



The Long Haul: An Autobiography

Myles Horton , Herbert R. Kohl , Judith Kohl

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In his own direct, modest, plain-spoken style, Myles Horton tells the story of the Highlander Folk School. A major catalyst for social change in the United States for more than 70 years, this school has touched the lives of so many people, including Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Pete Seeger. Filled with disarmingly honest insight and gentle humor, *The Long Haul* is an inspiring hymn to the possibility of social change. It is the story of Myles Horton, in his own words: the wise and moving recollections of a man of uncommon determination and vision.

The Long Haul: An Autobiography Details

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From Reader Review The Long Haul: An Autobiography for online ebook

Joe Shoenfeld says

I enjoyed the first three-quarters of this book very much. A roughly-told story-- more told than written--of a fascinating member of the generation of radical Americans who came to politics during the Depression. It offers something of a birds'-eye view of a life and work that is moving and original. The last quarter was way too self-congratulatory for my taste and the struggles in discussion much too far removed from the author to be anything but a tedious recitation of international good works late in the twentieth century.

Liz Murray says

I've known about Highlander and Myles Horton for some time, but it didn't come up during my teacher education classes. Horton didn't work in the K-12 realm and neither did he work in a formal tertiary education. He comes across as a humble person and I believe this to be true as he is always looking to the people around him. He could have taken advantage of opportunities to "brand" Highlander but again that was never his goal.

The story that stands out to me most in the book is that of Myles meeting an older black woman who told him that they had a Citizenship School down here. She said that they go out and teach people to read so they can vote. She said that she figured it out and then taught three other women to do it. Myles was behind getting Citizenship Schools set up, with a goal like that in mind.

"It's only in a movement that an idea is often made simple enough and direct enough that it can spread rapidly. Then your leadership multiplies very rapidly, because there's something explosive going on. People see that other people not so different from themselves do things that they thought could never be done. They're emboldened and challenged by that to step in the water, and once they get in the water, it's as if they've never not been there" (p. 114).

There are clear links to Freire and his practice of adult education. The two met at some point in their lives, but Freire has a larger profile, possibly because of a more direct focus on education and schooling. What this shows though is the universality of grassroots movements and the human spirit. Both men, white men, did not seek the limelight and the work they fostered has far reaching implications. It is genuinely a matter of liberatory education in the work that came out of places like Highlander. I focus on the educational aspect because that's my direct field, but this work, and this book is for anyone looking to the strength of collaborative effort in effecting real change. It is education with a life long, mile wide purpose.

Zena says

Well written story lines though my favorite parts of the book are when Horton talks about his mother. The book made me look at my work/life/activism differently - the last chapter is really all you need to read if

you're looking for life advice.

Cailin Deery says

Dictated by Myles Horton and transcribed Judith & Herbert Kohl, the Long Haul is an autobiographical history of the Highlander Folk School in Western Tennessee, its role in the civil rights movement, and Hortons' perspective on community organizing, education, democracy. Myles Horton is a lesser-known contemporary of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Warren Wilson, Paolo Freire, James Bevel, Ralph Abernathy, etc. He was integral to the Civil Rights Movement, and one of the most progressive educators of his time. I really just want to share my favorite ideas of his:

"An experience you don't learn from is just a happening. I've always thought it was important to persuade people to be willing to fail because if you're not willing to fail, you'll always choose easy goals and learn from that to continue to choose easy goals. Your sights are limited by what you do. The pursuit of an expanding, unrestricted goal that is always receding in front of you, as you get a clearer view of where you're going or would like to, is not an experience to shun."

"Instead of thinking that you put pieces together that will add up to a whole, I think you have to start with the premise that they're already together and you try to keep from destroying life by segmenting it, overorganizing it and dehumanizing it. You try to keep things together. The educative process must be organic, and not an assortment of unrelated methods and ideas."

"Education is what happens to the other person, not what comes out of the mouth of the educator. You have to posit truth in the learner in spite of the fact that the people you're dealing with may not, on the surface, seem to merit that trust. If you believe in democracy, which I do, you have to believe that people have the capacity within themselves to develop the ability to govern themselves. You've got to believe in that potential, and to work as if it were true in the situation."

"There's much to learn from how things get started. You can't cut off the top of a tree and stick it in the ground somewhere and make it grow - you have to know about the roots."

Drick says

Myles Horton is one of the largely unsung heroes of progressive social action in the United States over the last century. In the 1930's he and Don West started the Highlander Folk School, which later became the Highlander Research and Action Center, in New Market, TN. This "autobiography" is really a series of edited transcripts of recorded interviews conducted by Herb and Judith Koler. As such they tell a rough outline of Horton's life, but more importantly his perspective and outlook on social change and education. Highlander was instrumental in starting the labor movement in the South, and for supporting the Civil Rights movement, especially the Citizenship Schools. While Horton supported many different civil and labor actions, he always saw his role as using education to develop leadership which would then organize people around a particular concern. Though he "retired" as director in the 1970's and died in 1990, Highlander continues to carry on his legacy in its work with immigrant rights groups.

While the book was written in a conversational style, I found the stories engaging and the principles he drew

out of them revolutionary.

Demosthenes says

super interesting

Mel Katz says

The stories in this book are beautiful, rich, and pushed my thinking in many ways. Truly, everyone should read this book. But it taught me much more: The more I read people's stories/theories/etc, I'm learning to appreciate complexities/contradictions/changes in people and in figures - Myles Horton's quote, to me, is exactly that ("...my ideas have changed and are constantly changing and should change and that I'm as proud of my inconsistencies as I am my consistencies.") Schooling taught me to engage with text many times to find the "hero" of the text - almost to the point of no critical analysis. I'm learning to stop looking for the perfect person/theory/answer for it all, & appreciate complexity. It's an unlearning process, and Horton's book has been monumental in helping me work toward this. As he says, "Goals are unattainable in the sense that they always grow."

Lisa says

I've been looking for some much-needed inspiration and vision in my life and work lately. As a second year social work graduate student, possibilities seem simultaneously promising and bleak. We spend many of our studying hours reading books that reference the work of Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, and much of our curricula is based on an 'empowerment' model that constantly references the work of the legendary progenitor of popular education, but doesn't require a grappling directly with his texts, and by extension, with the true complexity of his thought. As an undergraduate, I found sustenance, hope, and regeneration in the work of Freire, and as I prepare to enter a frankly, quite lean job market, I found myself needing to revisit the core values that I hope to solidify as I re-enter the workforce. Horton, the child of two poor, but educated Appalachian parents, raised as a Cumberland Presbyterian, where he cut his teeth as a desegregationist, played a key role in many of the American social movements of the 20th century. He did this by following a very simple principle: aid those who are most affected by the social problem at hand to articulate their own realities, and strategize to build their own power. He followed no specific ideology, in fact, he would not allow those who did to sermonize in his workshops, although he did allow them to convene after a workshop with those who might voluntarily choose to attend. He believed that each human being has value, has intelligence, and is an expert on their own experience and reality, and is capable of theorizing about the broader society in which they live. This radical humanism guided everything that he did at Highlander, and provided a base for those who attended to develop their talents and skills so that they might develop the talents and skills of others. Reading this book gave me powerful insight into how Horton developed his theory and practice, and of the concrete campaigns and results of the work at Highlander, including very real struggles, setbacks, and conflicts, but also the joy and beauty of communing with others to achieve a more equal society. It also is helpful in developing core values and practices independent of the moralizing of the Church, politicians, or the media. I'm really grateful I stumbled across this book on-line and decided to purchase and read it. It is essential for all people and professionals who desire to work towards making a more equal world.

John Blevins says

This was an incredibly moving story of persistence, foresight, and courage. I read this many years ago, soon after publication (early 1990's?),

Sean Estelle says

Wow, what a book. This is definitely at the top of my list of 'essential books for organizers' now. Tells the story of Myles Horton, and the Highlander Folk School, in clear, simply, easy language. So many good lessons and reflections!

Elbabasic says

Lovely and Frank written account of the life work of Myles. He is admirable in his believe in people and helping them to achieve the goals circumstance might otherwise have left unachievable.

Amanda says

"When you work toward equality, you have to devise some kind of structure in which there can be justice, but in the meantime you have to do the best you can in an unjust society. Sometimes that means that the laws you go by are moral laws instead of book laws. It isn't too complicated to get the principles of equality and justice and love, but to make these things function, you have to trust that people have the capacity to live that way and achieve that kind of society. This is hard to do, because under present day conditions many people are untrustworthy. They are untrustworthy in a temporary sense. In the potential sense they are trustworthy, so you have to posit trust in spite of the fact that the people you're dealing with don't, on the surface, merit that trust, and they will never merit it until you have it in all people. It's the kind of thing you just have to posit: you have to have trust in people, and you have to work through it to a place where people respond to that trust. Then you have to believe that people have the capacity within themselves to develop the ability to govern themselves."

I believe. And so I am in it for the long haul. And so this book this book this book.

Shannon says

I think it's interesting how forcefully Horton speaks about avoiding book learning or formal education, given how much formal education he experienced on the road to founding Highlander. That said, the story is an inspiration, and in some ways the inconsistency between Horton's personal journey and the learning

experiences he creates for others speaks to the very uniqueness of learning situations that he finds so important in training organizers. Having just read "Rules for Radicals" a few months ago I found his discussion of Saul Alinsky to be fascinating. I was most interested in the concept of "goals too big to get in the way." It seems a great lense by which to examine our current political apathy, at least as regards to the Democratic Party. If we don't put forward a big enough vision, we will only learn to do small things - and we'll miss people who know that the problem is bigger than the small steps we must take to get there. I remain a huge fan of Myles Horton and Highlander and hope that I can achieve 1/100th of what he was able to do for social justice.

Laura Hernandez says

Absolutely insightful ?

Kelly says

This book provides an easy to read overview of the life and work of a great community organizer. I appreciate that he explains his motivations and worldview.

Like some other reviews have stated, he does come across as a bit self satisfied at times, but I probably would be if I were in his shoes so I can't judge him too harshly.
