7-1-2018

Book Review - Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain: The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics

Susan Clay
sclay@uga.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol55/iss3/19

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Library Quarterly by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.
Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain: The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics
by Terry Easton (The Open Door Community Press, 2016: ISBN 9780692667156, $10.00 suggested donation)

In June, 1990, in downtown Atlanta, eight activists from People for Urban Justice (PUJ) broke into the abandoned, derelict Imperial Hotel, an eight-story, early twentieth-century structure owned by John Portman, a real estate investor. PUJ’s intention was to hang a “House the Homeless Here” banner they hoped would bring much needed attention to Atlanta’s homeless population and the need for affordable housing—Single Room Occupancy—not temporary shelter. At the same time, the City of Atlanta and its business leaders were spending profane amounts of money on the renovation of Underground Atlanta, the building of the Georgia Dome, and Atlanta’s 1996 Olympic bid. When the banner was hung, no one came to arrest the activists or ask them to leave. The break-in was intended as a half-day protest but instead turned into a 16-day occupation. In the two weeks that followed the break-in, many homeless people moved into the hotel, cleaned out debris, and created living spaces. Local churches and volunteers provided daily meals to the occupants and activists, and local reporters and politicians were forced to take notice.

The book includes biographies of the “Imperial Eight” who originally broke into the hotel and a timeline of the occupation. This story would benefit those studying recent Atlanta history and politics, religious activism, homeless populations, and affordable housing issues, especially Single Room Occupancy (SRO).

Susan Clay is Map and Government Documents Original Cataloger at University of Georgia