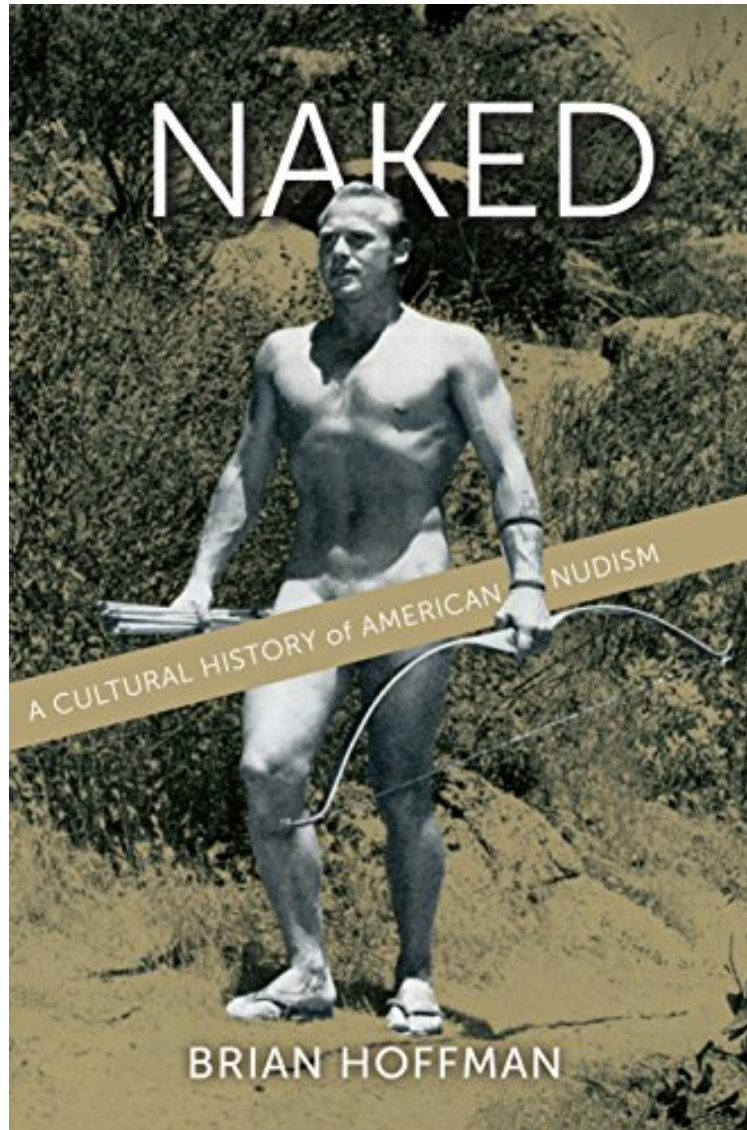


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## Naked: A Cultural History of American Nudism

*Brian Hoffman*

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**Brian Hoffman : Naked: A Cultural History of American Nudism** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Naked: A Cultural History of American Nudism:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A "New" Look at an Unorthodox Practice By T. H. Pine Naked is not your average beach read. Usually, you pick some light fare to pass your time reading while soaking up the sun (and in between swimming) at the shore. However, if youre a nudist, you may find this exactly what you want to read. First, let

me state that author Hoffman is an academic writing about nudism, so he approaches the book with the rigor required for the Academy (the notes, bibliography and index take up 66 pages of the book). Since getting involved in naturism, I've read a LOT on the subject, so if you're like me, some of what you'll read in *Naked* won't come as new news. However, author Hoffman's studied, honest approach pointing out the good alongside the not-so-good pulls you in. Happily, the writing isn't stilted or boring. Hey, it's not a pulse-pounding thriller, but if you focus just a little, you'll get into the book. What I found most interesting is how author Hoffman explains the Cultural History part of the book's title. Taking the movement from its earliest days, decade by decade, he illustrates the impact nudism has had on the societal mores of the time and I found it interesting (and informative) how that changed over the span of the Twentieth Century. Neither pro, nor con, author Hoffman lays it out and lets the chips fall where they may. In fact, his honesty won't allow him to extrapolate and he ends the book on sort of an open note, not putting a period on the end of the sentence, so to speak. His last sentence, "Once again nudists will have to negotiate the shifting boundaries of sexual expression in the United States," speaks volumes. *Naked* isn't an apologetic for nudism; it's a studied look at a phenomenon, not a slam, or praise, of the movement. Unlike much pro-nudist literature, he views the subject as the practice of sexual beings. As much as nudists chant that it's not about sex, as you read this book you realize that because we are sexual beings we cannot escape the fact that our sexuality often informs our nudism, taking into account the societal pressures around us. Ultimately, I found the book a fascinating read and applaud author Hoffman for providing, in layman's terms, a new look at a phenomenon so many consider weird or perverse, largely because of the misunderstanding and mystery surrounding the unorthodox practice. It should be a welcome addition to any nudist/naturist's library. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. It's hard to imagine a better account of the clothes-free phenomenon in the U.S. By D. C. Doran This title is precisely what it claims to be AND a first-rate read besides. It's hard to imagine a better account of the clothes-free phenomenon in the U.S.A. The author lays out the facts and figures as well as providing judicious interpretations of the most relevant events. Its scope includes most of the 20th century and into the new millennium. The illustrations placed among the essays are few but well-chosen. Following the main text are very helpful lists of sources (legal decisions, nature films, Congressional records, etc.) as well as a bibliography of articles, books and internet information. As promised, this is indeed a CULTURAL history. As such even non-nudists/naturists will find fascinating all the info about the time's headlines, folk wisdom, politics, economics, journalism, social psychology, anthropology and sociology of the nation at large. Everyone with a human body ought to treat themselves to this excellent offering. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Colin Williams A scholarly effort to explore an aspect of modern culture which is taboo for most people.

In 1929, a small group of men and women threw off their clothes and began to exercise in a New York City gymnasium, marking the start of the American nudist movement. While countless Americans had long enjoyed the pleasures of skinny dipping or nude sunbathing, nudists were the first to organize a movement around the idea that exposing the body corrected the ills of modern society and produced profound benefits for the body as well as the mind. Despite hostility and skepticism, American nudists enlisted the support of health enthusiasts, homemakers, sex radicals, and even ministers, and in the process, redefined what could be seen, experienced, and consumed in twentieth-century America.

Hoffman provides a comprehensive overview of the history of American nudism. Hoffman adeptly documents and defines legal practices that determined the methods by which nudism could be viewed, consumed, and experienced in American culture. Summing Up: Highly recommended. -Choice *Naked* provides a well-organized overview of nudism in twentieth-century America, documenting the contributions of nudist leaders, intellectuals, court battles, and milestones for the nudist community... Any number of scholars should take note of the book. -Journal of Social History "[T]his book provides a fresh angle to discussions concerning reproductive rights and sexual freedom that is not so often given attention in the curriculum as a historic part of sexual freedom or displays of gendered assumptions and prevailing attitudes concerning men and women and how they should or should not behave." -Metapsychology "Hoffman exposes the beginnings of public nudity as a legitimate movement in the United States, beginning in New York City all the way back in 1929, when groups of men began peeling off their restrictive clothing and exercising in the nude at the New York Gymnasium... Hoffman's book ably traces the ideological development of the American nudism movement from its health-and-fitness beginning to the more politically charged movement it became in the 1960s and 1970s, and on into the 1990s, when quasi-mainstreaming of recreational nudity began to surface. An original, well-researched study." -Kirkus s In focusing on how nudists reinforced the pastoral ideal to situate nakedness as morally, physically, and socially beneficial in modern America, Hoffman uses nudism to seamlessly join disparate historiographies of feminism and gay liberation, obscenity law, adult media, alternative medicine, and environmental tourism." -Journal of Popular Culture This book will be of much use to readers interested in the history of obscenity laws and controversies. -Bulletin of the History of Medicine "A compelling and provocative interpretation of the American nudist movement, *Naked* makes a significant contribution to the literature on the history of sexuality in the twentieth century United States. Shedding light on a heretofore unstudied sexual movement and the

political and legal response to it, Hoffmans focus on the rurality of U.S. nudism pushes us to rethink the urban-centered bias of most studies of the history of sexuality."-Andrea Friedman,author of Prurient Interests: Gender, Democracy, and Obscenity in New York City, 1909-1945Brian HoffmansNakedis a thorough and engaging account of many of the contests over social nakedness that took place in American society from the 1930s to the 1990s.-The Journal of American HistoryAbout the AuthorBrian Hoffman received his Ph.D. in History from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has taught at the University of California, San Francisco and Wesleyan University. He lives in Guilford, Connecticut.