



Fourteenth Colony

Jeff Altabef

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Jack's heart started pounding. His hands were slippery from sweat as he twisted the grips on the bike. He couldn't help but glance back at the approaching sedans, his gaze drawn toward the danger like a moth to a flame. Jack almost jumped off his bike when he heard a voice through his earpiece. 'Incoming call.' Jack answered, and the same female voice from earlier whispered in his ear.

'Run, Jack.'

Tom can't remember to match his socks and may be hopeless with women, but he is undeniably brilliant. His intellect is about to be put to the ultimate test—his older brother, Jack, has been kidnapped, and it's up to Tom to rescue him.

The all-powerful Originalist government rules 2041 America with an iron fist. Armed checkpoints and vast ghettos dominate the country. Before Jack was kidnapped, he stumbled upon an explosive secret that could start a bloody revolution, but he managed to pass a message to Tom just in time. Will it be enough to save him?

When Tom discovers his family is part of a covert political movement, he must put all his hope in the Fourteenth Colony.

The Author proudly donates 50% of his proceeds to the Covenant House for any books sold by April, 2014. They are a beacon in the darkness for homeless youth.

Midwest Book Review

The "Fourteenth Colony" is an original entertainment from beginning to end and documents its author as a contemporary novelist of considerable merit and imagination. Highly recommended for summer reading lists.

ForeWord Clarion Review Four out of Five Stars

"Altabef's clean writing style shines . . . his descriptions are thorough and fresh." The review goes further to describe Fourteenth Colony as a "fast-paced, futuristic political thriller . . . with an especially enjoyable turn of events at the end."

Fourteenth Colony Details

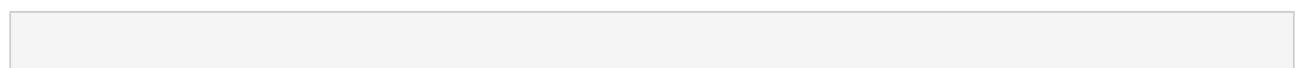
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From Reader Review Fourteenth Colony for online ebook

Clayton says

Received my copy from one of the goodreads give-aways. This book is a great read. I think it could be classified as historical fiction cum political thriller.

The main plot unfolds roughly 30 years in the future. Throughout there are foot notes similar to a history text or a republished Shakespeare play that provide a reader historical context about the unfolding events. This mechanism gives the reader unique insight into greater environmental forces that contribute to the events and attitudes that occur within the story.

Ken Halajian says

Get your favorite drink. Find a comfortable chair. Settle in for a good chunk of time because you won't want to put this one down. New author Jeff Altabef has already mastered the skill of juggling several interesting characters in a compelling narrative and delivering on the promise of a realistic near-term future that posits where our current trajectory may take us. Be forewarned. You may not like that future but you can take heart from vivid characters willing to fight to make things better. Enjoy.

Jeff Altabef says

Midwest Book Review

Synopsis: From "Fourteenth Colony" - Jack's heart started pounding. His hands were slippery from sweat as he twisted the grips on the bike. He couldn't help but glance back at the approaching sedans, his gaze drawn toward the danger like a moth to a flame. Jack almost jumped off his bike when he heard a voice through his earpiece. 'Incoming call.' Jack answered, and the same female voice from earlier whispered in his ear.

Critique: The synopsis gives a reliable example of author Jeff Altabef's genuine talent as an articulate and engaging story teller. The "Fourteenth Colony" is an original entertainment from beginning to end and documents its author as a contemporary novelist of considerable merit and imagination. Highly recommended for summer reading lists and community library collections, it should also be noted that "Fourteenth Colony" is also available in a Kindle edition (\$8.99).

Jack Mason
Reviewer

Clarion Review (Four out of Five Stars)

With a statement on today's economic crisis and political climate, Fourteenth Colony is a fast-paced, futuristic political thriller.

In America in the year 2041, the Originalist party has taken over the government, clearing the way for big business to do what it pleases, including making the middle class smaller every year and pushing more

people into ghettos. As a result, the threat of a violent uprising is coming to a boiling point.

Jack is a member of the underground group Fourteenth Colony, which aims to nonviolently bring America back to a better time. Jack stumbles across information that could help the movement, but it almost gets him killed. His genius younger brother, Tom, must find the information in order to exchange it for his brother's life, fighting against time and also against Warren, a powerful, rich, eccentric man who wants to sell the information for his own purposes.

Jeff Altabef's clean writing style shines in Fourteenth Colony. His descriptions are thorough and fresh without overloading the reader: "Rachel leaned back in her chair, looking a little disappointed, her shoulders slumping back slightly as she closed her eyes." His ideas of the future are believable, and they function as an extreme version of the path some believe America is headed down. At the conclusion of the book, instead of events and characters being drawn in black and white, as one might expect, they turn gray in an enjoyable turn of events.

Both the text layout and the font used are basic and make the book easy to read. Part of the title on the bold red, white, and blue cover graphic looks worn and bloody, lending some edginess to the image. Altabef includes almost fifty footnotes to give the reader extra information, such as American "history" of 2041, humorous backstory, and interesting tidbits about the characters. At times the footnotes distract the reader from the story, especially as they may take up a half page or more. Some footnotes could have been easily added into the narrative, while others do not add to the context at all and could have been left out entirely.

The main characters are well fleshed out, and readers can easily understand their motivations. Other characters are added throughout the story, and some are a bit two-dimensional. However, instead of leaving them at the wayside as many authors do, Altabef gives closure to the stories of these secondary players by including bits of epilogue, by way of footnotes. Some of these characters even get happy endings.

Altabef, a New Yorker, is a storyteller and a volunteer at the writing center of a community college. He is donating half the proceeds of this book to Covenant House, a safe environment for homeless youth that provides counseling, medical assistance, and a place to sleep.

Readers who enjoy futuristic and political thrillers would like Fourteenth Colony.

Beth VanHouten
June 8, 2013

Stephen says

I received this book through the Goodreads First Reads Giveaway.

I have a lot of conflicting opinions about this book. I started reading it expecting a near-future dystopia type read. Instead, I got a near-future political commentary wrapped in a thin sheaf of suspense thriller. So, within a very few pages I was a bit disappointed with the direction it was going.

Here is what Fourteenth Colony is about:

It is 2041 and America is ruled by a hard-line Conservative regime called the Originalists. They have turned the country into an oppressive dictatorship where decisions are made by the people with the most money. (Alright, so we basically have today's real world situation amped up about 200%)

A young man named Jack gets something that could topple the power structure and lead to violent uprisings of the people. Jack disappears (is kidnapped). So, now Jack's brother, Tom, must race against time to find Jack AND the item in his possession.

The author did several things well.

1. He kept several things secret until a few big reveals later in the story. This helped to keep tension high and made it easier to see things from Tom's POV.
2. The idea behind the story, "some information could shake the status quo and some innocent guy has it", never gets old to me.
3. The underground "Fourteenth Colony" movement is also a well thought out part of the book.
4. The overall writing of the story (minus one part I will get to later) was very good.
5. There were some excellent footnotes injected throughout the book. They feel very much like the author was emulating Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett, though the humor wasn't quite to their levels.

Unfortunately, there were a lot of things that did not work for me.

1. Most importantly, there was very little reason to feel invested in the main characters. They weren't even all that likeable at points throughout the story.
2. There was a lot of background given for characters other than Jack, Tom, and their pair of friends Mary and David. Nearly a chapter of character bio was given for each of the other supporting characters that had any impact on the story. This was often inserted just in time to kill the flow of the narrative. What makes this worse is the lack of similar information provided about the main characters. By the end of the book, we still don't have effective bios for Mary and David.
3. Dialogue had an unrealistic, choppy, academic feel to it. It never felt like a real conversation was happening at any time. While I know dialogue is one of the hardest things to get right when writing fiction, this was atrocious.
4. The plot was thin as a whole. Not much happens and what does happen is rather diluted due to so many biographies and so much political commentary.
4. Finally, the political commentary was over-the-top skewed to one side of the political spectrum. I realize that people who don't agree with my world view can sometimes be right. (I lean conservative, this author leans liberal). However, I know it is nearly impossible for every idea of either conservatives or liberals to be wrong and destructive to the American way. Mr. Altabef has built a world where rampant capitalism, every policy enacted on either Republican or conservative platforms, and religious beliefs have caused the destruction of America as we know it. There is even a lengthy discourse on the evils of VAT taxes and flat taxes (two positions supported by nearly every conservative). I don't mind social commentary in my fiction (take a look at some of my favorite books), but blatant political propaganda disguised as a thriller is not what I look for in a story.

Overall, I give it a 2.5 because it was interesting at times. I think that the author would be a top-notch commentary writer and political blogger. Hopefully he will avoid things with dialogue and stick to what he does better in the future.

With that said, I do not plan to look for the sequel to this book any time soon.

Deborah says

Interesting story, and a good read.

Alison says

Fourteenth Colony is a fast-paced political thriller set in 2041. The author Jeff Altabef does a fantastic job of describing what America could look like if we continue down the road of gross economic disparity. The story is smart and clever. Altabef provides a look into a future ruled by the 1 percent - where hospitals are protected by armored guards and where 16-year-olds must sign on to a corporation in order to gain access to a college education. While the message is serious, the book is a fun read. A true page-turner. I felt a connection to Jack, Mary, Rachel and all of characters and I couldn't put the book down. I would recommend Fourteenth Colony, in fact, I have already loaned my copy to a friend!

Jeff Altabef is donating 50% of his proceeds to Covenant House, the largest agency in the Americas serving homeless and at-risk youth. By supporting Covenant House, Jeff is showing homeless kids they have not been forgotten, that they have friends who care.

Michael Spevack says

This is a great book. The writing is really strong and the characters are vivid and entertaining. The vision of the future contained in the book is entirely plausible given the current political climate. There is plenty of action and suspense. The prose is sinewy, meaning, muscular, and the story is riveting to the end. I particularly like the way the author wrote his female characters. Well worth your time and investment of a few bucks. I also understand that the author donates some the proceeds of the book to a really great charity. Well done! Buy it, you will be glad you did!

Carlos says

I got this book through first reads and it was interesting, the vocab and imagery could have been better and instead of all the footnotes most of them could have been avoided by talking about in the book. This book was ok but i gave it four stars because of the social undertones through out the book really helped it a lot. Would read again.

Ellen says

If someone wants to know what America could look like in thirty years if we continue on our present political course, just read Fourteenth Colony by Jeff Altabef, which combines my relatively new passion for politics with a genre I have always loved, the mystery/thriller. Fourteenth Colony, set in 2041, depicts an

America that is shaped by the beliefs and desires of the conservative, religious fanatics in political offices. Think Ted Cruz, Paul Ryan and Rand Paul, and the entire Tea Party caucus. As the author states in the book's first footnote, "I believe the events described in this book represent a tipping point in American history...." Depending on the action or inaction of its citizens, America could easily end up exactly as Altabef describes. It is not a pretty picture. It is not an America in which I want to live.

The book is fast-paced, and the characters come to life in a way that draws the reader in and elicits either strong feelings of identification or great dislike. According to the author, the characters portrayed in the book are real, but their "dialogue and internal thoughts are fictitious" - although Altabef tried to be true to their actual speech patterns. I admit I have wasted a bit of time trying to figure out whom they might be in real life. Altabef's background as an attorney with a prestigious New York City law firm, followed by a long stint at a major investment banking firm put him in the perfect position to observe powerful, cunning men who will do anything to enhance their financial position and feed their enormous egos and insecurities. Altabef's keen intellect is ever present throughout the book.

In the Fourteenth Colony, the predominant political party is the Originalists. The Originalists' political platform is extremely similar to the Tea Party's current platform. The Originalists believe that if one repeats something long and often enough, it will eventually be received as factual. This applies to their mantra that tax cuts pay for themselves even though they know this is not true. Their deep tax cuts result in the government not having the financial resources to provide police services outside of wealthy areas. There are few remaining middle-class neighborhoods, and ghettos are growing larger every day. Without a police force, gangs run the ghettos and violence is prevalent. Citizens must carry identification cards with computerized strips that allow them to be tracked. Identification cards also limit and restrict citizens from travel into specified areas. The wealthy live in gated communities protected by armed guards with checkpoints to prohibit access by the undesirables.

The story unfolds in Manhattan and Westchester County, New York and centers around the loss of a flash drive that contains truly explosive and confidential information. Information that could set off a revolution if it gets into the wrong hands. One of the book's key characters, Warren Scott, has a final meeting at Westchester County's Ronald National Country Club with the computer hacker who discovered the volatile information. Scott believes the flash drive was left in the private guest room where they met. The only other people who used the room after Warren's meeting was a female club member and Jack, a tennis instructor at the club who is also a waiter for special events. Warren is willing to go to any lengths to find Jack and recover the flash drive, which sets off a harrowing manhunt by Warren, a ruthless psychopath. When Jack disappears, his younger brother, Tom, is recruited by a secret, underground group called Fourteenth Colony to help find his brother and the flash drive before Warren. Manhattan and Westchester County are home terrain for Altabef, and his knowledge of both areas adds detail and authenticity to the story. Ronald National could easily be Old Oaks Country Club or the Pelham Country Club.

By 2041, in Altabef's America, the FDA has been partially eliminated, is controlled by a privately-owned corrupt company and only has jurisdiction for over-the-counter medications. Prescription drugs, because they are not regulated, have become ineffective, unreliable, dangerous and addictive. Most Americans cannot afford them and, those that can purchase them from other countries with better regulation. Medicare no longer exists, and two thirds of all seniors have no insurance coverage. A third of Americans have no health insurance coverage, another third have coverage only for medical clinics that often have a two-month wait for appointments, and a third (wealthy) are insured for treatment at private state-of-the-art hospitals and doctors. Food sources are also completely unreliable due to deregulation of the entire industry.

The government's official position on global warming is that it is not man made but a perpetuated hoax. Vehicles still run on fossil fuels like gasoline and liquid natural gas at a cost of \$20 per gallon. Of course, true to the greed of the controlling class, there are private gas clubs for the wealthy where they are able to buy gas at \$13.00 per gallon. The EPA has been dissolved, and all its former laws and regulations were repealed - kind of like the current state of affairs in the not-so-great-state of Texas. The public water supply is no longer drinkable. Most poor people drink beer since they cannot afford the price of the imported water.

While public schools still exist, teachers are required to distribute propaganda or be tried for treason. Unions and collective bargaining are illegal. Voting rights are now based on how much income one makes. The less you make, the less your vote counts. Elections are rigged and meaningless. Does any of this sound vaguely familiar to you? Gerrymandering to the nth degree? Now, when I listen to the news, I often think about how we could easily end up the life described in Fourteenth Colony if we are not vigilant. If not for the combination of the Internet, social media, and the power of individuals finding their voice and uniting, it is quite possible that we may not have become fully apprised of behind the scene political and legal maneuvering that had been going on for many years by powerful men and corporations to rig everything to their favor - legally.

Sometimes writers described their characters or scenes in such minute and excruciating detail that I find myself bored and skipping parts - sometimes important facts escape me when I do this. Not so with Altabef's writing. Rather than go on, ad nauseam, describing each of the primary characters, his characters come to life through their actions, thoughts and dialog. Altabef's writing style is clean and crisp. Simple. A pleasure to read. Not easy to put this book down. The story has many twists and turns on its own without complicating it with pretentious highbrow writing. I also love his use of footnotes to bring the reader up-to-date on all the changes that occurred in America between now and 2041. Their use also helps keep the story flowing and uninterrupted.

My only real complaint is that I wanted to know more about the Fourteenth Colony. I suspect my wish will be fulfilled in the coming sequel. Oh, and I love the character, Rachel, with whom I greatly identify. I am hoping to see much more of her. I plan to figure out a way to get my hands on it prior to its actual publication. I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves mysteries and thrillers - particularly if they also like politics.

Alex Mueck says

The Fourteenth Colony is a modern or should I say future thriller. The book is filled with interesting snippets about the near-future, most of which are very well done, and scarily realistic.

The characters are all their own, with individual motivations, and despite the grim plot line, there is some humor mixed in furthering developing the characters.

The book has great pace, no lulls, and good crisp prose. It also sets the stage for a sequel, which I will definitely be looking forward to. This book would make a great movie

D Wu says

This is a fast-paced thriller - an easy read with great character development. The author also incorporates humor by inserting fictional footnotes to correspond to the timing of the book, which takes place in the future. The underlying political commentary of the book is appropos for the current political climate. I greatly enjoyed reading this book and highly recommend it.

Ken Anderson says

Couldn't put it down! (Apologies to my wife and children)

Kylie says

This novel was based on a great idea but was poorly executed. The writing was clunky and unpolished which slowed my reading and my enjoyment. It's set up as a historical fiction set fifty years into our future and about fifty years in the past of the ghost writer which I thought was unique. The use of footnotes greatly added to the sense of the book. I found that the author included too much world building back-story within the book. Overall I would not recommend this book to others unless it when through a major edit to tighten up the writing and smooth the flow of the story. I received a copy of this book through Goodreads- First Reads.

Joan says

Loved this thriller. It takes place in my neighborhood, but thirty years in the future. It's great fun to recognize the settings. Compelling heroes combat really awful villains. The author builds on some contemporary social problems and shows how awful it can (will?) get if we don't do something to preserve our freedoms and values. Young adults in a dystopian future have to rely on themselves - a great lesson for all of us. And a fun (and funny) read to boot.

Kevin Ryan says

In this gripping dystopia story, we see just what happens when power and wealth are concentrated among a few. Fourteenth Colony is a clever tale of intrigue, in a future where the poor get poorer and the rich control access to health and education, but the plucky may still survive.

Jeff Altabef has surprises in store as his carefully-crafted characters discover the mysteries of the Fourteenth Colony. You'll find yourself rooting for these working-class kids held back by an unjust society, and for this bright new story-telling talent to come out with his anticipated sequel. Kudos for a fast-paced well written work that is full of heart and a sense of justice in regards to young people. Fourteenth Colony is a thought-provoking, fast-paced thriller that you should treat yourself to today!

And thank you to Jeff who is donating 50 percent of his author proceeds to Covenant House. The kids at Covenant House are lucky to have a friend like you!
