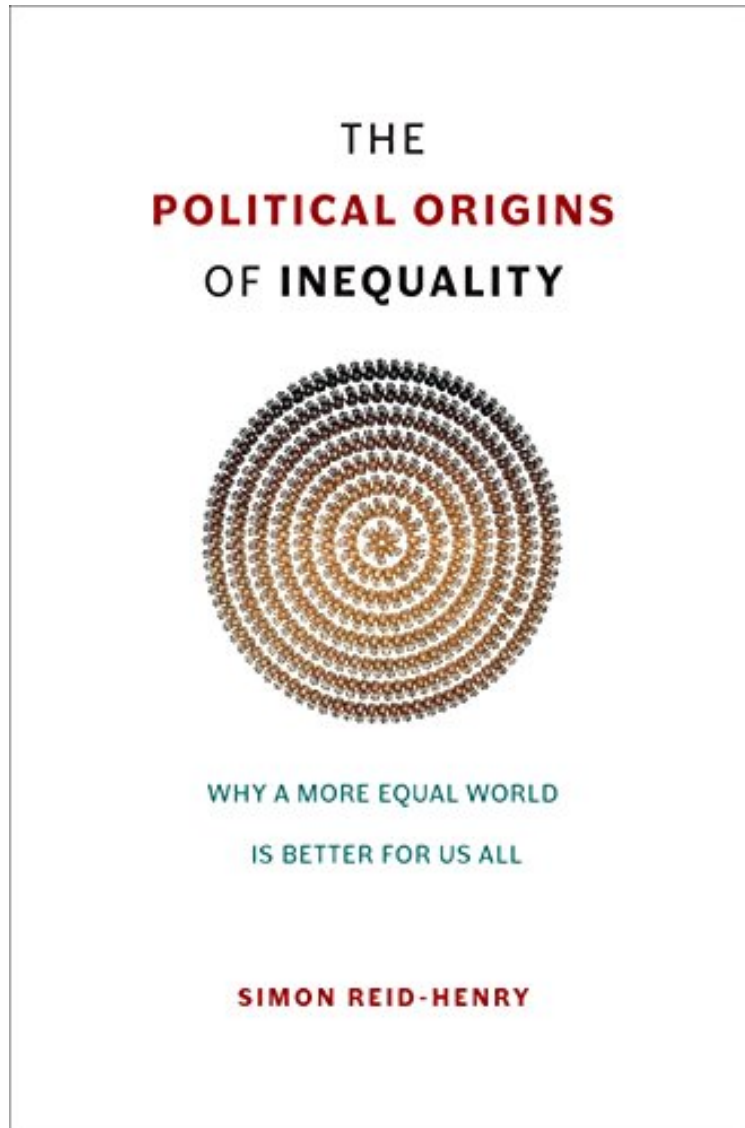


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# The Political Origins of Inequality: Why a More Equal World Is Better for Us All

*Simon Reid-Henry*

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**Simon Reid-Henry : The Political Origins of Inequality: Why a More Equal World Is Better for Us All** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Political Origins of Inequality: Why a More Equal World Is Better for Us All:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Radically sensible address on structural poverty By T. Koch This is a radically sensible book arguing the deceptively simple thesis that talk about wealth and poverty dominating international and presumably national debates is misdirected. The issue is one not of total wealth of the type measured

by personal income or GDP but the distribution of wealth in a society and between societies. To this is added early on the advertisement that poverty is not a characteristic of peoples or places but the result of programs and policies that result in the impoverishment of some by others. The book is dense but clearly written. Reid-Henry has a penchant for quotes and he uses them to good effect from a stunning variety of sources. The diversity of his reading is easily missed because the quotes are important, correctly placed and add seamlessly to the argument. All and all, a remarkable achievement.

Inequality is the defining issue of our time. But it is not just a problem for the rich world. It is the global 1% that now owns fully half the world's wealth—the true measure of our age of inequality. In this historical tour de force, Simon Reid-Henry rewrites the usual story of globalization and development as a story of the management of inequality. Reaching back to the eighteenth century and around the globe, *The Political Origins of Inequality* foregrounds the political turning points and decisions behind the making of today's uneven societies. As it weaves together insights from the Victorian city to the Cold War, from US economic policy to Europe's present migration crisis, a true picture emerges of the structure of inequality itself. The problem of inequality, Reid-Henry argues, is a problem that manifests between places as well as over time. This is one reason why it cannot be resolved by the usual arguments of left versus right, bound as they are to the national scale alone. Most of all, however, it is why the level of inequality that confronts us today is indicative of a more general crisis in political thought. Modern political discourse has no place for public reason or the common good. Equality is yesterday's dream. Yet the fact that we now accept such a world—a world that values security over freedom, special treatment over universal opportunity, and efficiency over fairness—is ultimately because we have stopped even trying in recent decades to build the political architecture the world actually requires. Our politics has fallen out of step with the world, then, and at the every moment it is needed more than ever. Yet it is within our power to address this. Doing so involves identifying and then meeting our political responsibilities to others, not just offering them the selective charity of the rich. It means looking beyond issues of economics and outside our national borders. But above all it demands of us that we reinvent the language of equality for a modern, global world: and then institute this. The world is not falling apart. Different worlds, we all can see, are colliding together. It is our capacity to act in concert that is falling apart. It is this that needs restoring most of all.

*The Political Origins of Inequality* makes the bold claim that popular thinking on global development is profoundly and fundamentally flawed because many of the economists who have written many of the best sellers have often been shortsighted. This is an important book about big issues, dismissive of facile solutions, it should change the terms of the debate on why the gaps between us are so wide and what we could do about them.