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**Review: Revolutionary Power: An Activist's Guide to the Energy Transition**

By Shalanda H. Baker

**Reviewed by Dawn Lowe-Wincentsen**

*Shoreline, Washington, USA*

Baker, Shalanda H. *Revolutionary Power: An Activist's Guide to the Energy Transition*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2021. 224 pp. ISBN: 9781642830675, paperback, US\$32.00.

*Revolutionary Power: An Activist's Guide to the Energy Transition* ends with a parable. A storm of epic proportions, grown through climate change, is destroying the energy infrastructure of Hawaii in 2035. It tells the story of what could be and what will be if there is not a revolution in the power industry now. The story starts in the 1980s, the golden triangle of Texas, the land of Beaumont, Orange, and Port Arthur, also called the cancer belt. The picture painted for the reader is of a young kid visiting their father in this industrial setting, living in the shadow of the refinery that he works in, fishing in the oily and muddy waters polluted from the same refinery, and the others in the area. The reader journeys from 1980s Texas to 2035 Hawaii through policy and change and the need for social justice.

In order to change the system, social justice and equity need to be a central part of the conversation from the outset. This book maps what that can look like. Energy justice, revolutionary power, requires a reckoning with the impacts of the design of the energy system we know now. Each chapter takes on a part of the power system, from the policy and energy grid we currently know, through the options for solar power and a need for green banks as a finance method for making renewable energy more attainable to traditionally marginalized communities.

Access to power is a human right in modern society. Denying that right to Black and Brown populations is a social injustice built into the system from the very beginning of the power grid. Chapter Two discusses challenges and opportunities in different types of utilities to change this injustice and adapt renewables. Case studies such as one on the city of Boulder, Colorado utilities demonstrate changes being made and possibilities. Shalanda Baker suggests that with the different types of utilities it boils down to an "all

of the above strategy.” The answer to change is not a fix so much as reform and restructure.

Nearly year-long power outages in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria are used to demonstrate the politicization of the power industry. As a territory of the United States Puerto Rico did not have a place to advocate from the way a state would. Hurricane Maria also demonstrates the decaying infrastructure on the island. The outages in the northeastern United States give another example of the grid-based system failing. If met, the call for a more flexible grid would offer a way to prevent future failures. This, alongside green banking finance could change the lived energy experiences through clean energy and financial access to it.

While renewable energy is referred to as an alternative, the only one of these energies discussed is solar power. However, the true purpose of the book comes back to a call for action, and a need for action now - not after the parable storm hits Hawaii or anywhere else, not after whole sections of power grid have failed. Read this book and see a path forward. Read this book and take up the mantle to advocate for racial justice within the power that should be a human right. Read this book - now, before the lights go out.

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