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Book Review: So Much to Be Angry About: Appalachian Movement Press and Radical DIY Publishing, 1969-1979

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So Much to be Angry About: Appalachian Movement Press and Radical DIY Publishing, 1969–1979 by Shaun Slifer (West Virginia University Press, 2021: ISBN 9781949199949, \$32.99)

In his prologue to *So Much to Be Angry About*, Appalachian artist and museum professional Shaun Slifer recounts a fortuitous encounter he had with a thin, austere paperback while attending a private event at the Appalachian South Folklife Center in West Virginia. Don West's *A Time for Anger*, a chapbook of poetry, would inspire Slifer to investigate the complex history behind the work and its printer, the Appalachian Movement Press (AMP). Slifer's work offers a thorough account of the activist printshop and the radical personalities that shaped its operation from the late 1960s through the 1970s.

Slifer, a self-described "community-taught" historian, is joined by activist Josh MacPhee in the book's introduction. MacPhee contextualizes the development of the Appalachian Movement Press with the greater New Left movements that came to utilize small, underground printing presses to produce their political texts. Parallels are made between the more rural and regionally focused AMP and social movement presses in larger, more urban areas during this period.

The remaining book is divided into two parts: "The Press" and "In Print." "The Press" is a chronological overview of the Appalachian Movement Press's development and is organized in short, thematic chapters. Its beginnings are traced to the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) chapter at Marshall University and their newsletter *Free Forum*, first published in 1966. While SDS was short lived, local activists worked together to start a printing press to serve the burgeoning activism thereafter. In early 1970, the Appalachian Movement Press came into being with its

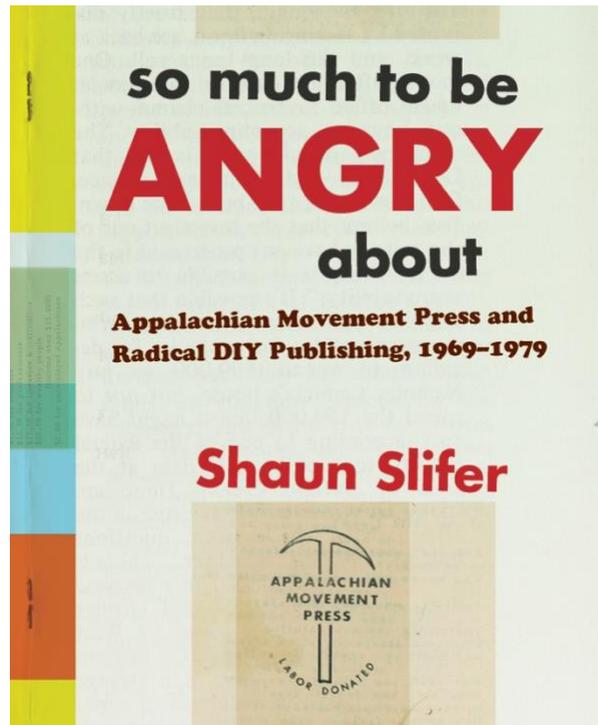


Image courtesy of the publisher

mission of "uplifting Appalachian people to self-determination." AMP created and distributed original political writing as well as republished content from more widely distributed periodicals. AMP underwent a variety of ideological and functional changes, eventually printing work for allied organizations in its later years. AMP ceased operations sometime in early 1979. While Slifer consults AMP publications throughout, he more willingly cites one-on-one interviews he conducted with surviving contributors during a three-year period.

One of the most noteworthy features of *So Much to be Angry About* is its visual appeal. Illustrations and reprinted sources appear frequently throughout the book, allowing the

reader to engage with the source material firsthand. Slifer goes a step further in Part Two of the book. "In Print" is dedicated entirely to full-color reproductions of AMP publications, many of which have not been reproduced since the 1970s. Five facsimiles, rather than transcribed pages, are included in this section. This engages the reader, allowing one to experience the text similarly to the Appalachian reader of the 1960s and 1970s. It is, however, curious that Slifer chooses not to include West's *A Time for Anger* zine when it was the impetus behind the author's research.

Overall, the clear prose and engaging design of *So Much to be Angry About* would appeal to a variety of readers. Those with an interest in literary activism and social justice writing would find this book particularly interesting, as both Slifer and MacPhee draw many parallels between contemporary social movements and those explored by Appalachian Movement Press contributors. The complete and chronological bibliography of Appalachian Movement Press publications is certainly of great value to researchers as well.

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