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James Ferguson

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#148238 in Books James Ferguson 2015-05-20Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.80 x .60 x 5.90l, .0 #File Name: 0822358867280 pagesGive a Man a Fish Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures Paperback | File size: 18.Mb

James Ferguson : Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution (The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution (The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures):

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A great critic gives us reason to hope
By Luke Messac
I had been looking forward to this book for a while, having read a few of the chapters as journal articles. But the book is a revelation. Ferguson, known to many for his deep critiques of international development discourse (particularly in *The Anti-Politics Machine*) asks us to reconsider the cash transfer schemes that have gained prominence in political debates in the Global South (and particularly in southern Africa) in recent years. He invites readers to see them neither as dependency-fostering giveaways (as opponents on the right have) nor as politically-demobilizing crumbs for the poor (as detractors on the left have). Instead, Ferguson says, "the present political moment reveals that some of the foundational assumptions that have guided critical social theory for generations are in significant ways out of step with our new realities." He argues that the insistence--common to almost all teleologies of modernization--that the only answer to poverty is to get everyone into waged labor has blinded us to more immediate solutions to desperate poverty and massive inequality. There is much more to the book, of course, including an amazing synthesis of Africanist anthropology and political histories of welfare regimes.
I was left convinced that I have been harboring a too-constricted sense of the possible. Though I have read or skimmed hundreds of books in the last year in preparation for oral exams and in dissertation research, I have not felt as jolted by a book in years. This is a must-read for historians and anthropologists of Africa, but also for anyone concerned with the urgent work of discerning solutions for the long-standing and global but entirely tractable problem of extreme poverty.
2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By readerA helpful, thought-provoking book. Worth reading if one wants to rethink the structures of the world.
0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A great piece of scholarship - Ferguson at his best
By Customer
An interesting and thought provoking approach to the post-apartheid context. Through different essays, Ferguson illustrates the limits of a pure neoliberal critique of Southern Africa and particularly the current South African crisis, that is, unknown levels of social inequality and perpetuating poverty. Additionally, he masterfully suggests an alternative view of Southern Africa's active social welfare system, gaining increased traction despite neoliberal fashioned economic policies. A great piece of scholarship - Ferguson at his best.

In *Give a Man a Fish* James Ferguson examines the rise of social welfare programs in southern Africa, in which states make cash payments to their low income citizens. More than thirty percent of South Africa's population receive such payments, even as pundits elsewhere proclaim the neoliberal death of the welfare state. These programs' successes at reducing poverty under conditions of mass unemployment, Ferguson argues, provide an opportunity for rethinking contemporary capitalism and for developing new forms of political mobilization. Interested in an emerging "politics of distribution," Ferguson shows how new demands for direct income payments (including so-called "basic income") require us to reexamine the relation between production and distribution, and to ask new questions about markets, livelihoods, labor, and the future of progressive politics.

"*Give a Man a Fish* is a vitally important book that aims to unsettle often-unspoken commonplaces about the contemporary politics of social welfare. Its wide-ranging and provocative investigations in southern African countries which raise fundamental questions about the changing relationships among autonomy, dependency, and security are of global relevance and importance."