



## **City of Dust: Illness, Arrogance, and 9/11**

*Anthony DePalma*

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On 9/11, the destruction of the World Trade Center unleashed a vortex of dust and ash that blotted out the sun--and has distorted science, medicine, and public policy ever since.

The likely dangers of 9/11's massive dust cloud were evident from the beginning, yet thousands chose not to see, even as the sickening results of exposure became increasingly difficult to ignore. Why? And why have years of politics and courtroom maneuvers delayed justice for those who gave their all when the need was greatest? Anthony DePalma goes beyond his front-page coverage of ground zero in *The New York Times*, offering the first full accounting of one of the gravest environmental catastrophes in U.S. history. He separates myth from reality...reveals the decisions that destroyed public trust...shares powerful, never-before-told stories of the victims and those who've tried to help them...and helps us make sure this never happens again.

- **They said the air was safe.**

The health myths and realities of 9/11--and the decade of suspicion and fear that followed.

- **"This smells different. It tastes different."**

The firefighters who couldn't breathe, and the doctors who treated them.

- **Sound bites, arrogance, scorn, and invective.**

New Yorkers versus the political and legal system.

- **A comprehensive look at what lies ahead.**

The ongoing impact for the thousands who were directly affected, and lessons for the future.

## City of Dust: Illness, Arrogance, and 9/11 Details

Date : Published August 23rd 2010 by FT Press (first published May 12th 2010)

ISBN : 9780131385665

Author : Anthony DePalma

Format : Hardcover 352 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Environment

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## **From Reader Review City of Dust: Illness, Arrogance, and 9/11 for online ebook**

### **Kathryn says**

Just couldn't keep reading this. Just too dry and boring! Going to try reading "Escape from the World Trade Center", which is by a 9/11 survivor. Luckily, this was a free book, so nothing lost, except for a couple hours of reading time.

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### **Kristin Little says**

Can I give it two and 1/2 stars? It wasn't terrible... It was just boring. The topic had lots of potential... especially coming up on the 10 year anniversary of 9/11, but just became very repetitive. I am usually a one-book, slog-through-until-you're-done reader, but this book kept being put aside for other, more interesting books. It took me more than 4 months to make it all the way through. I just couldn't bring myself to read it. The author basically looked at the data from several different angles... which sounds like it might be interesting, but (as I mentioned before) was incredibly repetitive. I was hoping for another journalist-written expose on how the government failed its people along the lines of "And the Band Played On" (which is GREAT), but I was disappointed. If you can't even create an emotional response when you're writing about 9/11, you're doing something wrong.

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### **Lauren Sipe says**

Very well written. A bit lengthy but the afterclap of the dust of 9/11 is an ongoing process that requires significant documentation. I learned a lot of details of 9/11 I didn't know before. This book should be a must-read added to the list of books about 9/11.

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### **Michael says**

This book takes a look at the impact of the dust that was created by the collapse of the WTC on 9/11. Interesting aspect is medical program created to assist firefighters/police in comparison to those who worked/lived in the area of WTC. Explores how at first the response was on recovery and then changed to clean-up and rebuilding. It seems change to focus of safety of workers was not as apparent. Confusion as Feds declared the air safe and thus many did not use air filters that could have spared many from health problems. Explored ethics, legal, and medical/scientific aspects of the aftermath.

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### **Jack says**

A comprehensive account of the environmental consequences of 9/11. Makes one realise that risk assessment has its limitations in the face of such an unprecedented catastrophe. Looks at the role played by the media,

the politicians and the lawyers in influencing the response.

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### **Michael Karol says**

Another sad book, full of ironies. We are beginning to experience, and by "we" I mean as a society, not me or you necessarily, but the first responders to 9/11, the awful price they and the city of New York have paid and will pay in terms of illness and more death, because precautions weren't taken in the face of the unfathomable emergency of losing the World Trade Center buildings and the people trapped inside. A must-read for anyone who cares about humanity (all of us, right?), but by no means an easy read, and occasionally a bit too deep on the science end of things. But not to be missed.

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### **Christopher Rex says**

The book itself is good. The author, in my opinion, does a good job of remaining objective about the battle over diseases "allegedly" caused by the WTC dust on 9-11 (and after). He certainly hits the mark that it is a horribly subjective situation of "best guesses" and "probabilities" which is terrain in which, generally, lawyers thrive at the expense of others. The legal battles surrounding the WTC dust and its link to disease is no exception. In this sense, I felt the book was very good, though disheartening in the sense that the only ones who truly benefit at the end of the day are the lawyers. And it is disheartening to see the greed that surrounded this tragedy on all sides.

It is in other areas that the author falls short. Particularly in his assessment of the "arrogance" to re-open lower Manhattan and give a perception of "America Un-Bowed" and return NYC & the country to normal. It's not that he doesn't touch on the topic, he does. The problem is, he relates it far to much to simple "arrogance" and "ego" and barely touches on the idea that it was (in my opinion) greed - particularly in the form of a re-opened Wall St. He barely scrapes the surface of this idea, which seems a bit naive to me. The argument that links the desire to re-open as quickly as possible to raw "patriotism" and "ego" falls flat. We wanted (needed?) Wall St. open and that's exactly what we did. Giving the impression that "everything's fine" was critical to that happening. In the end, all the other problems that emerge (no real enforcement of regulations, not enough masks, no real concern for safety etc.) are linked to that critical decision.

The other area in where the author falls short, to the point of being annoying is ignoring the "rush to re-open" and its link to the desire to remove the evidence as quickly as possible and to shape the memory of 9-11 in one particular mode only. The US rushed to judgement on the guilt of Bin Laden and rushed to judgement on the cause of collapse (both with almost no reliable evidence to support the government's conclusions), hence, it makes perfect sense they would rush to clean-up the mess and store it in a government-shaped memory built on the propaganda of the "heroic firefighter" which ignores all sorts of critical questions - the unnecessary risks the responders, citizens and businesses in lower Manhattan faced w/ the dust among them.

What is particularly annoying is that the author makes absolutely no discussion of WHY the WTC turned to dust in the first place, when that seems a virtually impossibility given that (according to the Official Theory) the only forces at work were jet fuel and gravity - or in the case of WTC 7, gravity and office fires. This neglect on the part of the author would be excusable if the author didn't throw in little quips supporting the Official Theory throughout the book. Either ignore this part of the discussion, or include it. The author frequently uses terms like "implode" and makes reference to the fact that the fires (oddly) burned for months

on end, but never goes any further down that road to question how or why that was the case

He even included a passage which said the WTC looked like "it had been put through a gigantic wood-chipper, then those remnants passed through a coffee-grinder, were thrown in a gigantic mortar and smashed with a pestle until all that was left were indistinguishable particles, a powder of the past"

Gravity can do all of that?

Again, this would be forgivable if the author simply stayed to the point of his book - the dust and its health effects - and didn't venture into supporting the Official Theory here and there throughout. Either examine the issue of HOW the WTC turned to dust, or don't.

At the end of the day, more and more people who breathed the WTC dust in the hours, days, weeks or even months following 9-11 will fall ill with odd diseases and as time passes it will become harder and harder to prove in a court of law. The book clearly demonstrates that the courts are not always the best place to seek justice and that science doesn't have all the answers.

The nagging question that remains for a lot of those that became ill and found it hard to prove it was the WTC dust remains - "what else could it be?" When a 220lb 30-something year old in the prime of their life and health was fine before 9-11, works the pile on (or after) 9-11 and then suddenly drops to 150lbs, can't walk up a flight of stairs, gets cancer and dies, it is hard not to ask that question - even if the science can't prove it 100%.

Worth reading.

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### **Kathy says**

The author does a great job putting this all together. It was of course, a sad account of all that transpired after the attacks on 9/11. I felt sorry for those running for their lives as the collapse of the towers surrounded them in an environment for which they could barely breathe. For the first responders, who in their heroic efforts to recover injured people, found none. I also never thought about all the people who lived in the surrounding areas for which their homes/offices/apartments/schools were covered in the toxic dust that permeated through windows, doors, ventilation, etc., making them unable to live there until cleaned up. Then the workers hired to clean up didn't take precautions (didn't really know they had to) and inhaled all the dust as well. Mistakes made, fingers pointed, and unfortunately, many who got sick, some already dead and untold how many more will succumb to the toxic mess of the dust and the "pile".

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### **Julie says**

What the government did wrong and did right at the time of the attacks. Health problems faced by the first responders and residents of the area. The legal battles to prove cause and effect. In our rush to prove to the world that nothing can break us; that you may knock us down but we'll be back on our feet tomorrow, neither the government nor the workers did anyone any favors.

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## **Tom Hansen says**

A definite buy if you are interested in the details of the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath!

This book chronicles the lasting effects of the dust cloud that surged over Manhattan on 9/11 when the towers came down. The dust was a mixture of mercury vapor from the thousands of fluorescent tubes, gasses from the improperly burning jet fuel, asbestos, pulverized concrete dust from the structure itself, as well as untold hundreds of other volatile chemicals made from the burning computers, monitors, carpeting, clothing, and bodies that made up the mess at Ground Zero.

This dust permeated buildings, schools, hallways, ductwork, and worked its way deep into the lungs of those that were there that day, pushing high levels of carcinogenic chemicals and concrete dust deep into their bodies. Those that worked at Ground Zero over the next three months had to deal with slowly burning jet fuel deep underground and the toxic off-gassing that came with it, breathing in even more chemicals as they worked tirelessly to rescue people and help rebuild our nation.

Not mentioned much outside of New York City, this book offers a very detailed look into the lives that have been affected by the dust cloud. It chronicles the sense of dread that hung over everyone that was there when the towers came down, the feeling of being blind when the dust clouds first hit, and the panic that even the governmental agencies felt as they took stock of the situation.

It was an unprecedented event that no one in government or business had properly prepared for. The sheer number of things that had gone wrong stupefied all the officials who were being pressured for immediate response and to come together with one resolute face to present to the public.

Our nation, led by Bush's presidency, took a hard-line stance against the terrorists and pushed for rebuilding and recovery. We presented a strong, united front. We pushed for recovery speed over safety, strength over licking our wounds. This decision had lasting effects on those people who risked, and are now giving their lives, to help sort through the rubble.

A lot of mistakes were made, from all sides. We had never had an attack, or fought a fire like this before. The EPA did not have data on what health risks there would be for the thousands of contractors, firemen, police, and others who spent months cleaning up Ground Zero. We all hope the information gathered will never have to be used again.

My hats off to the author who presented many sides to the issue, from the businesses affected, the doctors who ran the free clinics, lawyers who sued years later, students whose high school was shut down due to dust invasion, the firemen and police officers who felt unpatriotic wearing respirators while sifting through rubble, and the government agencies whose own emergency response area had been destroyed in the attacks.

I think everyone should read this book. I for one am fascinated with 9/11 history, and this book provides a deep look into an ongoing facet of the attacks that still haunts America today.

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## **Tamara says**

As a New Yorker who spent half her life living in the great city of New York, I knew this was a book I

would appreciate reading. As the tenth anniversary of the World Trade Center attack is sadly approaching I thought this book would be very fitting. Anthony DePalma's "City of Dust" gives the reader a mind opening look at the history of the ground zero site through a public health and safety approach. For anyone with an interest in this issue, you will finish this book feeling extremely informed. There were so many things that I was not aware of that this book clearly explained. For years after the attacks, the residual effects of the dust and smoke caused numerous illnesses and at times deaths. I found this book to be extremely informational and sad in regards to how things could have been better handled and concerned about how things may not be handled much differently as they were 10 years ago, should G-d forbid we get attacked again. This is a very eye opening book and one that I would recommend.

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### **Elaine says**

By denying us the truth, our government protects itself fiscally, while keeping at a distance, keeping themselves safe physically. We the people should not have believed them when told that the dust from the Twin Towers was safe to breathe. I suppose though that we wanted to believe the lie rather than believe that our government could so blatantly lie so as to protect themselves while standing back and letting others do the work to recover those left in the debris, and letting them be the ones getting sick in the process.

They then continue the lie by denying that the resultant coughs and other asbestos-related sicknesses had anything to do with the ubiquitous dust. On top of that, the officials (OSHA, for one) was getting on the workers' cases for not wearing their dust masks. Why bother if the air was considered safe? Who's fooling who?

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### **Katy says**

Great background into one of the lesser known impacts of 9/11 and the case being made for people suffering health problems as a result of the dust.

A bit dry and sciencty in parts, which makes it a dense read, but lots of information and details.

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### **Allison says**

City of Dust is a great look at how the truthiness of 9/11's environmental/public health disaster is shaped by stakeholders: scientists, politicians, media, victims/survivors, and the general public. Depalma provides a different way of looking at this national tragedy, especially in light of the 2011 controversy of NYC barring certain first responders from attending the 10-year anniversary event. This is a thoughtful, investigative portrayal of imperfect people in an imperfect system.

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## **Jimmie says**

Poignant story of the 9-11 workers involved in the rescue and clean up and the New Yorkers who were exposed to the deadly dust that coated the city. The dust contained everything from asbestos and lead to glass and bone fragments. It wasn't long before many had a hacking cough and were being diagnosed with deadly cancers and auto immune diseases. Unfortunately, the death count if that awful day continues to rise as these people are being recognized as being victims of that day.

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