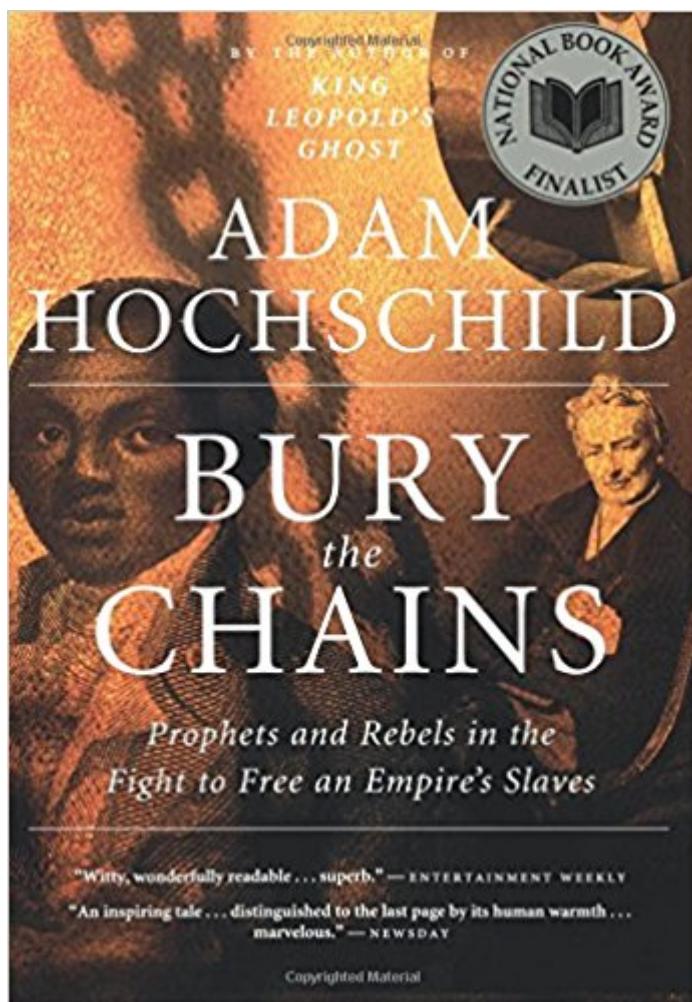


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Bury The Chains: Prophets And Rebels In The Fight To Free An Empire's Slaves



Synopsis

From the author of the widely acclaimed King Leopold's Ghost comes the taut, gripping account of one of the most brilliantly organized social justice campaigns in history -- the fight to free the slaves of the British Empire. In early 1787, twelve men -- a printer, a lawyer, a clergyman, and others united by their hatred of slavery -- came together in a London printing shop and began the world's first grass-roots movement, battling for the rights of people on another continent. Masterfully stoking public opinion, the movement's leaders pioneered a variety of techniques that have been adopted by citizens' movements ever since, from consumer boycotts to wall posters and lapel buttons to celebrity endorsements. A deft chronicle of this groundbreaking antislavery crusade and its powerful enemies, Bury the Chains gives a little-celebrated human rights watershed its due at last.

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Customer Reviews

"Men from England bought and sold me,/ Paid my price in paltry gold;/ But, though theirs they have enroll'd me,/ Minds are never to be sold." So went "The Negro's Complaint" by noted 18th-century poet William Cowper, written, says Hochschild, as an op-ed piece would be today, to spread the message of England's fledgling movement to abolish the slave trade. Hochschild, whose last book, King Leopold's Ghost, was a stunning account of the ravages perpetrated by Belgium on the Congo, turns to a more edifying but no less amazing tale: the rich, complex history of a movement that began with just 12 angry men meeting in a printer's shop in London in 1787 and, within a century, had led to the virtual disappearance of slavery. The men who met in James Phillips's print

shop included Quakers, Evangelical Anglicans and a young Cambridge graduate who had had an epiphany about the evils of slavery while on the road to London. The last, Thomas Clarkson, became an indefatigable organizer, carrying out the first modern-style investigation into human rights abuses. Granville Sharp was an eccentric but socially respected man of progressive ideas who dreamed of founding a colony of free blacks in Africa. Within a short time these men and their colleagues had created a mass movement that included the first boycott, in which hundreds of thousands of Britons, chiefly women, refused to buy slave-made sugar from the Caribbean; petitions from all over the country flooded into Parliament; and a mass-produced drawing of a slaver's lower deck, showing where the slaves were densely crowded for the middle passage, became the first iconic image of human oppression. Hochschild tells of this campaign with verve, style and humor, but without preaching or moralizing, letting the horrific facts of slavery in the Caribbean (far more brutal than in the American South) speak for themselves. And he refuses to make saints out of the activists; while highlighting bravery in the face of death threats and physical violence by promoters of slavery, the author equally points out their foibles and failings, and the often ironic unintended consequences of their actions. Along the way, Hochschild illuminates how Britain's economy was dependent upon the slave trade, why England's civil society was particularly hospitable to a movement to abolish that trade, and the impact on the movement of the French Revolution and the particularly bloody slave uprising in French St. Domingue (today's Haiti). It's a brilliantly told tale, at once horrifying and pleasurable to read. 16 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hochschild's history of British abolitionism notes that ending slavery would have seemed as unlikely in eighteenth-century England as banning automobiles does today. Despite the "latent feeling" among intellectuals that slavery was barbarous, Caribbean sugar plantations were seen as a necessary part of the economy. Prefiguring many social movements to come, the anti-slavery crusade was driven by the partnership between a committed activist, Thomas Clarkson, and a connected politician, William Wilberforce. It was Clarkson and his Quaker associates who pioneered the use of petitions, eyewitness accounts, and even an early, innocent form of direct-mail solicitation. Hochschild argues that the violent techniques of naval press gangs primed England's populace to consider the plight of the slaves. His capacious narrative is both disturbing and fascinating, and not without its ironies: when Parliament finally did abolish slavery, in 1833, plantation owners were generously compensated for their loss of "property." Copyright © 2005

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This well-written history of the anti-slavery movement is a discovery. Everyone who gets discouraged by evil and suffering in the world, everyone who thinks they can't make a difference should read this. The evil and horror of slavery seems overwhelming but it was accepted as normal --as good business. Hochschild brings alive the individuals, with all their foibles, to show how working for a cause can eventually lead to change. There are lessons here for those who think global climate change, propelled by the oil and coal industries, can never be stopped.

I am very grateful to CSPAN's interview with such authors as Hochschild, Gary Wills, Tom Franks, and Joseph Ellis. It has allowed me to discover some wonderful books. This is the first Hochschild book I have read, but I am going to read more. He has a wonderful talent for turning deep historical research into a captivating story, the only downside being that will stay up to 3 AM in the morning when I have to be awake to go to work three and a half hours later. There are several themes I see in this book. First there is Hochschild's continuing illustrations that the greatest changes to liberate human beings cannot make all of the changes that are necessary to truly free the victims of a terrible system. The power dynamics do not change, even where the accomplishment is great, and the liberation just goes to another level, where the ones who were on top taking terrible advantage still are, or in case of Haiti, some new people are on top, and in both cases most of the ones on bottom live in desperation, significantly improved desperation that only sets the stage for another great fight. Next Hochschild gets into the recognition that some of the purpose for his book is to tell us that we have the same kinds of fight to wage in our world. The anti slavery battle in Britain is something like our own global world, and that we have battles we perhaps should be waging also. Britain and some very high class British prospered because of slavery. They were the causers of a great unfairness in the colonies and in other parts of the world, while the British common people also suffered. The very best of the anti slavery movement linked both of these realities, supported both causes, and built their movement by developing awareness of a greater combined cause. We are also introduced to the brilliant and imaginative organizing methods of this movement in great detail. Hochschild goes into the very particular demographics of early 19th Century Britain, factors that really made the success of the movement possible, which should help us in understanding the kind of complexities we will have to consider if we are to build a great movement to make changes in our world. This story is very rich. It is not just about the purest and best as Hochschild explores with Thomas Clarkson. It is about a great range of different people some of whom were

very eccentric, some who were in powerful leadership roles but who were very unrealistic, others who were very aristocratic and otherwise narrow, but were also a big part of the movement. Hochschild explored the characters of some very interesting people such as Wilberforce, just for an example, someone who was narrow about every cause except slavery. He was the anti-slavery leader in parliament when only 1% of Britons could vote, was very aristocratic, against the rights of the common people and women, and a narrow evangelist, very different than the Quakers, who were at the core of the movement but were near the bottom of British society. Wilberforce, on a personal level, with his own servants and employees was just the opposite of what he was politically, loyal and dedicated to the welfare of his own infirm and incompetent servants. This is a taste of the book. It was delightful reading.

Well-researched, engaging and often graphic depictions of slavery, seaboard life and the fight to end the slave trade well before the US civil war.

Brilliant. Thorough. Vital reading for anyone interested in the history of the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery. The ultimate triumph lifts one through the depressing slow march of history, Hochschild at his very best.

Quintessential book about not just the abolitionist movement in Britain, but about the first calculated human rights movement in the world. Anyone that works in humanitarian aid should read this book to understand better how great movements get started, and the historical context for how and why international aid campaigns play out the way they do. Great piece of historical writing as usual by Hochschild.

This is an eye-opening account of the magnificent Abolition Movement in England and the people who organized and implemented it, such that the Movement brought about the demise of formerly ubiquitous slavery in the Western World in less than a century. God bless those visionary and dogged Abolitionists. Bet you didn't know much of the important history you'll find here. Easy to read and a real page turner.

An exceptional account of the efforts to end the slave trade; the people involved; and the interconnection of Anti-Slave Trade Committees. It is a fine work rendering coherent the combined and sometimes disparate efforts of a number of people, all infused with ideas of the enlightenment,

and inspired by each others' efforts.

Ok...this is a long book. But it is so interesting, informative and well written, even inspiring, that I am reading it in chunks over time. I would say it is a "must read" for anyone who appreciates the work of justice.

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