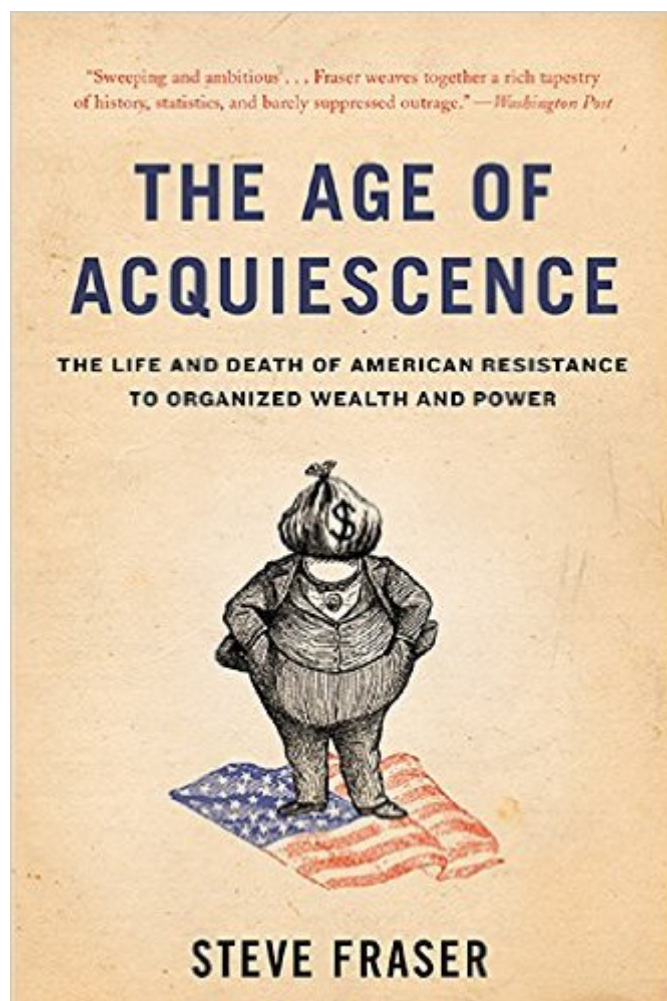


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# The Age Of Acquiescence: The Life And Death Of American Resistance To Organized Wealth And Power



## Synopsis

From the Revolution through the Civil Rights Movement, Americans mobilized against political, social, and economic privilege. But over the last half-century that political will has vanished. In *The Age of Acquiescence*, Steve Fraser explains why. His account of national transformation brilliantly examines the rise of American capitalism, the visionary attempts to protect the democratic commonwealth, and the great surrender to today's delusional fables of freedom and the politics of fear. Effervescent and razorsharp, *The Age of Acquiescence* is indispensable for understanding why we no longer fight for a more just society, and how we can revive the great American tradition of resistance in our own time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Age of Acquiescence* First, Steve Fraser has a word for us to learn: "Precariat." You can probably see the word from which this portmanteau derives, in turn riffing on "proletariat." Yes, we are the class of the precarious. So, why didn't more Americans join Occupy Wall Street a few years back, or start their own, similar movements? That's the thesis of this book. One of the greatest strengths of this book is Chapter 10, titled "Fables of Freedom: Brand X." Of course, branding and its adjunct, marketing, become fiercer by the day. But, as Fraser shows, their roots go back at least to the Keynesian consumerism which he marks as the real "settlement" of the New Deal and later. He's true about this in general "American mainstream" organized labor accepted the offer of a theoretically guaranteed piece of the capital pie on wages, health care

and other benefits, while agreeing to keep its collective nose out of corporate operations, unlike in a Germany, and to also play good soldiers abroad in undermining labor movements elsewhere that wouldn't salute the flag of high-octane American capitalism. And so, as the Sixties drew to a close, organized labor had trouble incorporating the Vietnam generation into its ranks. Fraser even shows that many strikes of the early Seventies were wildcats, without hierarchy's OK, and at times aimed at the hierarchy as much as the employer. "It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the new corporations emerging out of this bazaar of buying and selling were in a new business: the fabrication of companies to trade back and forth." — *The Age of Acquiescence*, p. 245.

Five stars means you "loved" the book? No, I really hated it because it's an exhaustive analysis of the total failure of this country as a representative democracy. However that's always been the "myth" anyway and it's now clearer than ever that the emperor has no clothes, that we have always been a Republic ruled by the rich until, as during the Depression, they screwed up so bad in their greed, inhumanity, unenlightenment, and corruption that the govt. did rebel in the form of FDR and the New Deal. However that just started up again the inexorable engine of power & wealth to start the whole dismal thing all over again resulting in the Great Recession which has raised hardly any opposition and people are suffering all over but kept at bay by the need to survive and buying into the nightmare and like of the American Dream and the mollification of the American Standard of Living that just keeps people stupid. This is a brilliantly written, exhausting, and totally depressing book and about 95% accurate in its analysis of the dismal state of affairs in this country. But not to worry hardly anyone's going to read it and nothing will change, imagine (only 20 reviews here) when they're needs to be 5000, you got to be kidding me, see what I mean? So what difference will it make? Although it's infuriated me but I was already infuriated, anyone with a grain of sense living in this culture would be or should be but who has the time and energy to read a book like this, they're all staring mindlessly into their cell phones or trying out their latest app, and that's exactly the problem, not enough people are angry enough, or they're angry at so many things, different groups are angry for different reasons, so much so that America is a CIRCUS.

3/26/2015 Does Fraser answer the question WHY we have had acquiescence in this second gilded age? I took a second look at the book to try to address this question. He seems to approach this indirectly, in fact, so indirectly that he doesn't get to the why at all. He has a lot of narrative description about what happened and the best chapter is #12 about the labor movement. This is not surprising since Fraser is a labor historian but given the purpose of the book, it is very disappointing

that he really says nothing about why in any direct and convincing way. I believe this relates to his weak economic analysis. He references many economic subjects but never in very analytical ways. He seems to be so enamored with his own writing skills that he neglects the purpose of pursuing a coherent argument about the why of what happened. What were the underlying forces that broke down working class solidarity and resistance to rising inequality? There is no clue in this book. There are hints but nothing ties them together and rhetorical flourishes simply distract from the possibility of forming a conclusion. He has no discussion of any substance of either the anti Vietnam War movement or the civil rights movement, the two most important progressive movements of the period. Paul Krugman in *Conscience of a Liberal* argues that race and Southern conservatism related to race are the major reasons for the lack of a significant Left in this country. Fraser does not seem to subscribe to that. Higher rates of unemployment, higher participation of women and immigrants must have weakened workers' bargaining power and unions. Fraser does not discuss that clearly. The Cold War and anti-communism have been cited by others as important but Fraser has little to say about these.

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