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Taking Liberties: The War on Terror and the Erosion of American Democracy

Susan N. Herman

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TAKING LIBERTIES

The War on Terror and
the Erosion of American Democracy

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Susan N. Herman : Taking Liberties: The War on Terror and the Erosion of American Democracy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Taking Liberties: The War on Terror and the Erosion of American Democracy:

3 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A very necessary analysis of the so-called "Patriot Act"By Simone

SignoretA necessary and apt analysis of the Patriot Act and attendant gross abuses of governmental powers. Fails to analyze though the actions, one by one, that led to the 9/11/01 disaster in terms that would have shown that each and every necessary step in the commission of this horrendous crime would not have been possible had the laws and ordinances then on the books been enforced. NO ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION was NEEDED, IF EXISTING LAWS HAD BEEN ENFORCED. e.g. fourteen of the nineteen terrorists involved had overstayed the terms of their "visitors' visas." It is the job of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to follow up on visitors and make sure that they leave when their visas expire. Had security measures been enforced at Logan Airport, the box cutters the terrorists used would not have gotten onto the plane, etc.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great writer and speakerBy Delilah CottoA great read if you want to know updated info on our current civil liberties and how the constitution is reinterpreted to in order to limit our rights.

In this eye-opening work, the president of the ACLU takes a hard look at the human and social costs of the War on Terror. A decade after 9/11, it is far from clear that the government's hastily adopted antiterrorist tactics--such as the Patriot Act--are keeping us safe, but it is increasingly clear that these emergency measures in fact have the potential to ravage our lives--and have already done just that to countless Americans. From the Oregon lawyer falsely suspected of involvement with terrorism in Spain to the former University of Idaho football player arrested on the pretext that he was needed as a "material witness" (though he was never called to testify), this book is filled with unsettling stories of ordinary people caught in the government's dragnet. These are not just isolated mistakes in an otherwise sound program, but demonstrations of what can happen when our constitutional protections against government abuse are abandoned. Whether it's running a chat room, contributing to a charity, or even urging a terrorist group to forego its violent tactics, activities that should be protected by the First Amendment can now lead to prosecution. Blacklists and watchlists keep people grounded at airports and strand American citizens abroad, even though these lists are rife with errors--errors that cannot be challenged. National Security Letters allow the FBI to demand records about innocent people from libraries, financial institutions, and internet service providers without ever going to court. Government databanks now brim with information about every aspect of our private lives, while efforts to mount legal challenges to these measures have been stymied. Barack Obama, like George W. Bush, relies on secrecy and exaggerated claims of presidential prerogative to keep the courts and Congress from fully examining whether these laws and policies are constitutional, effective, or even counterproductive. Democracy itself is undermined. This book is a wake-up call for all Americans, who remain largely unaware of the post-9/11 surveillance regime's insidious and continuing growth.

"Taking Liberties offers a compelling case that the basic constitutional protections most Americans take for granted, including the rights to free speech, a fair trial and due process, as well as freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, were seriously compromised after 9/11 as a result of the government's well-meaning but ill-conceived efforts to safeguard the country against another attack. . . [P]ersuasively fair and reasonable . . . A valuable contribution to the growing body of literature regarding the War on Terror's impact on our constitutional rights." --Kirkus s "This smart and passionate book shows how we as Americans - and not our faceless enemies - have the most to lose from the erosion of our civil liberties since 9/11. By showing what has happened to real people, Susan Herman offers the wake-up call we need to regain our perspective and reclaim our values." --Linda Greenhouse "Taking Liberties is an engrossing read full of heartbreaking stories about how the War on Terror more than made up in zeal what it utterly lacked in logic. In the immediate aftermath, the errors documented here were understandable; ten years out, they are unforgivable. Anyone who cares about civil liberties, believes the War on Terror is making us safer, or even believes the War on Terror is about the War on Terror should read this book." -Barry Friedman, author of *The Will of the People* "'If you don't do anything wrong, you don't have anything to worry about.' This phrase is destined to be with us for all time, kept alive by the same people who cheerfully volunteer that they are willing to trade some 'liberty for security.'" Susan N. Herman's new book, *Taking Liberties: The War on Terror and the Erosion of Democracy*, provides a sharp rebuttal to this compliant mind-set that gave the government more power over the rest of us . . . [A] great catalog of personal injustice anecdotes, with story after story of people who don't do anything wrong yet have plenty to worry about--they get deported, imprisoned without charge, tortured . . . In addition to compiling all these outrages in one handy place, *Taking Liberties* does quite a good job of detailing the mechanics of the laws, policies, and procedures that created this havoc and in most cases made legal redress unattainable." --Reason "The prosecutions on the basis of 'contribution of expertise' should be of particular professional interest to sociologists." --Contemporary Sociology About the Author Susan N. Herman became president of the American Civil Liberties Union in 2008 after serving on its national board for twenty years. A constitutional scholar and chaired professor at Brooklyn Law School, she is the co-editor (with Paul Finkelman) of *Terrorism, Government, and Law* and the author of *The Right to a Speedy and Public Trial*.