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Disaster Citizenship: Survivors, Solidarity, and Power in the Progressive Era (Working Class in American History)

Jacob A.C. Remes

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JACOB A. C. REMES




DISASTER CITIZENSHIP

SURVIVORS, SOLIDARITY, AND POWER
IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA



THE WORKING CLASS IN AMERICAN HISTORY 

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Jacob A.C. Remes : Disaster Citizenship: Survivors, Solidarity, and Power in the Progressive Era (Working Class in American History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Disaster Citizenship: Survivors, Solidarity, and Power in the Progressive Era (Working Class in American History):

A century ago, governments buoyed by Progressive Era beliefs began to assume greater responsibility for protecting and rescuing citizens. Yet the aftermath of two disasters in the United States-Canada borderlands--the Salem Fire of 1914 and the Halifax Explosion of 1917--saw working class survivors instead turn to friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family members for succor and aid. Both official and unofficial responses, meanwhile, showed how the United States and Canada were linked by experts, workers, and money. In *Disaster Citizenship*, Jacob A. C. Remes draws on histories of the Salem and Halifax events to explore the institutions--both formal and informal--that ordinary people relied upon in times of crisis. He explores patterns and traditions of self-help, informal order, and solidarity and details how people adapted these traditions when necessary. Yet, as he shows, these methods--though often quick and effective--remained illegible to reformers. Indeed, soldiers, social workers, and reformers wielding extraordinary emergency powers challenged these grassroots practices to impose progressive "solutions" on what they wrongly imagined to be a fractured social landscape. Innovative and engaging, *Disaster Citizenship* excavates the forgotten networks of solidarity and obligation in an earlier time while simultaneously suggesting new frameworks in the emerging field of critical disaster studies.

"In his meticulously researched and intelligently argued book, *Disaster Citizenship*, Jacob Remes has advanced and perfected the kind of deep social history pioneered by Herbert Gutman and Linda Gordon in their studies of working people's lives. More than any other historian writing in this tradition, Remes has revealed the power of the informal networks and solidarities that existed in poorer communities, particularly during disasters, and he has highlighted the ways agents of state intervention failed to understand these strengths and their democratic significance. Scholars will find in this excellent study a model of transnational history and other readers, especially officials in charge of disaster relief, will discover a new way of thinking about the people they are attempting to 'rescue.'"--James Green, author of *The Devil is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal Miners and their Battle for Freedom*

"Jacob A. C. Remes has shed new light over a broad terrain of Progressive Era historiography through this richly researched, sensitive, transnational comparison of the 1914 Salem, Massachusetts fire and the 1917 Halifax, Nova Scotia explosion."--*New England Quarterly*