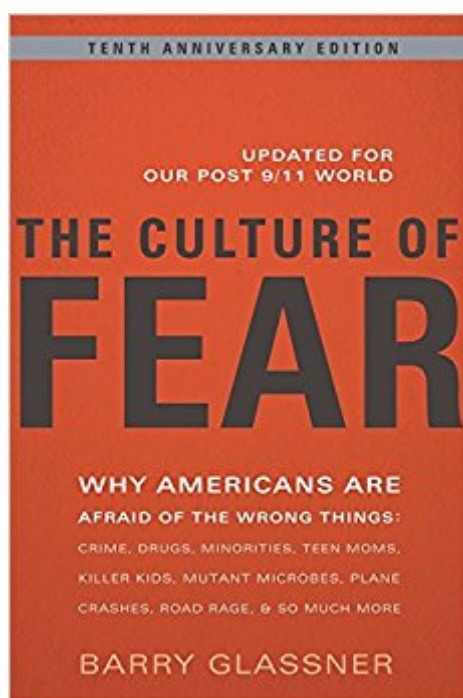


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# The Culture Of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid Of The Wrong Things: Crime, Drugs, Minorities, Teen Moms, Killer Kids, Mutant Microbes, Plane Crashes, Road Rage, & So Much More



## Synopsis

In the age of 9/11, the Iraq War, financial collapse, and Amber Alerts, our society is defined by fear. So it's not surprising that three out of four Americans say they feel more fearful today than they did twenty years ago. But are we living in exceptionally dangerous times? In *The Culture of Fear*, sociologist Barry Glassner demonstrates that it is our perception of danger that has increased, not the actual level of risk. Glassner exposes the people and organizations that manipulate our perceptions and profit from our fears, including advocacy groups that raise money by exaggerating the prevalence of particular diseases and politicians who win elections by heightening concerns about crime, drug use, and terrorism. In this new edition of a classic book—more relevant now than when it was first published—Glassner exposes the price we pay for social panic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Barry Glassner is professor of sociology at the University of Southern California. He is the author of seven books and countless articles that have appeared in magazines and newspapers around the world. His academic research has appeared in the most prestigious journals in sociology and psychiatry. He lives in Los Angeles.

This was an interesting book and I really enjoyed it. The author cites numerous studies that show how influenced we are by the media. There are stories and facts that back up his claims and show us how silly and easily influenced we are as a society. Our culture is getting lazier and lazier as a

whole and we rely more and more on the media and news sources to not only deliver the news to us, but tell us how we should feel about it, how much significance we should give it, etc. Definitely an insightful and eye opening book that will cause some serious introspection. If this book were required reading in high school classes, we would all be a little better off and we just might be able to correct some of the social ills that we face as a society. No one book can make us a better people or force us to treat each other better or make us better citizens, and I am not claiming that this book will do those things, but serious readers will undoubtedly begin examining the information around them and the sources from which it comes.

I knew that the media exaggerated certain situations in the news but I had no idea how far off statistically these concerns are from the truth. What this book does is not only show what the problem isn't, but what the true problems are that we need to address. The real problems are getting lost because they are more complicated than what can be said in scary sound bites and harder to solve. This book helps to put all the, supposedly, scary things into perspective. I consider myself a skeptic but I watch a lot of media and some of it got by me this book helped me to sort it out.

I found this book to be very well-written and pose many very interesting and important questions. He not only reports on the various media biases, but investigates \*why\* it is that certain types of stories are covered so frequently. His political views seem basically "left-wing" (though that is quite a blanket term, and often not very descriptive), while I am more or less Libertarian. Despite the fact that his somewhat socialist ideals did come out in this exposition, I still enjoyed the book. I liked how he was honest about his political views, but they didn't bias the work so much as to rob it of its intellectual merit. (Which is, sadly, not true of many other writers, both on the left and right.) I give it only 4 stars simply because I have a very high standard for 5 stars--I reserve that for works that are simply phenomenal.

Sociologist Glassner indicts the media on several counts of fear-mongering, and claims that misappropriated fear causes both undue trauma over the feared issue and starves away concern over the real problems. First, he argues, we are afraid of things that are mostly harmless. Road rage, delinquent kids, single moms, black men, hard drugs, strange illnesses seemingly from breast implants and desert wars, plane crashes, and Martians invading New Jersey ("The War of the Worlds"); all these are of little danger to most anyone. These fears often follow general rules that we

can use to ferret them out (page 206-8), but regardless, they inspire worry in many people. The danger of fearing too much, Glassner argues, is that it "knocks the optimism out of us by stuffing us full of negative presumptions about our fellow citizens and social institutions" (page 208). This makes us believe that we cannot solve our real problems, which adds even more to our fear in a self-perpetuating cycle. Second, and worse, fearing the harmless keeps us from seeing and solving the real problems that plague our society. Often the hyped-up fears are successful, in fact, because they are a stopgap solution, giving us a smaller battle to fight while we ignore the greater war because it has gotten "too big". Glassner puts it this way: "The success of a scare depends not only on how well it is expressed but also, as I have tried to suggest, on how well it expresses deeper cultural anxieties." For instance, the War of the Worlds was successful because it tapped into people's current fears of the Nazis and World War II, which America had so far done nothing about. This is a good read, if only for the reassurance in the validity of statistics. Everyone's heard that "you're more likely to die driving home from the airport than in a plane crash"--but we haven't heard the other comforting facts as much, like the better odds that children and single mothers have today, and the drop in crime despite increased media coverage of what's left. And it's always nice to hear good news again--it's news of a dying breed.

Glassner has written a great expose about our delusional and paranoiac media system that perpetuates illusions, delusions, and partial truth, placing us in a constant imbroglio, and rendering our society into a bewildered, scared, narcissistic, paranoid, homophobic, split/schizophrenic, and brainwashed society. Glassner will provide you in his book with truthful material that will encourage the average person to cogitate, instead of simply absorb what the venomous media imbues in our minds. Media 101 teaches that fear works and gets ratings. "instill fear in them and they shall follow." The airwaves belong to the public and we should claim it back. We should contact our FCC and demand unbiased, honest, and decent programming. Fear is the driving force and the major psychological component of terror. Fear incapacitates people and renders them impotent. Fear is conducive to regressive behaviors by responsible adults. Fear justifies our willingness to relinquish our most intimate and sacred rights in order to feel safe. Fear is primal. It brings out the primitive and reptilian part of our humanity. It is tragic that the media outlets dictate our lives, educate our children, and shape our daily opinions. We are treated as frightened, dependent, and ignorant children that will follow their parents anywhere to survive. Walter Lippmann (a media Guru) has called us (the people) the perfect name "the bewildered herd." Or are we? The culture of fear makes a great reading that would help us dispel the myth behind our glamorous media !

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