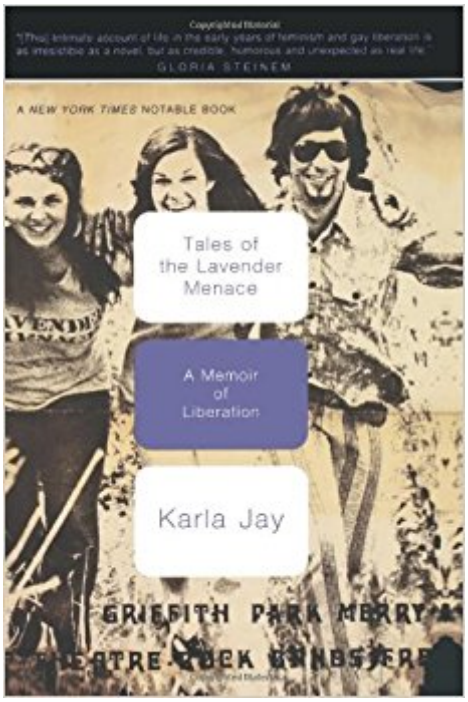
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Tales Of The Lavender Menace: A Memoir Of Liberation



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Synopsis

Karla Jay’s memoir of an age whose tumultuous social and political movements fundamentally reshaped American culture takes readers from her early days in the 1968 Columbia University student riots to her post-college involvement in New York radical women’s groups and the New York Gay Liberation Front. In Southern California in the early 70s, she continued in the battle for gay civil rights and helped to organize the takeover of "The Ladies’ Home Journal" and "ogle-in" - where women staked out Wall Street and whistled at the men.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lesbian scholar and activist Karla Jay’s memoir is rich in sexual detail and family trauma, but may be enjoyed best as a personal history of the turbulent era in which its author came of age. She brings fresh first-hand reports on some of the most pivotal events in the rise of the New Left--from the 1968 student riots at Columbia through the Stonewall riots to the 1970 feminist takeover of the Ladies’ Home Journal, which Jay describes as "without a doubt the most successful one-day action taken by the Women’s Liberation Movement." At times nostalgic, at other times clear-eyed and critical, Jay recounts her close involvement with both the Gay Liberation Front and radical feminist groups. In an atmosphere of increasing paranoia (Jay’s own phone was tapped, and there is evidence of FBI infiltration of the meetings she attended), she came to terms "with the likelihood that I would spend some part of my life in prison." Enlivened, here and there, by waspish recollections of Rita Mae Brown and other activists, Jay’s memoir takes its place beside Jan Clausen’s recent Apples and Oranges in tracking the inception of the gay rights movement and the glory days of

women’s lib. --Regina Marler --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Jay writes with wry humor and astute historical analysis in this memoir of her early days as a feminist and gay liberation activist. Currently the director of women’s and gender studies and professor of English at Pace University, she was raised in a middle-class Brooklyn home by an emotionally disturbed mother and a father who didn’t believe she was his daughter. Jay’s political life began in 1964 when she entered Barnard College; by 1969 she was a member of the Redstockings radical feminist collective and a leader in the newly formed Gay Liberation Front. With a canny eye for detail, she creates a vivid, realistic portrait of early 1970s feminist and sexual radicalism, from communal living to group sex to the watershed feminist protest in the offices of Ladies’ Home Journal. She charts how women’s and gay liberation were made possible by the black civil rights and antiwar movements and is careful not to idealize or whitewash complex, sometimes petty and factional, political struggles, while clearly expressing the joy and excitement she felt in the moment. Nor does she hesitate to contradict the memoirs of luminaries such as Rita Mae Brown and Betty Friedan, taking them to task for what she considers historical misrepresentation. Jay has turned out a political and personal memoir that succeeds in its aim to convey "what it was like to live then and what some of us did to forge social change." Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Oh, what a fun read! This is one person’s perspective, one person’s story. Karla Jay does not claim to speak for all feminists, and it is important that those willing to take the time and energy to write their experience do so -- it is in so doing that herstory manifests. We all have our own perspective on the time in which we live -- just note how many people yell at the TV while watching the news!I loved reading this book. It helped me to remember my own time during the 60s in which I missed out on much of the fun Ms. Jay experienced, but have certainly benefited from the work she and her cronies did. For that, I am truly grateful.I loved this book. It captures a sense of "being there" that too many books lack. Her history of family dysfunction is far from uncommon, given the numbers of traumatized children and that trauma, without treatment, tends to be intergenerational. It’s part of the story, certainly. After all, isn’t Patriarchal madness part and parcel of the history of the world?Karla Jay chose not to avail herself of therapy. On the other hand, she had access to Academia that escaped me, and it supports her today. I probably have more confusion around that. Interestingly enough, we both managed to live our lives without ever driving a car. I know there are

more of us out there!A great book, again, a fun read. Definitely a "Feminism 101" reader.

It felt as though the author was spreading herself too thin trying to tackle so many subjects, that none of the characters mentioned had any depth, and you couldn't get emotionally involved with the memoir because of her style. Interesting historically, but not for an in depth reading.

I was lucky enough to snag a pre-publication copy of Tales of the Lavender Menace. This is Karla Jay's affecting memoir of her transformational journey through the heady early years of the women's and gay liberation movements. Jay writes with courage, humor and complete candor, starting with her difficult family and her student life at Barnard College. Her first-hand experience with political protest and police brutality caused her to begin to question her original values. Consciousness-raising groups, lesbian dances, and a generous helping of sex complete the picture. She does not spare the reader any intimate details, as we learn how she literally re-invented herself, from a middle-class college student to a radical lesbian feminist. Not just a witness to, but also a participant in the rapidly changing history of the sixties and seventies, Jay takes the reader on a hilarious, whirlwind tour of the era. I was amazed at how much detail she remembers. For her, and for the reader, the personal really becomes the political. Buy (do not burn or steal) this very engrossing book; I couldn't put it down.

I found reading this book a little like looking through a high school yearbook. It has a certain "those were the days, my friends" feel to it. It's interesting mainly because the times were interesting, and it's fun to look back. But it left me wanting something more substantial.There are details galore about the titillating (sex, drugs, agents provocateurs, etc.). In contrast, there's very little of the emotional candor or 20/20 hindsight one might expect after the passing of thirty years.In the Epilogue Ms. Jay writes "It is hard for me to explain how the protagonist of this memoir emerged as a tenured full professor ... I am no longer the person at the center of this political autobiography, not even vaguely..."And that's exactly my problem with the book. Jay offers a chronicle of events -- large and small -- but there's little of the introspection and reflection I expect in a personal memoir.

I shared some, though by no means all, of the exciting times described by Karla Jay in her book. I am very proud to have worked with her on four books, and pleased to remain her friend. This shouldn't disqualify me from recommending this book to friends and stranger alike. The word "liberation" in the title of this book is key. Read this book to find out more about the pioneers of

feminism and gay liberation. You'll learn a lot and have a good time. I laughed out loud at some lines I've heard before, and some that were new to me. You'll surely enjoy Karla's humor, too, along with her honesty and compassion for her fellow human beings, male and female.

Karla Jay gives the most intimate-and politically interesting-view of the early years of radical feminism and gay liberation (roughly 1968-1971) that I've seen. Alongside the moving sketch of her own tragic family, the book gives a close-up view of some of the movements' then-key players, the political thinking of the time, and lots of 1960s-era sex. Very clear-eyed in its political assessments, giving both a sense of how seductive it was to be a 'radical' then-without any excuses for some of the era's whackier ideas. Essential and fabulous background for understanding today's lesbian and gay politics.

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