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A People's History of Poverty in America. Stephen Pimpare. Reviewed by James Midgley.

James Midgley
University of California, Berkeley

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practice. It conveys a strong message that culture, is essentially a source of strength and resilience. One of the salient strengths of the book is its efforts to place each concept in a real world context and to incorporate case studies throughout the text to illustrate these concepts. It presents a logical continuum from embracing diversity, to understanding the causes and mechanisms of oppression, and to proposing a culturally grounded social work approach that facilitates positive social change. Nevertheless, the case studies in the book are mostly characteristic of an American scenario. Considering that diversity and oppression are both global challenges, the book would have had broader relevance if the authors engaged readers in a discussion of how culturally grounded social work can be applied in different international contexts.

Qiaobing Wu, University of Southern California

Stephen Pimpare, *A People's History of Poverty in America*. New York: The New Press, 2008. \$27.95 hardcover.

Since the first surveys of poverty were undertaken in Europe at the end of the 19th-century, academic research into poverty has proliferated and a huge amount of information about its incidence, extent and effects has been accumulated. In addition, academics have devoted a good deal of attention to defining poverty and much of their research has been concerned with the development of poverty lines which purport to measure the proportion of the population experiencing material deprivation. Poverty line research has yielded a voluminous amount of quantitative data about poverty which has been amenable to statistical analysis and the formulation of hypotheses about the poverty's correlates.

Although this research has been accompanied by in-depth qualitative studies based on interviews with poor people, these studies have not addressed what Stephen Pimpare believes to be a major drawback of academic investigation into poverty, namely the voice of poor people themselves. Even carefully designed ethnographic studies cannot provide an adequate vehicle for the expression of the authentic voice of poor people. Drawing on a wealth of documentary evidence, the author

seeks to provide a people's history of poverty which expresses the views, attitudes, feelings and responses of poor people in the United States over the centuries.

The book has nine chapters followed by an epilogue which thematically organizes a huge amount of material culled from a great variety of published sources including newspapers and magazines, journal articles, books, novels and government reports. Among the themes covered by the different chapters are the characteristics of poor communities, homelessness, nutrition, employment, women and children, race and poor relief services. This chapter leads on to a brief discussion of organized movements of poor people which have engaged in different types of resistance to secure social justice. The book's epilogue, which could arguably have been placed at its beginning, discusses the different ways poverty has been defined by social scientists.

The book is a fitting contribution to the New Press "People's History Series" edited by Howard Zinn and it admirably meet the goal of giving voice to America's poor. The author's use of a multitude of sources and his ability to organize them coherently is astonishing. There is much in this book that will be of interest not only to scholars and students but to popular readers who will be fascinated by the book's impressive historical sweep. The author is also to be commended for augmenting the book's chronological narrative with a balanced perspective on a variety of issues. For example, the communities in which poor people live have been viewed by scholars from both a strengths and deficit perspective. Pimpare allows the reader to weigh the evidence and digest different interpretations without pressing his own views. The book has many other strengths and should be widely consulted by anyone interested in the topic of poverty in America.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley