

Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid: Labour and Politics in South Africa, 1939-48

By Peter Alexander


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This text provides a revision of South African labour history and makes a contribution to the debate about apartheid's genesis. Using a range of untapped sources, it shows that there was far more strike action during World War II than was officially acknowledged. North America: Ohio U Press

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
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- Rank: #5801562 in Books
- Published on: 2000-03-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .91" h x .59" w x .59" l, .75 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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Review

Alexander's argument appears to stem from a genuine desire to highlight the positive achievements of the many brave union leaders, black and white, who fought against the brutal discrimination evident in pre-apartheid South Africa. He succeeds in doing so... - Nancy Clark in INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES Students of American interracial trade unionism could profit immensely from reading Peter Alexander's new book Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid, a study of the impact of World War II and its accompanying strikes on the efforts of South African workers to negotiate the color line... While largely a study of state labor policy and the politics of organized labor, Alexander's focus on the impact of wartime African and multiracial strikes is a welcome addition to the literature on South African labor, and will serve comparative scholars well. ... Alexander's bold conclusion that the coming of apartheid effectively ended an era of multiracial unionism (1) offers labor historians, in whatever national area they work, the opportunity to reconsider more broadly the complex interplay between racial mobilization and class politics in multiracial industrial societies. - Alex Lichtenstein in LABOR HISTORY Overall, there is little to fault in this superb nuanced analysis of White labour, research on which remains mired in hostile liberal accounts, and leftist analyses for which White labour is at best irrelevant. Moving beyond the usual stereotypes - greedy labour aristocrats and lumpen poor Whites - Alexander forges a link to White labour's own intellectual traditions... - Lucien van der Walt in JOURNAL OF AFRICAN HISTORY

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