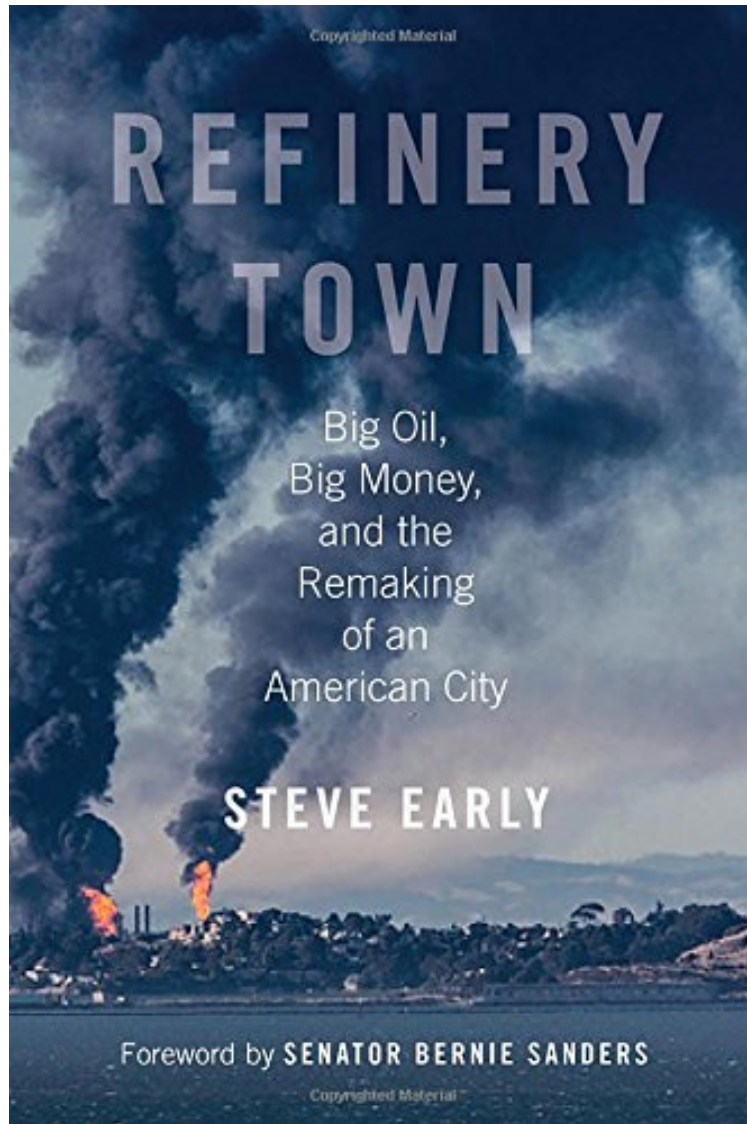


(Free and download) Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City

Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City

Steve Early

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Steve Early : Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great book. An inside look at municipal politics and ...By Henry M. GehmanA great book. An inside look at municipal politics and chronicles how it is possible to make substantive

change. Well worth it, especially if you are interested in the old saw, "politics is local". 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The fight over who is to govern By Mitchell R. Alegre Anyone contemplating freeing local government from the control of big business would do well to read this book. The author, Steve Early, does not provide a how-to manual. Rather, he chronicles the fight in Richmond, California, against Chevron's dominant influence over the city's government. The reader is introduced to the realities of trying to wrest government control from big business. Early does not paint a pretty picture. There is subterfuge, corruption, greed, infighting, and much else that is unsavory. There is also integrity, courage, persistence, sacrifice, and much that is inspiring. Reading this book provides a sense of the real challenges facing those who would restore democratic government. It is an exhausting and never-ending endeavor. Those on the side of democracy must be ever vigilant and active. Being on the sidelines is to surrender to special interests that would use government for personal gain to the detriment of collective wellbeing. This is a book for those concerned about local community and the future of democratic government. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Big Money in a Little City By William Wilson Refinery Town is a detailed look at local politics in Richmond, California, home of a massive Chevron refinery that gives the volume its title. Most of the book focuses on the 21st century and the efforts by progressives to make Richmond less of a company town and more of a livable, equitable home for its largely blue-collar residents. It is not an impartial work. It is written by a veteran trade unionist and progressive, but he attempts to be factual in its presentation of the political struggles within the community. In a way, Richmond, a city of a little more than 100,000, exhibits many of the same political issues as the United States as a whole. The unlimited financial resources of Chevron weigh heavily in the policy of the city. Channeled and disguised through various "public interest" groups, Chevron's expenditures in local elections overwhelmed the opposition. Only when safety and health issues motivated a core group of grass-roots activists was power wrested away from corporate sympathizers. Richmond citizens suffered problems with housing, crime, health and unemployment. The book chronicles the efforts of the city administration (mayor, city manager, council, and police) to ameliorate those problems. To say that they were successful would be overstating the case. Their efforts, however, are an object lesson to those in other cities who are beset by the same issues. Admittedly, this is not a book for someone who is only vaguely interested in city politics. Steve Early gives extreme detail about the internal workings of the progressive alliance that may not be of interest to all. On the other hand, a local activist may find in this volume an enhanced understanding of the dynamics of local politics.

The People vs. Big Oil—how a working-class company town harnessed the power of local politics to reclaim their community Home to one of the largest oil refineries in the state, Richmond, California, was once a typical company town, dominated by Chevron. This largely nonwhite, working-class city of one hundred thousand suffered from poverty, pollution, and poorly funded public services. It had one of the highest homicide rates per capita in the country and a jobless rate twice the national average. But in 2012, when veteran labor reporter Steve Early moved from New England to Richmond, he discovered a city struggling to remake itself. In *Refinery Town*, Early chronicles the fifteen years of successful community organizing that raised the local minimum wage, defeated a casino development project, challenged home foreclosures and evictions, and sought fair taxation of Big Oil. Here we meet a dynamic cast of characters—from ninety-four-year-old Betty Reid Soskin, the country's oldest full-time national park ranger and witness to Richmond's complex history; to Gayle McLaughlin, the Green mayor who challenged Chevron and won; to police chief Chris Magnus, who brought community policing to Richmond and is now one of America's leading public safety reformers. Part urban history, part call to action, *Refinery Town* shows how concerned citizens can harness the power of local politics to reclaim their community and make municipal government a source of much-needed policy innovation.

"A specific tale of governance at the local level that should appeal to labor activists and scholars of urban studies."—Kirkus s "Readers interested in American politics, progressivism, community practice, and local, labor, and social history will find Early's book to be informative, engaging, and inspiring."—Booklist "Exceptionally well written, impressively informed and informative, a compelling and thoughtful read from beginning to end, *Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City* is very strongly recommended for both community, college, and university library American History collections."—The Midwest Book "Refinery Town suggests that there is hope yet...folks: 2020 will be upon us in a flash; Richmond shows one way it can be a better time."—Dissent "Early is well positioned to tell this story. A lifelong labor activist and reporter who relocated to Richmond just in time to witness Chevron's spectacular 2012 refinery explosion that nearly killed a dozen workers and sent fifteen thousand residents to the emergency room, he has a natural feel for the flow of grassroots political movements and the forces shaping working-class life...indispensable reading for activists thinking about the real problems of governance once an insurgency gains a toehold of power."—Mark Dudzic, *Jacobin Magazine* "His book is a ray of hope for anyone wondering how to survive, and possibly even thrive, under Donald Trump and a hostile, Republican Congress...Community activists who are just starting out could find examples like Richmond a bit daunting, which makes intimate, contemporary histories like *Refinery Town* so valuable."—Shaun Richman, *In These*

Times “It is a tale well-told, and a good antidote for the despair that now runs rampant among many American progressives... [Early] successfully combines lively anecdotes, easy to read narrative, skillful analysis of often-complex issues, portraits of local leaders including the engaging Green Party former Richmond mayor Gayle McLaughlin, and commentary that places RPA in the larger context of American society and politics.”—Mike Miller, Counterpunch “A truly invaluable book on a tremendous urban political achievement. The importance of national resistance to Donald Trump does not reduce the importance of local struggles such as that in Richmond... [Early] has brought forth another powerful chronicle of how progressives can win against big money and powerful interests. At a time when people are looking for inspiration, Refinery Town could not have come out at a better time.”—Randy Shaw, Beyond Chron “Compelling on many levels.”—Seth Sandronsky, The Progressive Populist “A case study for activists looking to build power at the local level through grassroots organizing and independent electoral work... an invaluable documentation of their journey and a testimony of what might be possible in other cities.”—Ryan Haney, Talking Union blog “[A] hopeful narrative about how bottom-up citizen action can restore a city’s pride and make a real difference in people’s lives around such issues as affordable housing, community policing, sustainable job growth, open space, clean energy, and immigrant rights... Refinery Town provides an inside look at how one American city has made radical and progressive change seem not only possible but sensible.”—David Helvarg, The Progressive “Refinery Town should be on the reading list of all aspiring political revolutionaries, including those who may be temporarily discouraged and in need of a critical boost.”—Jonathan H. Martin, The Huffington Post “As Washington remains in gridlock, the everyday citizen-heroes of Richmond, California have been getting things done to make their city work for all. Refinery Town is essential reading for anyone seeking inspiration for what grassroots organizing can accomplish, one community at a time.”—Robert B. Reich, Chancellor’s Professor of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley, and former U.S. Secretary of Labor “Frontline communities have a key role to play in our climate movement. Richmond’s creative resistance to Chevron is a model for environmental justice campaigners everywhere—in the U.S. and abroad—who face tough struggles of their own against Big Oil and big money. Steve Early’s retelling of Richmond’s story proves that making real change is possible.”—Annie Leonard, Executive Director, Greenpeace USA and author of The Story of Stuff “This is the story of a paradigmatic urban resistance movement that is successfully challenging the myth that corporate power and gentrification are inevitable, almost geological forces. Deeply rooted in local traditions of labor and black-liberation activism, the Richmond Progressive Alliance—Sanderistas pay attention—exemplifies what a grassroots ‘political revolution’ actually looks like. We need two, three, many Richmonds!”—Mike Davis, author of City of Quartz “In a political system of Republicans and Democrats beholden to corporate cash, Refinery Town demonstrates there is an alternative in working people and community activists taking independent political action based on their own interests. From Seattle to Richmond, an emerging grass roots movement is developing for whom this book is an important read.”—Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative Seattle City Council Member “Refinery Town is a substantial contribution to the literature on local political struggles over poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Early has done for the contested terrain of Richmond, California what Mike Davis did for the much larger, majority minority metropolis of Los Angeles in City of Quartz. His first-hand reporting is invaluable for researchers in urban studies, city planning, and geography.”—Immanuel Ness, professor of Political Science, City University of New York (Brooklyn College) author, Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class “Refinery Town provides deep insight into problems that our local progressive movement faced in its continuing struggle against corporate domination. Early captures the spirit as well as the facts of our Richmond campaigns and puts them in the context of community struggles throughout the country. This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to challenge corporate power at the local level.”—Mike Parker, Richmond Progressive Alliance organizer and co-author of Democracy is Power “Steve Early’s new book describes the making of a ‘political revolution’ at the local level. Despite Chevron’s financial bullying and attempt to buy local elections, citizens of Richmond were able to organize and fight back relying on their own resources and energy. Like Bernie 2016, their story demonstrates that real change is possible through issue-oriented campaigns and effective electoral organizing.”—Larry Cohen, past president of Communications Workers of America and senior advisor to Bernie 2016 Campaign “For those of us wondering how to carry on the spirit and the activism of the Bernie Sanders campaign after 2016, this book contains a cornucopia of lessons to be applied in other cities and towns. The electoral success of the Richmond Progressive Alliance shows that maintaining a clear and radical anti-corporate politics is the way to win.”—Jane Slaughter, former editor, Labor Notes About the Author Steve Early has been an organizer, lawyer, union representative, and labor activist for the past forty-five years. He is the author of three other books, including Save Our Unions: Dispatches from a Movement in Distress. He lives in Richmond, California, with his wife.