

one of the leading members of the "radical" or "revisionist" or "New Left" or "conflict" historians of that era and since. This approach often has been called history "from the bottom up," suggesting that it focuses on common people rather than on presidents, royalty, generals, and the rich. But it is also history "from the outside in," in the sense that Zinn's heroes and heroines are those radicals who worked for change, such as those who fought to abolish the evil of human slavery, those who worked for equality for women, and those who struggled against the various wars in U.S. history.

One right-wing critic on the Internet has referred to Zinn as "the most influential historian in America." Personally, I hope so! And this book should spread his important message to even more and younger students. I had the experience, a few years ago, at the Woody Guthrie Free Folk Festival in Woody's hometown of Okemah, Oklahoma, of approaching one of the Burns Sisters, a wonderful folk-singing trio from upstate New York, to ask for her autograph on one of their albums. She complied, then asked me, interestingly and unusually, about my own work. I told her I was a retired history professor, and the conversation led to my mention of my book on the life and writings of Zinn. She responded enthusiastically: "I'll have to get that book! I'm reading his *People's History* right now, and I love it!" She knew about Zinn, she said, only because her daughter was using it in high school and recommended it to her.

This volume is an outgrowth of the work of The American Empire Project, described in the back of the book as a group that responds critically to the fact that "Empire, long considered an offense against America's democratic heritage, now threatens to define the relationship between our country and the rest of the world." Their earlier publications include works by Noam Chomsky and Anthony Arnove's *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*. Surely even those who differ with Zinn and with the Project can see the value of introducing students to this important point of view and to this "graphic adaptation" of his classic "people's history" as one way of doing so that might hold their interest.

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Walter LeFeber, Richard Polenberg, and Nancy Woloch. *The American Century: A History of the United States Since the 1890s*. 6th ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008. Pp. 624. Paper, \$42.95; ISBN 978-0-7656-2064-4.

The American Century: A History of the United States Since the 1890s is a powerful book that comes from a noted press and is written by well-respected authors. This sixth edition text includes new online content and updated material on the 1990s through the present. Unlike many texts for the second half of the United States history survey that begin either at the end of the American Civil War in 1865 or at the end of Reconstruction in 1877, *The American Century* begins in the 1890s.

The first chapter concisely tackles the major issues facing the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, including race relations, industry, economics, inventions, and foreign policy. Common to many texts, a chapter is devoted to the Progressive Movement, while another discusses U.S. foreign policy from 1900 to World War I. Hereafter the chapter subjects resemble those found in most standard textbooks.

The significant difference, however, between *The American Century* and other texts is how the material is presented. The work reads like a monograph, while maintaining its twentieth-century focus. The authors don't treat their readers necessarily as students, and, rather than lecturing to them, they present the material in a reader-friendly format. Other highlights of the book come in the authors' coverage of modern American politics and history in the last two chapters. "1993-2000: The Road to the Twenty-First Century" provides a plethora of new and updated material about the Clinton administration and the major events that shaped the years leading to George W. Bush taking office. The final chapter, "9-11: Causes and Consequences," is especially useful, as students are often looking for a way to make sense of the current political situation and foreign affairs. These foreign policy issues are where LaFeber is at his best, and the reader can see how he skillfully weaves this into certain chapters of the book. The frequent sidebars, about one per chapter, that illuminate the biographies of important people, help maintain the textbook feel. Even these are set into the backdrop of the chapter and appear as interesting and useful rather than distracting.

As many professors lament that they are not able to cover the most recent twenty years of U.S. history in one semester, they will enjoy the change of pace provided by *The American Century* by beginning their lectures in the 1890s. Students will find the work easy to read, well-indexed, and despite the length of the work, it is still very concise and reasonably priced.

If professors and students are looking for a book that is chock full of maps, highlighted terms, illustrations, and review questions, however, this will probably not be the textbook for them. Also, while the chapters are neatly organized into subheadings, there are no important terms highlighted in bold, no review questions at the end, and no ideas to ponder at the beginning. If, however, a professor wants a work that does an excellent job of weaving the major events of U.S. history into a format that is both enlightening and thought provoking then this work is highly recommended.

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Antonio Thompson

Barbara Dianne Savage. *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. 368. Cloth, \$27.95; ISBN 978-0-674-03177-7.

Today it is common to hear people speak of the "African American community" and the "Black Church" as if they were cohesive, clearly-defined institutions. Barbara