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The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century

Grace Lee Boggs
Scott Kurashige, contributor
University of California Press (April 2011)
Hardcover $24.95 (222pp)
978-0-520-26924-8

The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism For The Twenty-First Century, by social and political activist Grace Lee Boggs, is a masterful weaving of history, philosophy, social justice, and activism. The author's poignant political analysis and synthesis provide the loom that gathers otherwise interesting singular fibers to create a vibrant, revolutionary cloth, one that is purposefully left with space for continued work and growth.

Ninety-five-year-old Boggs, a child of Chinese immigrants, earned a Ph.D. in philosophy in the nineteen forties. Up against the sexism and racism of the university system's all-white, old-boys network, Boggs began a remarkable career as an activist and revolutionary. She moved to Detroit in the nineteen fifties and married Jimmy Boggs, an African American autoworker and labor and civil rights activist, and soon became part of the black power, civil rights, and labor movements herself. Grace Boggs still lives and works in Detroit, and continues to lead an extraordinary life.

The Next American Revolution, although in part about her life and activism, is not autobiographical (*Boggs's Living For Change: An Autobiography* was published in 1998). Instead, it is an argument for the efforts needed to create alternative paradigms to the predominant social, political, and economic structures of today. Even though with this book Boggs remains true to her background in philosophy, readers need not be familiar with the theorists and philosophers she cites (Hegel, Marx, and Paulo Freire among them) in order to understand her examination of their work and how they relate to past and present struggles.

Boggs uses direct and comprehensible language with insights from many progressive social and political movements to make a case for activism today. Her examination of some of the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X leaves one with the understanding of the development of not only their movements and ideas but of the leaders and peoples within those movements. She discusses the contradictions, growth, functions, and results that came of past struggles, as well as their unique identities in time and place. By providing examples of present-day community actions (some in places that typically conjure up images of despair, such as Detroit, or Chiapas, Mexico), Boggs helps the reader to understand the hope, progress, and potential inherent in these efforts.

This book is serious and compassionate, hard-core and humanizing. It inspires readers to not only think critically but also challenges them to join others in the work needed to create more humane, equitable communities.
ELISSA MUGIANIS (March / April 2011)

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