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Confucius Never Said



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Synopsis

This book is the 2015 silver winner of the Benjamin Franklin Award by the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA). It is about a four-generation family journey from repression and poverty in China to freedom and prosperity in the United States. Their lives overlap with many significant historical events taking place in China, such as the founding of Communist China in 1949, the Great Chinese Famine from 1958-1960, the Cultural Revolution from 1966-1976 and the Economic Reform starting from 1980.The author recounts the enormous suffering her family had to endure under Communist ChinaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s radical social experiment. Her great-grandfather was denounced by the Chinese Communist Party and his neighbors simply because he owned land. He died in poverty, and his dying wish was never granted. Her grandfather loaned his fishing boat to the Communist Party, and ended up losing his independence and becoming a janitor. Her father escaped his village to get educated and thus survived the Great Famine. He became highly educated, but never joined the Communist Party . . . and was sent to a re-education labor camp because of it.The author herself grew up in China and immigrated to the United States as a young adult. She sought freedom and the American Dream, and found both.This book is about freedomÃ¢â ¬â •and about what happens when we let people take our freedom away.

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Customer Reviews

Helen Raleigh has an amazing story to tell. Her hard work, close family and luck led to a much better life in America. I agree with her assessment of the communist form of government. It was a disaster. However, I think that Raleigh's logic is flawed when it comes to her "food for thought" sections at the end of each chapter where she essentially equates any government program as a step down the slippery slope to communism. She also somewhat implies that circumstances ultimately make no difference as to whether someone is successful. This to me is a grim view and it hurt my opinion of an otherwise very good book. I should also say that I do agree whole-heatedly with her criticism of our immigration system. My wife is Chinese and we are experiencing similar problems with our green card application. It is way too complicated and bureaucratic.

Helen Raleigh weaves a family story about Communist China that reminds me of Ayn Rand's story why and when she left the USSR. It draws a parallel between the USA and China and how our current direction may be taking the USA down a path of no return. We must learn from history, we live in an exceptional nation and when you read the horror of life under communist and big government rule it should drive you with purpose to preserve the liberty and opportunity that we take for granted in this great nation.This was a great book and enjoyable story that will enlighten you about the history of China.

Helen Raleigh is unusual in that she (or her relatives) saw the absurdities of Communism in practice in China, then she came here and moved from being mildly liberal to a free-market conservative. Her book is quite interesting.

I'm always a bit leery of buying books with only a few reviews, especially if they're all five stars. What if its a very niche book? I wonder. What if the star distribution is meaningless? But I read the first couple of pages and realized that it was exactly my father's kind of book, so I bought it for him. Well, I decided to read it as well, because it was there and why not. I'm usually a fiction reader, and was expecting to read a couple of pages and put it down.Based on the fact that I'm now writing a five-star review, you can guess how wrong I was.This story was in many ways a punch in the gut. This isn't just a biography of an ordinary family; it's the biography of a family that survived in horrific circumstances. They lived through the Great Famine in China, even as most of their village died of starvation. They somehow lived under Mao without joining the Communist Party. They endured decades of hunger, poverty, disrespect (as it, your neighbors all turning on you and the government

unfairly punishing you), and they survived it all -- because they were both clever and lucky, and because they met truly good people who helped them. In one anecdote, the author's father is at school and he's very hungry, because he can't afford lunch. One of his teachers secretly gives him his lunch -- not only his lunch, but his entire food ration for the day, and for one day, the boy isn't hungry. That teacher later, during the Great Famine, dies of starvation.I am not a person whose emotions are generally on the surface, or who makes a display. But as I sit and write this, weeks after reading the book, there are tears streaming down my face. It's that powerful.Don't get me wrong: the book isn't just a sobfest. There are plenty of funny bits. For example, the author mentions that when she was a child growing up in China, her mother told her to finish her food -- because there were starving children in America.The book is very well constructed and very engaging, and I was left with a feeling of deep respect toward the author and her family.A note on politics: at the end of each chapter, there is a "Food for Thought" section. This section details the author's observations on China and America, and sometimes draws parallels. It does make distinctive political statements. Do NOT let this put you off, whichever party you subscribe to -- or even if you're not American at all. First of all, these sections are short. Second, even if you don't agree with the author, her points are very interesting. Third, if you really can't stand them, just skip them; the narrative is complete without them if you really only want to read a biography.Yes, I am going to buy my own copy.

Helen Raleigh does an excellent job of reminding all native born Americans what they have in terms of freedoms and why they need to better appreciate those freedoms. This should be required reading for all Americans over the age of ten.

Helen Raleigh's book is a very important read about the the ramifications of political ideologies on the ordinary citizenry of a society. Most of us in the United States have been very aware of the political journey in China from 1949 to today. However, I never understood the devastating impact on the ordinary Chinese citizen until reading this book. It is a personal and insightful journey through the implications of Communism and political change on society.This is a must read for anyone mulling the impact of political ideologies and their social realities on people.

At a time when some Americans are flirting with communism as an alternate system for America, it is timely to read from someone who lived through such system. The book will give you insight into communism through the author's and her family's stories living in China. Her experience in America

is similar to that of countless immigrants that appreciate the opportunity that Freedom offers. It is an affirmation of the wisdom of the American founding and the guiding principles of Freedom, and Capitalism. I highly recommend this book!

I particularly appreciated reading the changes the author's family went through after Communism took over China. The changes went far beyond just the economic and political system with impact upon the family culture and values. It makes me appreciate even more being born in the United States. I am also impressed with how the author and her family were able to advance. There may be some points that I do not agree with the author's conclusions, but I respect her views. I highly recommend this book.

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