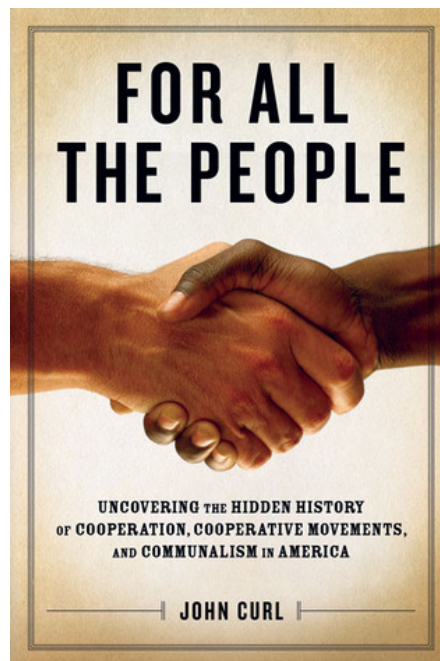




For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America

John Curl

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For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America John Curl

Seeking to reclaim a history that has remained largely ignored by historians, this dramatic and stirring account examines each of the American cooperative movements for social change—farmer, union, consumer, and communalist—that have been all but erased from collective memory. With an expansive sweep and breathtaking detail, this scholarly yet eminently readable chronicle follows the American worker from the colonial workshop to the modern mass-assembly line, from the family farm to the corporate hierarchy, ultimately painting a vivid panorama of those who built the United States and those who will shape its future. This second edition contains a new introduction by Ishmael Reed, a new preface by the author that discusses cooperatives in the Great Recession of 2008 and their future in the 21st century, and a new chapter on the role co-ops played in the food revolution of the 1970s.

For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America Details

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From Reader Review For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America for online ebook

Christina Zawadiwsky says

I received this book as a "win" from Goodreads, and entered to win it because its title piqued my curiosity. I did not expect it to be SO packed with historical data that it was hard to find the human interest in the book, however! A bit heavy-going and heavily foot-noted, I would recommend it primarily to historians!

Mark E. Smith says

Included in this book are some excellent examples of how the laws people fight so hard to get enacted, are often used against the people they were supposed to help.

Worker Co-op & Economic Democracy Reading List says

This book documents the importance of cooperatives, particularly worker cooperatives, throughout our country's history and their particular relevance today.

"It is indeed inspiring, in the face of all the misguided praise of 'the market', to be reminded by John Curl's book of the noble history of cooperative work in the United States." Howard Zinn, author of A Peoples History of the United States

Allee says

Finished about 2/3 of it.. there's some interesting analysis in there, but there's also a lot of really tedious recitation of every co-op that ever existed for 2 months and then failed. I get that it kind of serves as a historical record, "these people were here, let's not forget them," but it did not make for very interesting reading.

PM Press says

The survival of indigenous communities and the first European settlers alike depended on a deeply cooperative style of living and working, based around common lands, shared food and labor. Cooperative movements proved integral to the grassroots organizations and struggles challenging the domination of unbridled capitalism in America's formative years. Holding aloft the vision for an alternative economic system based on cooperative industry, they have played a vital, and dynamic role in the struggle to create a better world.

Seeking to reclaim a history that has remained largely ignored by most historians, this dramatic and stirring

account examines each of the definitive American cooperative movements for social change—farmer, union, consumer, and communalist—that have been all but erased from collective memory. Focusing far beyond one particular era, organization, leader, or form of cooperation, For All the People documents the multigenerational struggle of the American working people for social justice. With an expansive sweep and breathtaking detail, the chronicle follows the American worker from the colonial workshop to the modern mass-assembly line, ultimately painting a vivid panorama of those who built the United States and those who will shape its future.

John Curl, with over forty years of experience as both an active member and scholar of cooperatives, masterfully melds theory, practice, knowledge and analysis, to present the definitive history from below of cooperative America.

Spicy T AKA Mr. Tea says

An interesting idea--the history of the cooperative and communalist movements in the US. certainly a history worth telling. Mr. Curl, however, writes like a researcher and not a writer. The first half of the book is a chronological history of these movements and coops but he is never quite able to weave together a compelling narrative. It reads like snapshots in history. Bland and almost unreadable. When he writes from his own experiences though, his writing shines and I could really feel and grasp his motivation and interest in the topic. Unfortunately, he does this very little. Honestly, this felt more like a reference book than anything. Good topic, good information, just wish it could have been presented in a far more compelling way.

Kate says

Between Howard Zinn and John Curl, we might finally have a couple of historians who can teach us our history, so that we are not doomed to repeat it. Curl's book focuses on the history of cooperative work and communal living, and the aggressive tactics of capitalist, corporate and governmental entities to cut democracy off at the knees. Time and time again, the coop loses. That's the depressing part. And, time and time again, the workers rise. That's the part that gives me hope.

Unlike previous reviewers, my issues with the book are not the number of footnotes, dates, and names. Those reviews, in my opinion, should be struck. The book is, for the most part, a serious, well documented history. To criticize it for its dates and names is like criticizing a picture book for having too many pictures.

My main issue with the book is the omission of the entire decade of the 1950s. It's not there, and, given the social/economic conflicts of the McCarthy era, I was surprised to see that it wasn't there. My second issue, is less heartfelt. Toward the end of the section on Cooperatives, Curl abruptly shifts into discussing his experiences with San Francisco cooperatives. These are very informative and useful as we begin to understand, on a more intimate level, the forces working for and against cooperatives. But we lose the broad scope of history as he discusses his experience.

The communal chapters are also interesting, and easily linked to the cooperative chapters that precede them. As a teenager, I was able to participate very briefly in a commune (Koinonia Farm), from which sprung Habitat for Humanity, and so I found kindred spirits throughout that section of the book.

I look at the Occupy Movement, and the work being done by Yes! Magazine, and the myriad of networks of average people working to return the country to the vision of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, and I

think, this book is for them. If we don't learn from our history--heck--if we don't even know our history, we are doomed to repeat it. Even though so many cooperatives are doomed to fail, so many wonderful things arise from them that serve humanity. The 40 hour work week, community supported agriculture, even things like Habitat for Humanity (which is, in itself, a nonprofit housing cooperative).

This is a good book. An important book. A reference book. I highly recommend it.

Robert Stayton says

A very revealing history of cooperatives in America. In our history there have been wave after wave of cooperatives started by people who are sick of corporate control and wanting something better for themselves by helping themselves through working with others. Often coops were started by unions on strike to help their members. Even today millions of Americans are part of coops through agriculture coops and credit unions, which are coop banks. The author tries to be complete, but sometimes that completeness bogs down the reader. But the story of the rise and fall of the People's Food System in the San Francisco Bay Area is gripping.

Patrick says

Good book on a subject I care about. I'm hoping that books like this will help spread the word about the benefits of cooperative movements.

I won this book from First Reads and was pleasantly surprised when I discovered that the author had signed it for me. Thanks!

Matt says

Picked this up because it was Howard Zinn-endorsed. Not as readable as the back cover would have you believe (and certainly not as readable as Zinn)...it's a bit heavy-handed with the dates and names, but the relatable human interest points are what keep it compelling. I particularly enjoyed the beginning and the speculation on what might have been if we'd not gone the "indentured servitude" route in designing the labor force. Probably good for a classroom . . . and classroom discussion.

Eric Dirnbach says

Fantastic history of cooperatives in the U.S., really interesting.

Dan says

For All the People is more of an encyclopedia than a good read. But the amount of information on collectives and communes that figured directly in U.S. history is quite staggering. There was quite a bit I did not know and I read a lot of books on U.S. history.

I found the second third of the book, which roughly covers the 20th century collectives and unions to be better researched than the rest of the book.

There is a little too much of the author's experiences inserted in the latter portion of the book for my liking but perhaps for those who have adopted his philosophy it would resonate.

I gave this book four stars primarily because it is an honest, broad and unique compilation of an overlooked area of U.S. history. There is little to compare this book to except Howard Zinn's People's History of the U.S. Take note that For All the People is largely a well structured catalog of events with little space devoted to stories. It left me in many cases wanting to know more. I did not find the book to be overly preachy even though I don't subscribe to many of the author's beliefs.
