



# American Hysteria: The Untold Story of Mass Political Extremism in the United States

By Andrew Burt

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## American Hysteria: The Untold Story of Mass Political Extremism in the United States By Andrew Burt

This debut book from Andrew Burt details the pivotal moments in American political history when outliers moved to the center, capturing the national spotlight and turning fringe politics mainstream. *American Hysteria* puts readers at the center of the nation's most prominent periods of political extremism, from the Anti-Illuminati movement of the 1790s to McCarthyism in the 1950s to the Anti-Sharia movement of today. Both a deep dive into American history and a riveting narrative account, this book is as much history lesson as it is drama.

Burt argues that political hysteria arises in periods of deep uncertainty about American identity, and that when Americans lose their sense of who they are, they lash out against perceived threats with blacklists, scapegoating, conspiracies, cover-ups and more. By exploring the infamous and sometimes forgotten movements and characters of our nation's past, this fascinating book provides a unique view into America's history, its identity, and ultimately its future.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Andrew Burt helps make sense of the political extremism and hate all around us. This is a must read book dealing with a topic few want to tackle.”

—Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, 1984 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize

“Andrew Burt shows how episodes of political hysteria emerge in periods of deep uncertainty about American identity, when groups fearful of their changing status imagine mysterious threats from within and without. This beautifully written book reminds us that America’s greatness has come from our ability to adapt to change and forge a more perfect union.”

—Jack M. Balkin, Knight Professor of Constitutional Law and the First Amendment, Yale Law School

“*American Hysteria* brilliantly chronicles five episodes of political hysteria where irrational fears, stirred up by irresponsible leaders, tore us loose from our constitutional moorings. Ranging from hysteria in the earliest days of the Republic to the groundless fear that American Muslims are seeking to establish Sharia law in this country today, the message of this truly impressive first book by Andrew Burt is as poignant as it is timely. America should listen.”

—Jeffrey H. Smith, former General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency

“Andrew Burt, a brilliant intellect and scholar, explores some of the most sensitive issues our country has confronted, and provides an historical and sociological construct to lead us through these challenging debates. *American Hysteria* is a powerful read, and a deeply fascinating book.”

—Admiral James G. Stavridis (Ret.), Dean of Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander

#### About the Author

A former reporter for *U.S. News & World Report*, **Andrew Burt** is currently a Visiting Fellow at Yale Law School’s Information Society Project. His articles have appeared in *Slate*, *Politico*, and *The Atlantic*, among other publications. This is his first book.

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