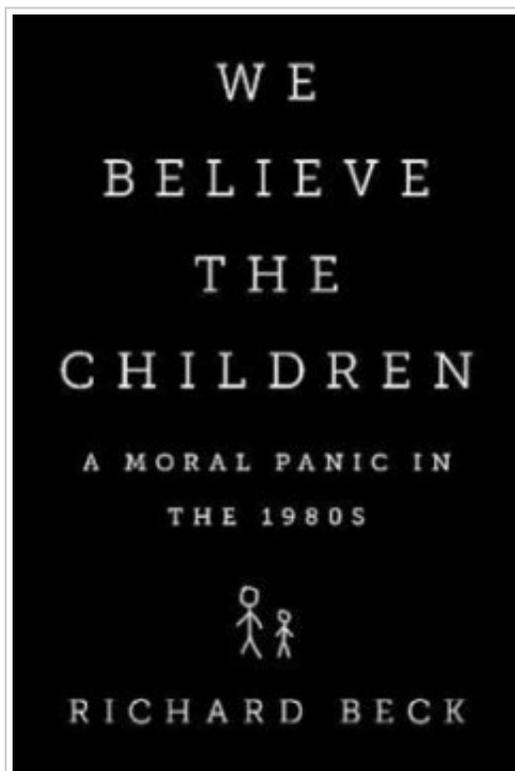


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We Believe the Children

A Moral Panic in the 1980s

by Richard Beck

Price: \$26.99(Hardcover)

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Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher:

A brilliant, disturbing portrait of the dawn of the culture wars, when America started to tear itself apart with doubts, wild allegations, and an unfounded fear for the safety of children.

During the 1980s in California, New Jersey, New York, Michigan, Massachusetts, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Ohio, and elsewhere, day care workers were arrested, charged, tried, and convicted of committing horrible sexual crimes against the children they cared for. These crimes, social workers and prosecutors said, had gone undetected for years, and they consisted of a brutality and sadism that defied all imagining. The dangers of babysitting services and day care centers became a national news media fixation. Of the many hundreds of people who were investigated in connection with day care and ritual abuse cases around the country, some 190 were formally charged...

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What We Say

A compelling, eye-opening and yes, jaw-droppingly funny look at the wave of court cases surrounding the day care child molestation panic epitomized by the McMartin case. You can't help laughing at some of the outrageous claims made during the "Satanic cults are molesting our children" hysteria that swept the US during the 1980s. It's sobering when you realize how seriously the patently absurd claims were taken: TV networks ran primetime specials (hello Geraldo Rivera!), newspapers and magazines ran endless wide-eyed exposes, activist groups were formed, laws were passed and lives were destroyed (and political careers made) as law enforcement went literally crazy, desperately looking for evidence -- any evidence -- of the baby killing, kiddie porn selling, child molesting, international conspiracies led by Satanic cults that were apparently present in towns large and small all across the country. In Beck's well-researched, fascinating work, he begins with the McMartin trial, the longest trial in US history and one which was launched on the fevered imaginations of a divorced mother with severe emotional issues. Many remember the name McMartin and Beck covers it with scrupulous care. But he also covers some of the dozens if not hundreds of similar cases that spread like wildflower. He shows the bullying and pressure that led very young children to offer incredible tales of absurd proportions, tales that changed so often you can't believe any case made it to court. Naturally, you wonder "How could this happen?" It seems like a bizarre, one-off phenomenon, a fever dream. But Beck shows precisely how it happened then, how it has happened before and how it will happen again. He brilliantly marshals information on changes in psychiatry, changes in law enforcement, changes in politics and changes in society that led to conditions in which these panics occurred. And while he offers a prescription at the very end, Beck's analysis leads you to understand it's almost inevitable some new panic unhinged from facts will strike again. -- Michael Giltz

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What Others Say

"Intellectually nimble... [Beck's] argument should prove far more enduring than all the lies and self-deceptions, so credulously believed in the 1980s, that this book does a devil of a job correcting." —**New York Times**

"[Thirty] years ago America was described as experiencing an 'epidemic' of sexual abuse in day care. Richard Beck, an editor at N+1, does a herculean job of investigating why this happened in his absorbing book *We Believe The Children*." —**Washington Post**

"In this sharp, sensitive debut [Beck] deftly examines all the forces that came together in this strange moment in our history." —**Boston Globe**

"Beck argues, convincingly, that the sexual revolution of the '60s and '70s provoked a conservative backlash in the '80s, fueling parental paranoia. The social and political conditions at the time set the stage for the most destructive moral panic since the Salem witch trials." —**The Daily Beast**

"N+1 editor Beck surveys the wild allegations, surreal trials, and sensational atmosphere of a child abuse panic that gripped the United States during the 1980s, while lucidly analyzing..."