

The United States of Paranoia A Conspiracy Theory



BOOK DETAILS

- Author : Jesse Walker
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BOOK SYNOPSIS

A history of Americas demons 1693: Cotton Mather suggests that the spirits attacking Salem are allied with the colonys human enemies. At their "Cheef Witch-meetings," he writes, "there has been present some French canadians, and some Indian Sagamores, to concert the methods of ruining New England." 1835: A gunman tries to kill Andrew Jackson. The president accuses a senator of plotting the assassination. Jacksons critics counter that the shooting was arranged by the president himself to gain public support. 1868: An article in the New-York Tribune declares that the Democrats have engineered malaria outbreaks in the nations capital, pumping "the air, and the water, and the whisky of Washington full of poison." 1967: President Lyndon Johnson asks his cabinet if the Communists are behind the countrys urban riots. The attorney general tells him that the evidence isnt there, but Johnson isnt convinced. Conspiracy theories arent just a feature of the fringe. Theyve been a potent force across the political spectrum, at the center as well as the extremes, from the colonial era to the present. In *The United States of Paranoia*, Jesse Walker explores this rich history, arguing that conspiracy stories should be read not just as claims to be either believed or debunked but also as folklore. When a tale takes hold, it reveals something true about the anxieties and experiences of those who believe and repeat it, even if the story says nothing true about the objects of the theory itself. In a story that stretches from the seventeenth century to today, Walker lays out five conspiracy narratives that recur in American politics and popular culture. With intensive research and a deadpan sense of humor, *The United States of Paranoia* combines the rigor of real history with the punch of pulp fiction.

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