is not much in the way of glitz or glamour on this DVD. However, each of the speakers on "Voices of a People's History of the USA" are the masters of rhetoric, so that every line drives chills up a viewer's spine. While the production values are not at the cutting edge, the director of the filming really does something impressive when he diametrically opposes the discussions of each individual (be it Zinn or not) with a nearly-empty stage and then the full crowd listening intently in. Individuals might be familiar with "A People's History of the United States", but Zinn ups the ante further when he discusses the formulation and the creation of what now is one of the key books to read to understand American history .

The thing that is most chalk-full of meaning in "Voices of a People's History of the USA" has to be when Zinn introduces all the important individuals in the creation of the book, filling the back row of chairs that had previously set empty. By doing this, Zinn ties the audience to the stage, breaking down any power dynamics that may still exist. Soon after, various quotations are tied into the major points of the work, which really make what is typically is slightly-dry text into living, interesting discussion. It is simply shocking that Zinn and Arnove can elicit so much emotion out of five hundred-year old text, and elicit that same sort of emotion in everyone that was present in this 2004 talk at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Other discussion, such as the court case concerning Susan B. Anthony and her attempt to vote in the latest sections of the 19th century, is done in much the same way as a play. By taking these words off of dusty pages and putting them in the mouth of breathing, living individuals Zinn and his disciples have made history salient and interesting for anyone who is clamoring for social justice in the current period. When Zinn discusses the occupation of the Philippines, it is not discussing something that happened over a hundred years ago but something that has direct ties to American foreign policy in this day and age.

By mentioning the fact that President Bush likened the occupation of Iraq to that of the occupation of the Philippines, the matter is salient in the minds of anyone who has any concern for the way the country is currently being run. This may be the most minimalist DVD that MVD has ever released, but any way one cuts it it is the most hard hitting and interesting two hours of information that individuals will ever get. Hopefully MVD will consider continually releasing other DVDs by groups like AK Press and the like in the future, as the power of the former tied to the message of the latter could really cause some societal change in just a short period of time. If you are into any sort of politics, this disc is for you.

Rating: 8.4/10

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