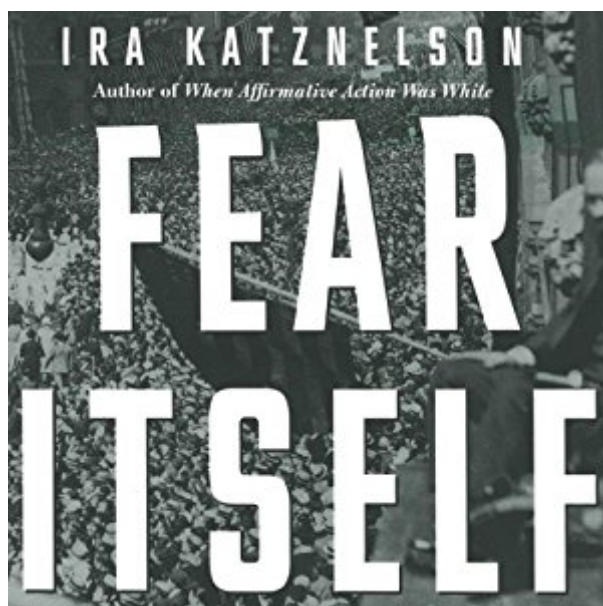


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Fear Itself: The New Deal And The Origins Of Our Time



Synopsis

Redefining our traditional understanding of the New Deal, *Fear Itself* finally examines this pivotal American era through a sweeping international lens that juxtaposes a struggling democracy with enticing ideologies like Fascism and Communism. Ira Katznelson, "a towering figure in the study of American and European history" (Cornel West), boldly asserts that, during the 1930s and 1940s, American democracy was rescued yet distorted by a unified band of southern lawmakers who safeguarded racial segregation as they built a new national state to manage capitalism and assert global power. This original study brings to vivid life the politicians and pundits of the time, including Walter Lippmann, who argued that America needed a dose of dictatorship; Mississippi's five-foot-two Senator Theodore Bilbo, who advocated the legal separation of races; and Robert Oppenheimer, who built the atomic bomb yet was tragically undone by the nation's hysteria. *Fear Itself* is a necessary work, vital to understanding our world - a world the New Deal first made.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A valuable addition to the extensive research on how the New Deal has shaped the current day, with emphasis on racial politics, challenges to liberal democracy, and the evolution of the national security state. While Katznelson is an obvious admirer of the New Deal and of FDR, he doesn't skirt their defects. In fact, the fears he exposes go to their defects, which may have been unavoidable but are nonetheless revealing of the who and what we have become.

It's the 3 books together: "Fear Itself" (Ira Katznelson), "FDR & The Jews" (Richard Breitman) and "Those Angry Days" (Lynne Olson), that provide a wonderful perspective, not only on those times (WWII), but on how the U.S. operates on the basis of its democratic structure (the Constitution). Together, these works illuminate, in depth, what this country can and cannot do to solve urgent problems in the short run. I'm convinced that "gridlock", for one, requires first and foremost, electoral reform. It's a sine qua non.

If you want to understand why the United States goes on occasional anti-something tirades read this book. Dr. Katznelson clearly explains why "fear" is spread and can overwhelm normal equality and liberty traditions of the nation. In short, the book would enhance any political history course if included in the syllabus. Recommended.

Katznelson does a wonderful job of putting the concerns and issues of the New Deal into a larger context. He concentrates on showing how Southern Democratic congressmen influenced the nature and timing of New Deal legislation, as well as making clear how much the government's approach to policy was shaped by what our fascist and communist enemies were doing to cope with the Depression. A beautifully argued work of real scholarship -- highly recommended.

well written, well documented, amazing insights. an in depth analysis of the crisis's facing USA in depression and war, and the amazing compromises FDR made with the southern, racist power block, and later the parallel compromises made with the dangerous, menacing Stalin against the even more threatening Hitler. I read this in constant surprise at the extreme conditions and the steps taken to ameliorate them. This book reads like a well written novel--if only it were only that.

Well written and pleasure to read. Have never read the central thesis--centrality of race and region--as setting the limits on the New Deal. If you think the New Deal was the beginning of the end for America, you will disagree with the analysis. The latter part of the book -- the US emergence of the national security state -- I found less interesting. I teach at a university and do research on political development. This book comes with that genre and is an excellent contribution to the field.

I am reading this book with great passion--here's a historian who makes the connections that were always there but long under-emphasized, perhaps because they do little honor to our past-- in this

case the astoundingly powerful influence of the Dixiecrats in the forging of the modern American state

Ira Katznelson does a good job in showing the fear many Americans had about our nations future and the obstacles FDR's New Deal had to address in the great Depression and how that all played into our performance during WWII. The author does an especially good job in describing the role racial segregation played in our ability to overcome many of the New Deal obstacles.

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