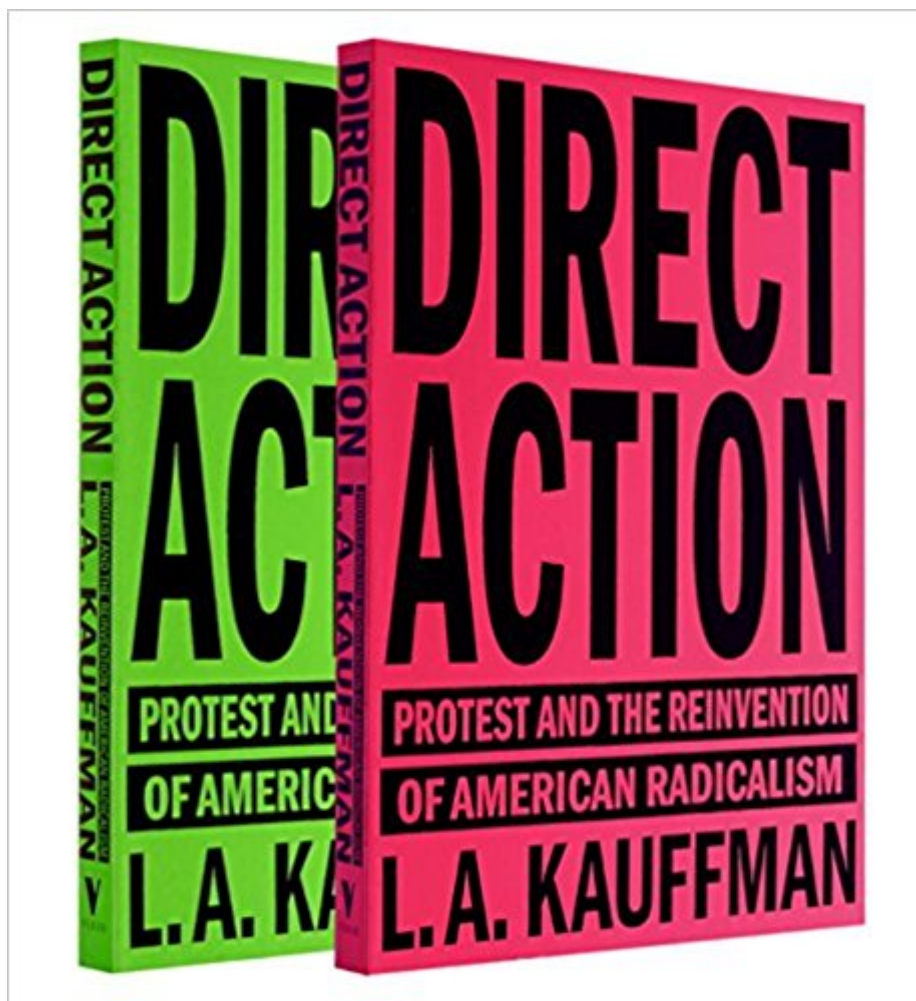


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Direct Action: Protest And The Reinvention Of American Radicalism



Synopsis

A longtime movement insider's powerful account of the origins of today's protest movements and what they can achieve now. As Americans take to the streets in record numbers to resist the presidency of Donald Trump, L.A. Kauffman's timely, trenchant history of protest offers unique insights into how past movements have won victories in times of crisis and backlash and how they can be most effective today. This deeply researched account, twenty-five years in the making, traces the evolution of disruptive protest since the Sixties to tell a larger story about the reshaping of the American left. Kauffman, a longtime grassroots organizer, examines how movements from ACT UP to Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter have used disruptive tactics to catalyze change despite long odds. Kauffman's lively and elegant history is propelled by hundreds of candid interviews conducted over a span of decades. *Direct Action* showcases the voices of key players in an array of movements: environmentalist, anti-nuclear, anti-apartheid, feminist, LGBTQ, anti-globalization, racial-justice, anti-war, and more across an era when American politics shifted to the right, and a constellation of decentralized issue- and identity-based movements supplanted the older ideal of a single, unified left. Now, as protest movements again take on a central and urgent political role, Kauffman's history offers both striking lessons for the current moment and an unparalleled overview of the landscape of recent activism. Written with nuance and humor, *Direct Action* is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the protest movements of our time. Product Alert: Book will have either a neon magenta cover or a neon green cover. Color is not selectable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“It is impossible to overstate the importance of this book. Chances are that even if you know something about the recent history of the left in America, you probably only know a few isolated parts. L.A. Kauffman has connected a vast field of dots to create an overview, and she has done so with dispatch, clarity, and elegance. Her book is essential reading for today, and will be for tomorrow.”

—Luc Sante, author of *The Other Paris*

“A movement tour de force. A must-read for those who have committed themselves to the life of the mind and of struggle.”

—Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, theologian and organizer

“As the new political reality settles in, resisters are asking a follow-up question: What else can I do? L.A. Kauffman’s new book *Direct Action* provides some answers.”

—Maya Singer, *Vogue*

“L.A. Kauffman may have the best-timed book release in years.”

—The Atlantic

“In *Direct Action*, L.A. Kauffman assesses movements of the past half century not as scattered uprisings but as phases of an overarching project. Our current radical-action culture, she thinks, really started in the early seventies, when a new generation of green shoots rose up from the ash.”

—Nathan Heller, *New Yorker*

“If direct action is a laboratory for political experimentation and innovation, as Kauffman argues in the introduction, then this is the lab report.”

—Vice

“You could not ask for a better guide through recent social movement history than L.A. Kauffman. A champion of radical causes with decades of experience on the front lines of civil disobedience, she chronicles the fascinating evolution of a set of protest tactics today’s activists take for granted. Kauffman has done a tremendous public service: by helping us better understand the past, in all its glory and folly, we can be more effective dissidents and rabble-rousers tomorrow. This startling, inspiring book is for anyone who has ever felt the urge to put their body on the line and shut things down for something they believe in.”

—Astra Taylor, author of *The People’s Platform* and co-founder of the Debt Collective

“The lurid circus sideshow has seized center ring in Washington, making direct action by progressive agitators all across the country more essential than ever. Don’t agonize, organize! How to do it? Kauffman’s powerful book, drawing on our people’s recent history, shows the way to create true justice for all.”

—Jim Hightower, author and activist

“Kauffman, an important and experienced organizer, senses in Occupy, Black Lives Matter and perhaps even the Bernie Sanders campaign new political oxygen, locally-based movements that cannot be effectively controlled or

easily squashed. — Paul Buhle, Socialism and Democracy

L.A. Kauffman has spent more than 30 years immersed in radical movements, as an organizer, strategist, journalist, and observer. Kauffman was the mobilizing coordinator for the massive anti-war marches of 2003-2004; she has been called a “virtuoso organizer” by journalist Scott Sherman for her role in saving community gardens and public libraries in New York City from developers. Her writings on grassroots activism and social movement history have been published in *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *n+1*, *The Baffler*, and many other outlets. She is currently involved in a range of initiatives to resist the Trump presidency.

The timing of L.A. Kauffman’s book, *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism*, is simply amazing! With all of the new reasons to protest following the election, this well-researched and extremely readable book offers an important historical perspective on all sorts of direct actions that are effective. The author provides insightful and interesting stories of how many seemingly disparate direct actions, from the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance to the anti-apartheid divestiture movement to Act Up to Black Lives Matter, are connected by the various strategies they use, people involved, and results. I highly recommend this book for activist readers young and old!

Love this book. Very insightful and well written

When you think of the word "radicalism", rarely do you hear people mention it in a positive or productive light. Why? Because the connotation of the word for many has less to do with 'opinions and behavior of people who favor extreme changes' and more to do with something bad replacing something that is seen as good. In the book *DIRECT ACTION* by L.A. Kauffman we are confronted with the questions when is change needed what are some willing to do in order to truly shake things up and move things in what is seen as a better direction and why is it so important that the objective of the "action" is clear. I really appreciated this book, mainly because it gave examples of when things needed to be changed or shook up and what some were willing to do in order to create a better result. The book also reminds us that as important as the goal is the way it is carried out, as it might do more harm than good if not handled correctly. Can change come about? Yes of course, but Kauffman reminds us that it's not an easy road at all. What it takes is organization, support and the right attitude about the end result. If you have those things you will be able to see not just things

evolve but change in the right direction for those involved.

Given the current political environment, this book should be required reading. Kauffman's recounting of methods in protests large and small provides great insight into what has worked in the past. The author's knowledge and experience in activism is impressive and inspiring.

I loved the way the author wove history, personal insights, anecdotes and humor together. Since this was the backdrop of my life, growing up in the 1970's and 1980's, I found it useful and satisfying to understand as an adult what was behind those confusing headlines, and also amazing to learn what I had missed - mainly because it had not been covered sympathetically or at all. She is hilarious and serious, and I recommend the book highly for the social history, sense of perspective, and inspiration to keep plugging away at problems.

The review on NPR led me to believe this was a book I could learn from. It wasn't.

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