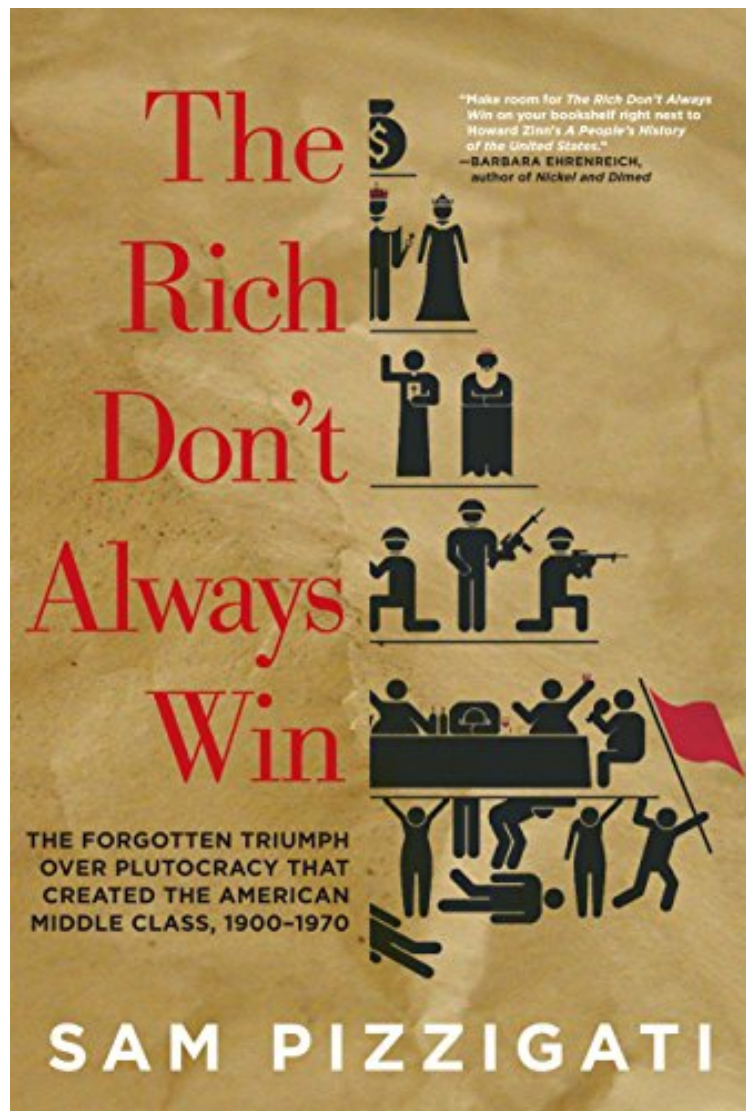


[FREE] The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970

The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970

Sam Pizzigati

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Sam Pizzigati : The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970:

21 of 21 people found the following review helpful. When people organize they can affect substantive progressive

changeBy Daniel KaranA very good read with some interesting historical tidbits (e.g., i learned that Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, Francis Perkins, who many credit with developing much of the important New Deal legislation witnessed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in NYC in 1911 and about which she said that that was the day the New Deal was born).I definitely recommend this especially in these grim times when it looks like the plutocrats have won it all and many see no way out. Pizzigati's book shows that, under similar circumstances at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries we faced a similar concentration of wealth and that by organizing people were actually able to do something about it. He is also clear that the reforms won were not because the rich somehow all of a sudden saw the light and the error of their ways but that some (what i would call the advanced wing of capital) came to understand (and fear) that if they did not make significant changes that the alternative could be much worse for them (given the radical nature of movements from the late 19th century populists to early 20th century socialists and communists). In other words, it was due to people's organizing and struggle that any progressive change was won. A valuable lesson particularly in an era where far too many believe that if only we elected the right person that all of our problems would be solved. That having been said, i think the weakness of the book is that there is not enough on how race played into all of this and how race was used to divide the american working class (you get a hint of it when Pizzigati talks about how much of the central New Deal legislation and programs excluded African Americans). And, the end of the book, where he tries to make the connection between the earlier struggles and the current issues around the concentration of wealth and income gap, i don't think he offers alot (but then, he's more of a journalist than a political theorist or activist/organizer so i'm not sure that one can really fault him for this). Nonetheless, despite its shortcomings (and a sense at the end of the book that i wished there had been more), i highly recommend this book to all who are concerned with the current day concentration of wealth and income gap in this country and are feeling helpless and believe that there is nothing that we can do. Pizzigati has rendered a real service in reminding us that this is not the first time we have faced this issue and that in the past people did much to affect real progressive change that did indeed (at least for a while) see an end to the obscene concentration of wealth in this country and the related power that this plutocrat class wielded.12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Bring back the middle class stateBy J. Alan Bock"The Rich Don't Always Win" is an exhaustively researched work by Sam Pizzicati chronicalling the rise and fall of the middle class state in America and its replacement by our current brand of plutocracy. Heroes and villains abound and are too numerous to mention and almost too numerous to count. Actually, the middle class mounted two succesful attacks against plutocratic rule in the 20th Century. Early in that century opposition to grand concentrations of private wealth gained ever increasing momentum in the years before World War I (Teddy Roosevelt would denounce the "dull purblind folly" of the very rich man who did not share his committment to change) culminating in the ratification of the Income Tax Amendment in 1913 on the eve of Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. The struggle for a more equal distributional system was bipartisan. Average Americans had triumphed over plutocracy. The war itself both buttressed the assault against plutocracy and undercut it. However, the Red scare after WWI almost completely snuffed out America's social reform spirit and gave plutocracy an opportunity to dismantle the two institutions that had the potential to significantly decrease inequality; high rates of taxation and the union movement.. The plutocrats seized the opportunity by erasing the steeply graduated WWI tax rates and smashing the labor movement. There then ensued the roaring 20s, a decade of resurgent plutocratic privilege that would drive America into an economic cataclysm. Out of this resulting devastation in the 1930s would emerge another grand charge against plutocratic power - the New Deal and its successors. FDR would rail on against these "economic royalists . . . these privileged princes who had created a new despotism and fastened it upon the American people. "The aftermath to World War II, like Word War I, also smothered social reform but this time around plutocracy would not be able to turn the clock back. Why the contrast? Namely the behavior of rich people. After World war II the critical mass of America's rich and powerful accepted and even welcomed high taxes on high incomes and a serioius union presence. What sold the rich and powerful on this change of heart? They were scared by World War II. Humanity had never seen such carnage and devastation. The Soviet Union scared them. The future scared them. They realized that the old order did not work. The old ecomonic order - capitalism that concentrated wealth, that left workers without the wherewithall to consume the modern world's bounty - had created the global economic instablity of the Great Depression years. The old order had made the cataclysm of World War II almost inevitable. The old order, if restored, would only turn the world's peoples toward the Soviet alternative. If America failed to create a more stable and just post-was world then the most reflectve of America's power brokers most certainly believed, horrific global conflict would almost surely reappear. A movement engineered this enormous change, a movement of men and women of varied political stripes and economic backgrounds that took root in the early 1900s. The activists in this movement shared little more than revulsion at the concentrated wealth and power they saw amassing all around them. They would struggle over half a century to clip that wealth and limit that power. In the 1940s and 50s they triumphed. World War II had nurtured an enormous demand for revenue that enabled progressives to realize startlingly high tax rates on incomes. The Great Depression had almost totally discredited America's rich and their ideologies and opened the door for massive trade union revival. The egalitarian triumph of the New Deal would not be confined to the US. Dominant middle classes would emerge in the mid-twentieth century throughout the world - in Japan, Canada and

allover Europe but the US led the way. We set the pace for standards for social decency. But internal contradictions would eventually crack the Middle-Class base and usher in what would become and astonishingly thorough plutocratic restoration. By nearly every major benchmark, from life expectancy to social mobility, the US today ranks substantially behind every other major developed nation. In much of Europe average families enjoyed paid leave after birth of a child, free university education, and cash payments for home caregivers of the elderly, all luxuries almost non-existent in the US. Some analysts have speculated that plutocracy may well be America's default state and that the middle class "golden age" of the twentieth century may have actually amounted to no more than a chance "interregnum between Gilded Ages." A set of unique and unrepeatable historical circumstances had created a space for a brief middle-class moment. There's no doubt that the rich and the super rich are resilient and relentless but there are signs that the wheel might be turning. The cries for a more equal distributional system are everywhere and have long since reached a crescendo. America's people never voted for a return to plutocracy. The vast majority of Americans would prefer to live in a society that shares wealth much more equally than the present day U.S. It's time to restore America to its greatness. It's time to restore America to its middle class.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. is the history our great grandparents would be around to tell us
By Customer100 years. What Sam gives us, is the history our great grandparents would be around to tell us, if they were still alive. the political arguments against unions, against funding health care, or public education, minimum wage, taxes on the rich: old news. In other words, when you read our history, it is like reading the same talking points we hear today, on 99% of our airwaves dedicated to maintaining the rich and powerful's hold on all the wealth. America needs to know the truth behind the lies, and how trickle down never worked then (caused the Depression, in fact), and it failed in Chili, and it is failing America. Freedom is not free; nor is profits. they come from somewhere, and they are generated by worker labor. Without labor sharing in the bounty of their efforts, eventually they cannot buy what they produce. In our case, we have moved production overseas for a long time, and exploited and oppressed foreign workers, but 'they' - meaning the plutocrats and owners of industry and finance, would like to make American workers just like that. Read on. Learn. Remember history.

The Occupy Wall Street protests have captured America's political imagination. Polls show that two-thirds of the nation now believe that America's enormous wealth ought to be "distributed more evenly." However, almost as many Americans--well over half--feel the protests will ultimately have "little impact" on inequality in America. What explains this disconnect? Most Americans have resigned themselves to believing that the rich simply always get their way. Except they don't. A century ago, the United States hosted a super-rich even more domineering than ours today. Yet fifty years later, that super-rich had almost entirely disappeared. Their majestic mansions and estates had become museums and college campuses, and America had become a vibrant, mass middle class nation, the first and finest the world had ever seen. Americans today ought to be taking no small inspiration from this stunning change. After all, if our forbears successfully beat back grand fortune, why can't we? But this transformation is inspiring virtually no one. Why? Because the story behind it has remained almost totally unknown, until now. This lively popular history will speak directly to the political hopelessness so many Americans feel. By tracing how average Americans took down plutocracy over the first half of the 20th Century--and how plutocracy came back-- The Rich Don't Always Win will outfit Occupy Wall Street America with a deeper understanding of what we need to do to get the United States back on track to the American dream.