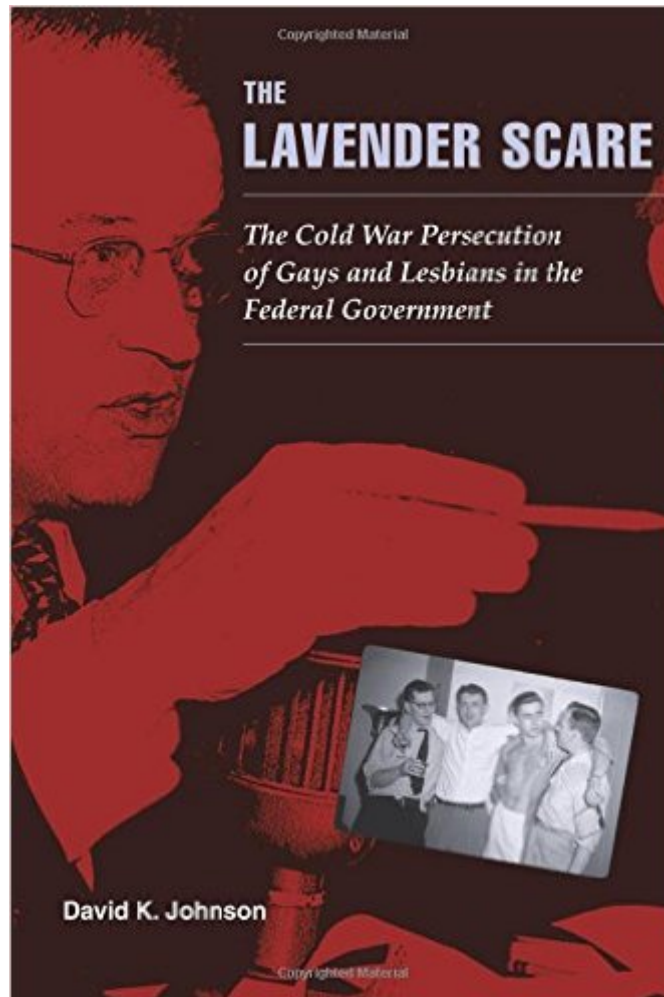


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The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution Of Gays And Lesbians In The Federal Government



Synopsis

In Cold War America, Senator Joseph McCarthy enjoyed tremendous support in the fight against what he called atheistic communism. But that support stemmed less from his wild charges about communists than his more substantiated charges that "sex perverts" had infiltrated government agencies. Although now remembered as an attack on suspected disloyalty, McCarthyism introduced "moral values" into the American political arsenal. Warning of a spreading homosexual menace, McCarthy and his Republican allies learned how to win votes. Winner of three book awards, *The Lavender Scare* masterfully traces the origins of contemporary sexual politics to Cold War hysteria over national security. Drawing on newly declassified documents and interviews with former government officials, historian David Johnson chronicles how the myth that homosexuals threatened national security determined government policy for decades, ruined thousands of lives, and pushed many to suicide. As Johnson shows, this myth not only outlived McCarthy but, by the 1960s, helped launch a new civil rights struggle.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am reviewing this book based on the Kindle version. The only problem i have with the Kindle version is that the footnotes, which in a book like this are very important, are not directly accessible as with other Kindle books. I can see the footnote number, but cannot click on the number to get to the actual note. I hope the producers of this book will correct this problem. As for the content, this well written book was an eye opener for me. The author lays out the events in a manner that makes

clear how the homosexual panic took hold as a tool for the Republicans wanting to oust a Democratic president and cast aspersions on the New Deal. It also reveals how some in the press used it as a means to improve their circulation by playing on the public's fear of the gay/lesbian "other". When i was taught about the McCarthy era there was NO information provided about the attack on the gay/lesbian community. This book is the only one to bring this dark period of hysteria into the cold light of day where i hope we will learn some important lessons. This book and Making Gay History are the two books i recommend to friends who want to learn about LGBT history. The two books are complements in that

This book is an excellent piece of history and well written. The author extensively researches private correspondence involving homosexuals and homosexual activists, newspaper reports, congressional reports and so on. The author makes use of the records of the most extensive congressional investigation into homosexuality among government employees, the Senate committee chaired by Senator Clyde Hoey, records which were closed to researchers until 2000. He also makes use of personal interviews and other biographic records that gives a picture of what homosexual life was like in Washington D.C from the 1940's to 1960's. An important point the author makes is how previous historians have usually downplayed or, more often than not, completely ignored, the prominence of the homosexual issue during the McCarthy era. Part of the reason for this, the author suggests, is that historians have used Senator McCarthy's public pronouncements to provide them with a measure of the public focus on gay people. In his initial speeches in early 1950, McCarthy linked homosexual behavior with adherence to communist doctrines, but then, for no clear reason, ignored the homosexual issue for the rest of his career. Dr. Johnson shows what he says other historians have ignored, that other politicians picked up the issue and were successful in using it. The Lavender Scare picked up steam in early 1950 when under-secretary of state John Peurifoy stated before a Senate committee that 91 employees from the State Department had been fired for homosexual activity. Pretty soon, newspaper reports indicated that while a quarter of the letters to McCarthy's office were about communists, the other three quarters expressed fear and anger about homosexuals employed by the federal government.

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