

Zinn chapter 3: person's of a mean and vile condition



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Zinn shares his thoughts on the classism carried over to America. Zinn unsurprisingly sides with the poor people who traveled to America out of sheer desperation. Zinn's main point seems to be that the nation of the U. S. was built on the backs of all the people who were taken advantage of: the poor, the black slaves, and the indians. The title of this chapter comes from the view of the upper class on those unfortunates that Zinn sides with.

"Persons of a mean and vile condition" were scoffed at. Those "undesirables" were seen as disgusting, barely human at the most extreme levels. It is true that they are often overlooked in the annals of history, but I can't help but be contrary to Zinn. Though the poor and despondent formed the economic backbone for the country, they should not be given too much credit merely for being taken advantage of. I think Zinn is a bit too free with his passing of judgement and handing out of pity.

Hypocritical though they may have been, acting as oppressors themselves, the men who founded this nation shared the same rebellious spirit as those who supported them. While its certainly terrible for people to have been oppressed as they were, their contributions are meaningless if there isn't someone to take advantage of them. True freedom from classism is an admirable goal, and one we certainly haven't reached, but to at least have some hope for all castes of people might be worth the effort that has already been given.

America has always had a reputation as a "blue-collar" nation. It was founded on the backs of the working class. But if you look at the things that push the nation forward it was often the wealthy who made those leaps. Is

this a very biased view of history? Zinn seems to think that had the poor and disadvantaged been able to be free from their oppressors that it would have been a good thing. But thinking in the long-term, could they have made those same leaps or would the country formed on the back of workers instead just been a country of workers.

Take a look at the pyramids of Egypt for example. These monuments have lasted for centuries and they too were built on the back of the lower-class workers, but they were designed by the upper-class. Then take a look at other parts of that same continent. Those communal tribes may have had an edge socially, but they produced few notable works while other parts of the world advanced by the strength of others, voluntary or not.