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**Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco. 2012. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. New York: Nation Books. 302 pp. Hardcover.**  
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Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco are acclaimed for their writing in and on war-torn areas of the world. Hedges wrote as a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* for 15 years, where he covered conflict in Central America, Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans. There he was part of a team awarded the 2002 Pulitzer Prize in Journalism for reportage on global terrorism. The same year, he was presented with the Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. Sacco is best known for his graphic novel-style reporting and comic/cartoon illustration in the books *Safe Area Goražde* (2000) about the Bosnian War and *Palestine* (1993) for which he received the 1996 American Book Award.

In *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*, the two authors join forces to cover a different type of conflict on a more domestic front: American class war. Playing to one another's

strengths, they combine vivid historical context and individual narratives with graphic illustration for a powerful one-two punch on increasing inequality and corresponding injustices in America. The book consists of an introduction and five chapters, each of which profiles a specific geographical location in the United States. As much an exercise in what C. Wright Mills (1959) called 'the sociological imagination' as what many social scientists would quickly defame as 'journalism', *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* provides rich history of these areas while literally illustrating the story of the individuals who inhabit them in comic book/graphic novel style. Based on two years of field research and interviews, the resulting intersections of history and biography provide strong examples of both the power elite and those recently referred to as the 'preariat'.

The introduction clearly states

the polemic nature of what is to follow, and also outlines the goals of such research. Hedges writes:

Joe Sacco and I set out two years ago to take a look at the sacrifice zones, those areas in the country that have been offered up for exploitation in the name of profit, progress, and technological advancement. We wanted to show in words and drawings what life looks like when the marketplace rules without constraints, where human beings and the natural world are used and then discarded to maximize profit. We wanted to look at what the ideology of unfettered capitalism means for families, communities, workers and the ecosystem (XI).

They end with a host of descriptive statistics regarding trends of inequality and injustice in America, including the highest poverty rate, greatest income inequality and lowest social mobility among industrialized nations and the highest prison population per capita (XIV). While the information and images contained in the book are often bleak, the presentation via the graphic novel/comic book format is engaging and compelling. This format allows the reader to experience both textual narrative (personal as well as historical), and visual portraits and landscapes simultaneously. The images are not simply illustrations or 'figures' used to provide ex-

amples to support the text, but are rather an integral part of the work. As such, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* is a wonderful example of the sociological imagination expressed through a visual methodology.

Chapter 1 takes the reader to Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Titled 'Days of Theft', it chronicles a history of 'ethnic cleansing, degradation and murder stretching back more than a century and a half' (4). The poverty and violence of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is contrasted with the wealth of neighboring Whiteclay, 'An unincorporated village that exists for only a block and a half', that 'exists to sell beer and malt liquor' (2). Explaining the white conquest of Indian lands through the story of Custer, broken treaties for resource extraction, and other forms of cultural assault, the authors point out how the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian 'makes no mention of the genocide, starvation, burning of Indian villages, rape, or forced death marches such as the 1838 Trail of Tears' (12).

It is within the context of this history that the authors tour the reservation with Charlie Abourezk, an attorney active in American Indian rights. Abourezk was present in the 1970s when Pine Ridge was consumed with violence during a conflict between the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the paramilitary GOON's (Guardians of the Oglala Nation) of tribal chairman

Richard Wilson. The authors spend an afternoon with Ivis Long Visitor, Jr. who lives where two FBI agents and an American Indian activist were killed in a shootout in 1975. An interview with Michael Red Cloud, descendant of Chief Red Cloud, becomes an illustrated life history, and the chapter takes them to AIM spiritual leader and medicine man Leonard Crow Dog, as well as Duane Brewer, a former Bureau of Indian Affairs officer and enemy of AIM. Throughout, Sacco's pen and ink portraits and landscapes provide powerful visual complements to the textual material. Likewise, the graphic novel format allows for a collaborative construction where history and biography, past and present, personal and political intersect.

Chapter 2 begins in a bakery in Camden, New Jersey where the story of aspiring business owners turns quickly to a tale of rival street gangs, the Bloods and Crips. The postindustrial history of Camden is given through Hedges' stirring description and Sacco's powerful drawings of the streets, including a tent city and an interview with its self-proclaimed mayor, Lorenzo "Jamaica" Banks. The artist's style provides a visual stream of portraits, landscapes and narrative that further brings to life the stories of the people, places and history of the city.

This venue provides the perfect context for a discussion of the poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, crime and corruption that plagues

Camden, and other cities like it. The authors compare the once thriving industrial city home to the New York Shipbuilding Corporation and the Campbell Soup Company to the now desolate wasteland run by political boss George E. Norcross III through the life history of seventy-six year old Joe Balzano.

The stories of Lolly Davis and Father Michael Doyle are used to 'mine beauty out of the gutters of Camden' (113) and the chapter concludes near the grave of Walt Whitman and Nicholas Virgilio.

Chapter 3 transports the authors, and the reader, from this urban landscape to the Appalachian mountains, where Larry Gibson exposes the human and environmental effects of mountaintop removal coal mining. They explain how 'That destruction, like the pillaging of natural resources in the ancient Mesopotamian, Roman and Mayan empires, is one of willful if not always conscious self-annihilation' (130).

The life story of Rudy Kelly, a ninety year old man in Welch, WV with black lung from forty years working in coal mines, provides plenty of background for the current state of WV. Similar to Pine Ridge and Camden, the poverty, addiction and other social problems of the Appalachian region is juxtaposed with the profit of coal companies and the corruption of government leaders.

Stories of activists against mountaintop removal mining are

told and illustrated along with those of OxyContin addicts, and Don Blankenship, former CEO of Massey Energy who vacationed in the French Riviera with WV Supreme Court justice Spike Maynard just before the court reversed a 76 million dollar judgment against his company. The Battle for Blair Mountain past and present and the last words of Jacob Vowell, killed in a mine explosion in 1902, provide a stopping point, if not closure.

In Chapter 4 we wait for work in the tomato fields of Immokalee, Florida with Rodrigo Ortiz, a twenty-six year old farmworker. A history of migrant farmworkers and a look into the lives of those currently involved takes the authors from the fields of Immokalee to the offices of the C.I.W., the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. There they learn of the horrible conditions that exist in the American food chain. They describe cases of modern-day slavery prosecuted within the last two decades and compare convict labor in the late nineteenth century with the more modern version. They quote a planter from 1883, who said 'If a man had a good nigger, he could afford to take care of him....But these convicts: we don't own 'em. One dies, get another' (196), and a grower from the 1960 television exposé *Harvest of Shame*, who said 'We used to own our slaves, now we just rent them' (196). The stories of Don Paquito and a woman they call Ana provide strong narra-

tive and visual examples of how little this has changed in the past few decades. However, a discussion of the recent successes of the C.I.W. provides evidence for hope.

The final chapter, 'Days of Revolt', takes place in New York City and specifically Zucotti Park, the initial site of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The stories of activists 'Ketchup', Kevin Zeese, John Friesen and Tim DeChristopher provide examples for the authors' comparison of the Occupy movement to similar movements in East Germany and Prague. Invoking Sheldon Wolin's (2008) 'inverted totalitarianism', they discuss the obstacles and difficulties faced by a movement for social justice in the current social and political climate. In the company of such historic movements as the Arab Spring and the *indignados* in Spain, however, Hedges and Sacco conclude with optimism that another world is indeed possible.

A scathing critique of corporate capitalism, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in issues of history, political economy, power, conflict, social movements and social change. For those social scientists interested in visual methodology, however, it is a must-read. Just as the authors seamlessly move from historical to personal and past to present, they create a dance between textual and visual. While there are pages of text without images and vice-versa, neither seems

to overwhelm or simply complement the other. Instead, the result is a true collaboration whereby illustrations narrate, narratives illustrate and the combination provides a powerful story (and image) of some harsh political and economic realities throughout America's past and present. A masterpiece of Weber's (1949) *verstehen*, Sacco's pen and ink illustrations, alongside the thick description of Hedges and their interviewees, allows the reader to transcend boundaries of space and time in order to empathize with the personal troubles of those most affected by greater public issues, those in the sacrifice zones.

### References

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