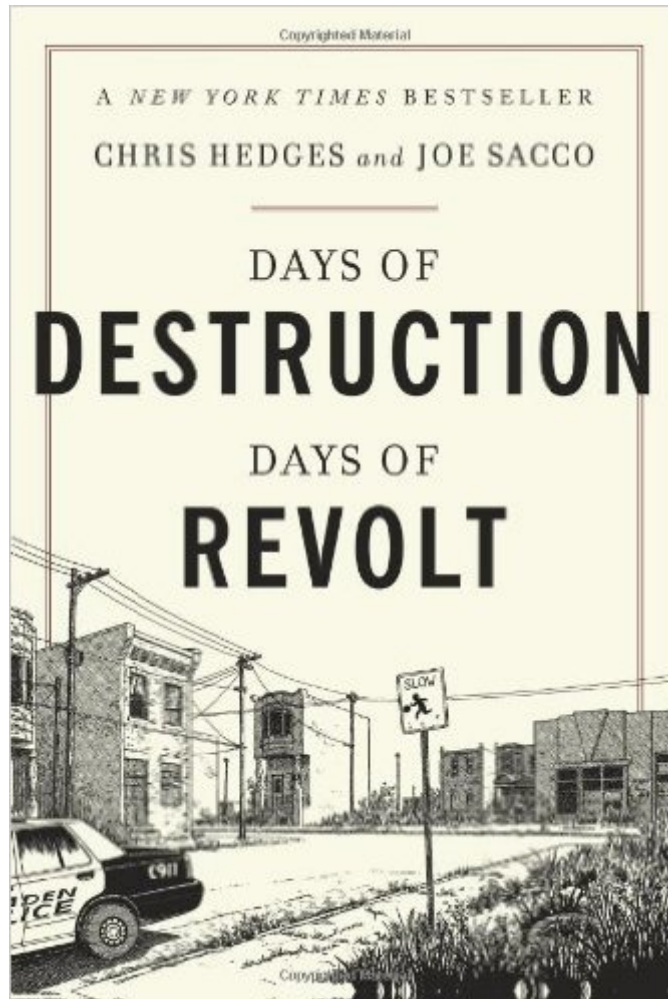


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Days Of Destruction, Days Of Revolt



Synopsis

Named a Best Book of the Year by [.com](#) and the Washington Post Three years ago, Pulitzer Prize–winner Chris Hedges and award-winning cartoonist and journalist Joe Sacco set out to take a look at the sacrifice zones, those areas in America that have been offered up for exploitation in the name of profit, progress, and technological advancement. They wanted to show in words and drawings what life looks like in places where the marketplace rules without constraints, where human beings and the natural world are used and then discarded to maximize profit. Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt is the searing account of their travels.

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Customer Reviews

Chris Hedges has a great capacity for evoking the misery and hopelessness that is increasingly common in this country. This is often a depressing book--but it is strongly based in reality.

Periodically in the book there are--provided by Joe Sacco--illustrations and comic book depictions of the lives of the individuals profiled in the book. In the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in South Dakota, Hedges describes one of the poorest and most socially dysfunctional areas in the United States.

Why are Pine Ridge residents in this predicament? Hedges finds the answer in the subduing of Indian resistance in the late 19th century. The basis for traditional Indian culture was wiped out, including the buffalo. The US government successfully used racist and murderous military violence to subdue native resistance. That violence included rape; Hedges quotes George Custer's chief of scouts as telling the historian Walter Camp that captured squaws in the 1868 raid on Washita were

used as sex slaves. Custer selected one for himself. Custer was a big part of the US military operations designed to steal the Black Hills region from the Lakota Sioux. The Black Hills had been granted to the Indians by the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie but gold, coal and other minerals were soon discovered in the region. A great many avaricious white people flooded into the region. The US military soon went into operation to steal Black Hills for white economic interests. The US government suppressed Indian language and culture. They instituted elected reservation governments that were easily controlled by the US government. An example of these puppet governments is pointed to by Hedges: the Pine Ridge tribal council in the 70's under the thuggish, corrupt leadership of Dick Wilson, a man very friendly towards white economic interests wishing to exploit Indian land. Wilson was a violent enemy of the American Indian Movement. Hedges profiles several Pine Ridge residents including people who have set themselves toward living constructive lives after years of destructive activities like alcoholism and gangs. According to Hedges, such people have gotten on the right path by participating in old Lakota rituals like sun dances and sweat lodges. Hedges writes that this rediscovering of roots has had a strong influence in helping Indians fight against the tendencies towards destructive lifestyles that Pine Ridge's poverty and hopelessness encourages. The next chapter is about Camden New Jersey. Camden is almost exclusively inhabited by persons of color, mostly African Americans. The city's residents face bleak job prospects, the housing and infrastructure have long crumbled and crime, drugs and prostitution afflict the city. One of the people examined in this chapter--citing reports from the Philadelphia Inquirer and other newspapers-- is George Norcross III, the insurance magnate and a dominant force in state politics. The Camden County Democratic Party appears to be the most docile instrument utilized by Norcross's political machine. Camden itself has been under the control of an unelected state government board since it went bankrupt a decade ago. Norcross seems to exercise very substantial influence with this board. He is in the habit of threatening to destroy local and state government officials and politicians who cross him; he has been caught on tape doing so using very profane language. If they cross him, these politicians run the risk of compelling Norcross to use his substantial influence to try to defeat them at election time. While Camden's residents deal with contaminated drinking water, crumbling infrastructure and a downsized police force, the politicians he supports make sure that tax dollars flow to him and his business allies through government contracts and millions of dollars in subsidies for urban renewal projects. Hedges writes that while Norcross is a Democrat, he is also an ally of New Jersey's Republican governor, Chris Christie. The next chapter is about southern West Virginia. This region has been economically ravaged, experienced massive population flight and has many towns that are almost ghost

communities. In this miserable environment, some residents have become drug addicts. Strip mining and mountain top removal mining seem to be the only thriving industries in the area but these create dreadful externalities. These operations spread toxic soot all over surrounding communities. Hedges examines the resistance of the town of Sylvester to the pollution sprayed upon it by a subsidiary of Massey Energy. This pollution severely contaminates the water supply, soil and air; the area is prone to high rates of cancer, respiratory ailments and other medical problems. Elderly people are predominant among Hedges's interviewees in this chapter. For example there are the elderly women active in the fight in Sylvester and the retired man refusing to bow to pressure to leave his ancestral property surrounded by mining operations. This retired man and another anti-mining activist, a woman in her early 40's, report being subjected to various acts of intimidation including drive by shootings, repeated vandalism to their property and killings of their pet dogs. Next is Imoakalee Florida, a center of immigrant agricultural labor, mostly Latino. The immigrants are housed in horrible conditions; subjected to extremely low pay; back-breaking labor; and serious respiratory problems, acute pesticide poisoning and other ailments caused by exposure to pesticides like Methyl Bromide. It is not uncommon for these workers to be held in literal slavery, have their paychecks stolen and subjected to physical abuse. The legal system in Florida appears willing to prosecute cases of slavery but the immigrants are very afraid to come forward for obvious reasons. Hedges interviews activists from the Coalition of Imoakalee workers, a very impressive organization--he describes their struggle to secure a minimum level of decent conditions. Hedges ends his book with a stop at Occupy New York's home base. He argues that the Occupy movement and historical figures--including Crazy Horse and Eastern European communist era dissidents--are models for resistance to the corporate tyranny that afflicts us. Hedges paints a vivid picture of the landscapes he and Sacco visit and the people they talk to. Sacco's illustrations are engaging.

Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" was seen to be a literary project that humanized the people ground down by the Great Depression. I would like to think that this book by Hedges and Sacco does the same, only it is not a story. It's what Hedges does best: it is reporting. Sacco's drawings are highly effective and I would like to think that they may bring thoughtful discussion about this topic to people who would not be likely to slog their way through an essay by Hedges, Chomsky or Henry Giroux. I particularly like the inclusion of Pine Ridge because it implicitly illustrates how long America's habit of discarding inconvenient people has existed. But all of it is good. IF you have never read Hedges expect to be discomfited. Sit with it and keep reading. Know that this may not represent your reality but it is real enough for too many people. In the back of your mind, in the dark of the night, do you

fear that this reality will be the reality of your children and grandchildren? I certainly do. And again, without trying to and almost begrudgingly, Hedges demonstrates a deep spirituality and paints a manifestation of the best of Christianity though certainly not that which you will see illustrated all too often by people who would call themselves religious leaders. Read it preparing to be challenged. I think this book AND I HOPE THIS BOOK will find its way into various college and high school classrooms. It has the possibility to take many students beyond the read and regurgitate style of so many classrooms today. ***IT'S KILLING ME to see this book take it on the chops for how well it translated to electronic media. I guess if you are in the decision phase of buying this book then I would say buy the real thing not the virtual model. The way the written content and the graphic content interfaces is very much an important part of this design. It's a cutting edge format. And it is unfortunate that that did not turn out to be a great consumer experience for those who plunked down the dollars for the e-model. It's well worth it...buy it as book. I may buy it to give to people. Just read it.

a grim but exceptional book, as expected from Hedges, Sacco's art is a brilliant compliment to the writing, Chris Hedges is truly a hero, I urge everyone to watch his CSPAN book TV interview on YouTube. This is a guy that walks the talk and puts his ass on the line for freedom and human rights, BRAVO! BTW, I paid the full price at our local independent bookstore, is fantastic, a real lifesaver, especially in rural areas, but let's not forget to support our local businesses

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