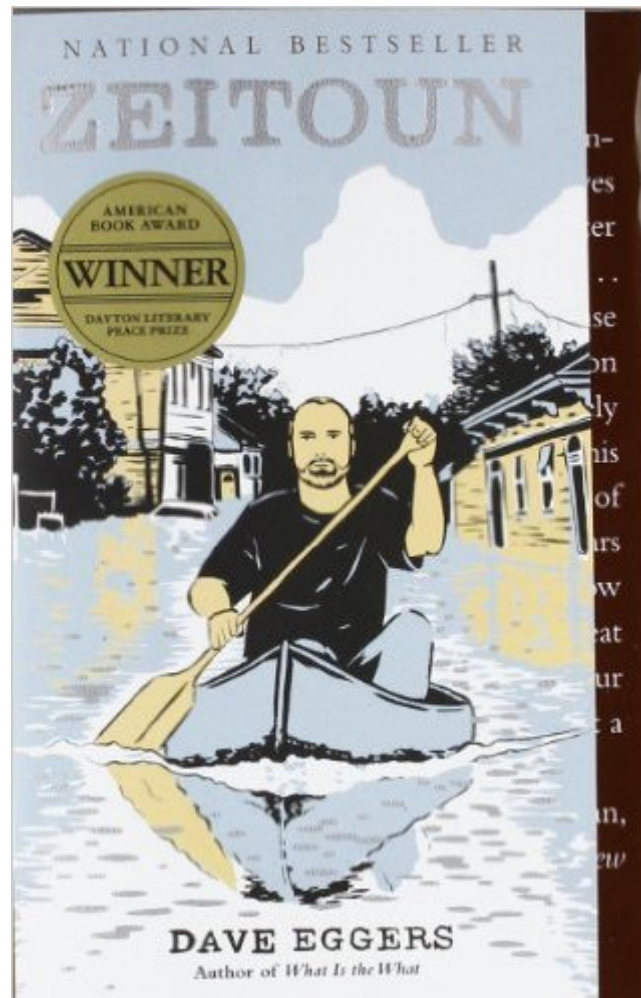


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Zeitoun



Synopsis

The true story of one family, caught between America's two biggest policy disasters: the war on terror and the response to Hurricane Katrina. Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun run a house-painting business in New Orleans. In August of 2005, as Hurricane Katrina approaches, Kathy evacuates with their four young children, leaving Zeitoun to watch over the business. In the days following the storm he travels the city by canoe, feeding abandoned animals and helping elderly neighbors. Then, on September 6th, police officers armed with M-16s arrest Zeitoun in his home. Told with eloquence and compassion, *Zeitoun* is a riveting account of one family's unthinkable struggle with forces beyond wind and water. A New York Times Notable Book, An Oprah Magazine Terrific Read of the Year, A Huffington Post Best Book of the Year, A New Yorker Favorite Book of the Year, A Chicago Tribune Favorite Nonfiction Book of the Year, A Kansas City Star Best Book of the Year, A San Francisco Chronicle Best Book of the Year, An Entertainment Weekly Best Book of the Decade

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Customer Reviews

First off, *Zeitoun* painted my house about 8 years ago so maybe I'm a little bit biased. I also think Dave Eggers is a great writer (doubly biased, perhaps). This story needs to be told to a large audience and Mr. Eggers is just the person to tell it. Maybe we can knock Eggers for the simplistic style he chose to write this book. On the other hand, this story frankly didn't need much artistic enhancement. It is shocking on its own accord and told in a very straightforward manner.

Appropriate for the material, I believe. Every American NEEDS to read this book. What we find in it is

an America that lost its core. It is truly shocking that no matter how bad things were in New Orleans immediately following Katrina (most reporting was inaccurate and sensationalized), we are still Americans with common beliefs in our system of rights. That these rights were tossed out the window is appalling. Mr. Zeitoun is a kind and gentle man. His signs are ubiquitous in New Orleans and he is a stranger to no one and well liked by all who have met him. That he could be mistreated is a crime and an outrage. That others were rounded up and treated even worse is one of the worst black eyes on our country. As I read this book I just kept saying out loud over and over again, "This cannot be America."

I had never read anything by Dave Eggers before, but his reputation set some pretty high expectations. I am a fan of narrative non-fiction and non-fiction, and enjoy books like "In Thin Air" or "The Colony." I picked up the book yesterday, and finished it this morning. It was spectacular. The writing style is perfect. It is not over the top with descriptions, but still makes you feel as if you are there, canoeing along in the streets of New Orleans. The subject matter is interesting, not just in a "can't stop watching this train wreck" sort of way, but because it ties together Hurricane Katrina and 9/11, two of the largest national events of the last decade. I never thought or knew about much beyond what I saw on TV regarding Katrina. This book thoroughly explores one story of one family, but manages to tell it from a perspective that everyone can understand. Much like the book *Three Cups of Tea* brought attention to the plight of women in Pakistan, I hope that *Zeitoun* will bring to light the problems and issues that still need attention in the US and in New Orleans. Eggers took the main event, Katrina, and by telling the Zeitouns' story, made it of human scale. I'm rambling--all I can say is, I think this book is worth a read for everyone. It isn't preachy--it is interesting. I learned a lot about many different subjects. I hope it ends up on the best seller list and stays there for a long time. Unlike some books that end up on the best seller lists, this one really deserves to be there.

Zeitoun is a creampuff to read and then there is a huge lump in your stomach where the content boils. I finished it in a couple of days, finishing on a cross-country plane flight and got off in a furious mood that didn't wear off until the end of a hot bath and a tall cold rum drink. Massive injustice has been done in New Orleans and this book follows it right down to the foundations. You won't read another word about Katrina without finding your thoughts completely reoriented. Let's hear it for the truth.

Dave Eggers's account of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, the first story in "*Zeitoun*," is

immensely readable. However, there has been a lot of well-written reportage on the storm and the Bush administration's botched handling of the rescue efforts. What's extraordinary about "Zeitoun" is the second, intersecting story, Eggers's narrative of the arrest and imprisonment---without charge, without representation, without even the ability to make a phone call--of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, Syrian immigrant, successful businessman, and American citizen. Incredibly, in "Zeitoun," the War on Terror merges with the Katrina disaster to produce a truly stunning example of what happens to xenophobia in the hands of petty officialdom. I've read several novels in which writers as diverse as Andres Bujac, Claire Messud, and, most recently, Lorrie Moore, attempt to incorporate the events of September 11, 2001. None of these writers is, to my mind, particularly convincing with this material. (Don DeLillo, in "Falling Man," comes closest, I think.) Eggers, on the other hand, a master of narrative nonfiction, simply (artfully) gets out of the way of his material, letting it speak for itself. And his depiction of the weeks after the storm, a period when Zeitoun's wife, Kathy, at first does not know whether he is dead or alive and then struggles with callous officials to free her unjustly detained husband, is powerful indeed. So too is the narrative thread that traces Zeitoun's family history. Most painful and revolting, however, are the scenes in the jail-cages of "Camp Greyhound," the temporary prison constructed outside the New Orleans bus station. As with the photos of Abu Ghraib, the emotion a reading of "Zeitoun" is mostly likely to evoke is shame. M. Feldman

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Zeitoun

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