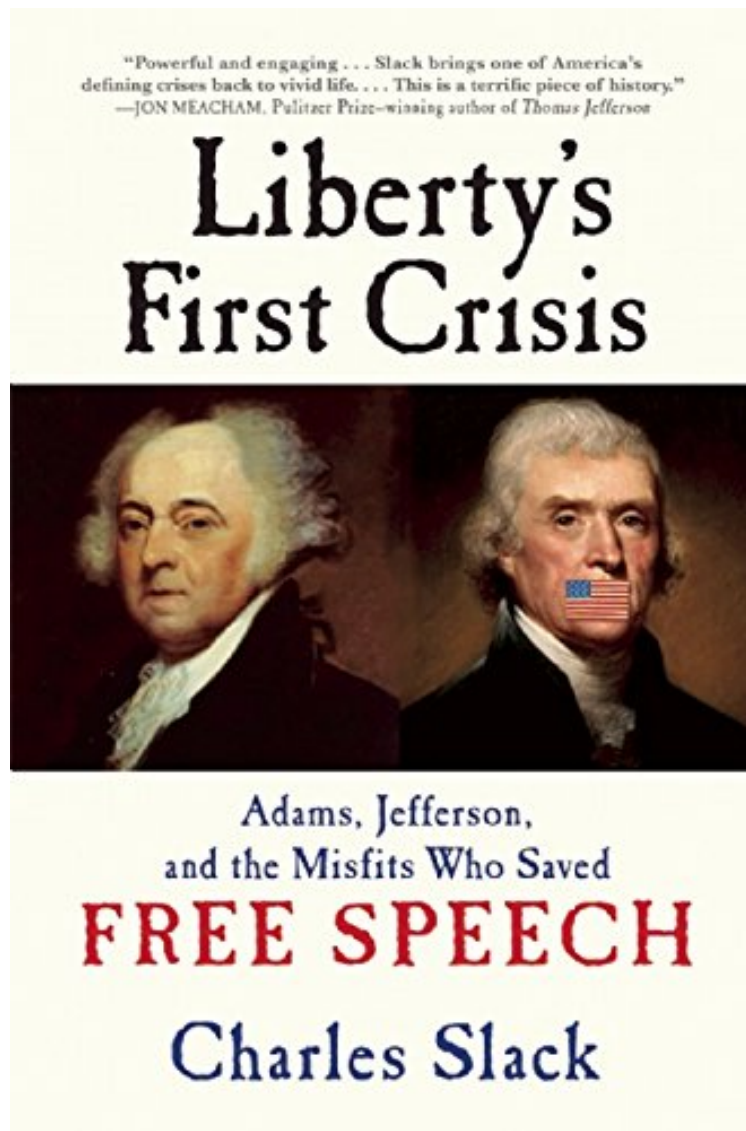


[FREE] Liberty's First Crisis: Adams, Jefferson, and the Misfits Who Saved Free Speech

Liberty's First Crisis: Adams, Jefferson, and the Misfits Who Saved Free Speech

Charles Slack

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#984703 in Books Slack Charles 2015-03-03Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.10 x 1.30 x 6.10l, .0 #File Name: 0802123422288 pagesLiberty s First Crisis Adams Jefferson and the Misfits Who Saved Free Speech | File size: 57.Mb

Charles Slack : Liberty's First Crisis: Adams, Jefferson, and the Misfits Who Saved Free Speech before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Liberty's First Crisis: Adams, Jefferson, and the Misfits Who Saved Free Speech:

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Word PowerBy VA DuckAuthor Charles Slack points out the

incredible value and political leverage of the First Amendment through the telling of six cases of prosecution under the Sedition Act of 1798. His message, or 'moral' is clear and poignant and delivered without political bias. Matthew Lyon - Irish immigrant, and elected member of the US House of Representatives attacked for being a loudmouth; David Brown a "drifter" persecuted in what was a kangaroo-court, presided over by a Supreme Court Justice; Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of the Founder and publisher of the newspaper "Aurora" destroyed for dissent; James Thompson Callender, a Scottish immigrant and editor of politically incendiary diatribes, driven to a watery death; Luther Baldwin a workingman of Trenton, NJ who one morning joked, "I don't care if they're firing through his arse." in reference to a cannon blast of honor for John Adams and was jailed; Thomas Cooper an intellectual, firebrand and later in life professor described by Adams as, "a learned ingenious scientific and talented madcap", are the protagonists, and victims. Each of these cases is characterized by the politically vengeful nature of the law's application, the petty animosity of its prosecution and the senseless pain it caused to the accused. This was a craven law intentionally written to expire at the end of a presidential term so that it could not be set on its own creators. In the end less than a dozen men were prosecuted, but enough to besmirch the constitution and help ruin the political party of its creators. Years later and too late, the congress decided the law, "unconstitutional, null, and void, passed under a mistaken exercise of undelegated power." It is hard to find heroes in this book besides the victims themselves: Secretary of State Pickering acts the petty head witch hunter, President Adams the self-righteous Prince of Philadelphia tries in vain to stand above the Bill he didn't veto (appearing a FAR cry from McCullough's sympathetic John Adams), Vice President Jefferson is reactionary to the point of suggested disunion with his over-the-top Kentucky Resolutions; even Madison the now out-of-office drafter of the first ten amendments appears at best - lame, and Justice Samuel Chase, appears in his traditional role as the man history loves to hate. (See Wm. H. Rehnquist's, Grand Inquests... for Chase's impeachment in 1805) The book is very well researched, especially well written in clear, vibrant prose and structured with the fast-paced anecdotes of the victims interwoven through its chronology. The last chapter concludes with lessons from that period, and for modern time reminds us that; the Declaration of Independence is our mission statement, the Constitution our user's manual and (with a phrase that Slack borrows from Ernest Hemingway) the the Bill of Rights ought to be our, "built-in, shock proof, sh_t detector"*. Recommended as good history, a good read and a good lesson to us all today who "recoil" at the "other" side of politics... regardless of which side you are on. _____* left incomplete through no delicacy of my own, but respectful of the "terms of agreement" for this page; substitute for underscore, the 3rd vowel of the English language, and blame Hemingway. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Critical reading on the first amendment By Customer This is a very readable book on the history of the first amendment and how it fared in the first half century of our country. The evolution of what free speech is and the lessons learned when power goes too far and fear has us giving up our rights. Also has a treatise on the first amendment during the rest of history up to today, and the dangers of letting power define free speech as anything offensive. Very helpful. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I am not an avid history buff By Donald Tilleman But I do like a good story well told. I did not quite know what to expect as this book was recommended by friends who fall a bit more to the right than I do. Many times, their recommendations feel like polemics to me and pushing a very certain point of view, so discovering the balanced manner in which the author framed the issue was a very pleasant surprise. I got totally immersed in the story and more than once wondered how could this happen here, after all where were the constitutional protections guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. The total disregard of those inherent rights, in respect to dissent was totally amazing to me and I wondered why in all my years at school this period was not covered in more detail. It seems to me that the educational system wants to sweep this bit of business under the carpet and pretend that it really can't happen here. The author's analysis of tying the alien and sedition acts to the social meme of political correctness was especially apt for me, as I find myself cringing under the yoke of "Thou shall not offend anyone, for any reason, at any cost!" I am of the school that legislating proper speech is a slippery slope that we as a people should not start down. Casting "hate speech" and "fighting words" legislation as tantamount to the alien and sedition acts of the early 19th century, is not a stretch at all. I, however have started to go out on a tangent, more to the point, the author did have a point of view to get across and although that was always under the surface, he did present the facts, through his historical documentation, in a balanced manner. The only suggestion I would have to make, would to be to include more of John Adams writings on this specific issue, as the author makes him appear weak-willed and driven by pure party police, a cartoonish character as it were, as I know Adams was a strong believer in the freedom and the American system. I would have liked to see a bit more of his thinking on this issue. In general that is my only criticism of the book, the "bad" guys were not as fully developed as the "heroes," and were presented in a single dimension. It is for that reason alone I give this book four stars instead of five, even though I found reading it a pleasure, rather than a chore.

When the United States government passed the Bill of Rights in 1791, its uncompromising protection of speech and of the press were unlike anything the world had ever seen before. But by 1798, the once-dazzling young republic of the United States was on the verge of collapse: partisanship gripped the weak federal government, British seizures threatened American goods and men on the high seas, and war with France seemed imminent as its own democratic

revolution deteriorated into terror. Suddenly, the First Amendment, which protected harsh commentary of the weak government, no longer seemed as practical. So that July, President John Adams and the Federalists in control of Congress passed an extreme piece of legislation that made criticism of the government and its leaders a crime punishable by heavy fines and jail time. In *Liberty's First Crisis*, writer Charles Slack tells the story of the 1798 Sedition Act, the crucial moment when high ideals met real-world politics and the country's future hung in the balance. From a loudmouth in a bar to a firebrand politician to Benjamin Franklin's own grandson, those victimized by the Sedition Act were as varied as the country's citizenry. But Americans refused to let their freedoms be so easily dismissed: they penned fiery editorials, signed petitions, and raised liberty poles, while Vice President Thomas Jefferson and James Madison drew up the infamous Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, arguing that the Federalist government had gone one step too far. *Liberty's First Crisis* vividly unfolds these pivotal events in the early life of the republic, as the Founding Fathers struggled to define America off the page and preserve the freedoms they had fought so hard to create.

Praise for *Liberty's First Crisis* Just a few years after the 1791 adoption of the First Amendment . . . the Federalists in the John Adams administration felt sufficiently threatened by their opposition that they passed the so-called Sedition Act of 1798, placing limits on scandalous and malicious writings or utterances against the government. In *Liberty's First Crisis* author Charles Slack revisits that nearly forgotten episode with storytelling flair and a keen eye for the latter-day implications of this early challenge to one of the country's bedrock principles. . . . In lucid English, Slack mounts a strong case against the contemporary inclination to legislate against speech that might offend.

Boston Globe Slack does more than just tell the story of the Sedition Act and the political crisis it created; he recasts the story as a chapter in a larger narrative about the philosophical right to be heard even when the opinion offered proves unpopular or even dangerous. . . . The lesson seems clear from Slack's well-written and well-researched work: Free speech and free expression don't have to be respected by society, but they must always be protected by law.

Dallas Morning News Artfully tells the story of the rise and eventual fall of the Sedition Act. . . . Slack's delightful narrative focuses not on Adams and Jefferson but on the vast and eccentric group of printers, orators, politicians, amateur philosophers and visionaries who fought against the Sedition Act. . . . [He] shows us how citizens . . . gave the First Amendment its defining role in American politics.

Minneapolis Star Tribune Slack reminds us that the free speech we too often take for granted is in constant jeopardy, most often from those who see the forced silence of others as an acceptable path to equity, tranquility and security.

Richmond Times-Dispatch A real gripping thriller . . . Vibrant, exciting.

Ralph Nader, Ralph Nader Radio Hour Among its other virtues, *Liberty's First Crisis* presents several healthy reminders that elected officials have always been capable of uncivilized behavior toward their colleagues . . . Slack has written a hearty work of history that is entertaining, educational, and serious about its topic without being so much so in tone.

Arts Fuse For those who think that partisan conflict is a cable-driven 21st-century phenomenon, Charles Slack has written a powerful and engaging narrative that puts things in perspective. By plunging back into the 1790s, Slack brings one of America's defining crises back to vivid life, reminding us that democracy has always been the tenderest of flowers. This is a terrific piece of history.

Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Thomas Jefferson* Fantastic characters, vibrant storytelling and a hugely important message for our time. When I reached the last page, I wanted to stand up and applaud. Slack's heroes took up residence in my imagination, where I'm sure they'll remain. I will be recommending this book far and wide.

William Powers, New York Times bestselling author of *Hamlets* Blackberry Charles Slack has taken a half-forgotten chapter in American history and made it into a legal thriller with profound implications for our own time. With meticulous research and compelling prose, Slack's dramatic narrative, ranging from the halls of Congress to fetid jail cells, reveals how the powerful sought to throttle one of our most cherished freedoms. He also warns that the threat persists. From the Founding to this day, liberty is a fragile thing indeed.

Henry Wiencek, award-winning author of *Master of the Mountain: Thomas Jefferson and His Slaves* Slack engagingly reveals how the Federalist attack on the First Amendment almost brought down the Republic. . . . An illuminating book of American history.

Kirkus's (starred review) A lively account of a relatively unknown episode in American history. . . . Slack's book will appeal to history lovers of all kinds.

Library Journal Imagine a novel in which a band of hard-drinking, street-fighting, badass rebels take on the rulers of a powerful new empire, risking everything in a struggle that will determine the fate of American freedom. Then imagine that it's not a work of fiction but the history of the early United States and that the villains attempting to impose a tyrannical regime on Americans were some of our greatest national heroes. Present this riveting, little-known, but painfully relevant story in the prose of a master storyteller and you have Charles Slack's *Liberty's First Crisis*.

Thaddeus Russell, author of *A Renegade History of the United State* This is a story about the true meaning of freedom, how America's founding fathers wrestled over it, and how it nearly slipped through their (and our) grasp. Deeply researched and cogently analyzed, Charles Slack's *Liberty's First Crisis* molds the dramatic events swirling around the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 into a mesmerizing, uniquely American tale complete with fistfights, insults, canings, and rigged courts. Most importantly, it underscores the high-minded reasoning, the courage, the sacrifice needed to achieve that most fleeting and invaluable of human conditions: freedom. Slack has created an indelible story. To read it is to better understand why America is still a

concept worth loving and fighting for. I highly recommend it. Dean King, nationally bestselling author of *Skeletons on the Zahara* and *The Feud* Charles Slack plunged me right into the cauldron of the 1790s, when politics was personal, personalities were larger than life, the First Amendment was an untested idea, and no one knew what kind of place the United States might turn out to be. *Liberty's First Crisis* is like being there, and it makes me marvel anew at the miracle that Americans wrought. Jonathan Rauch, senior fellow, The Brookings Institution and author of *Kindly Inquisitors* A reminder of the fragility of freedom of speech . . . A rousing testimonial to the virtues of freedom. . . . [Slack] has produced a rollicking story of politics, journalism and what it means to be a free people. John Bicknell, *Roll Call After Dark* The whole story [of the Sedition Act] is beautifully laid out in Charles Slack's terrific new book, a five star opus that you just can't put down Edd Doerr, *Secular Perspectives*