

"Providing a gripping historical account of hunger strikes over the past century, Nayan Shah sheds light on the paradox of using the frailty of the human body as a political weapon, showing how strikers slowly kill themselves in order to secure a series of rights and political goals. *Refusal to Eat* is as riveting as it is illuminating." **NEVE GORDON**, coauthor of *Human Shields: A History of People in the Line of Fire*

"This sweeping account manages to be both a total history and a primer for contemporary activism. Shah materializes the agony of embodied suffering and the global consequences of the refusal to eat in a truly devastating, inspiring read." **ANTOINETTE BURTON**, author of *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism*

"In this global study of the use of the hunger strike over the course of the twentieth century, Shah offers an affecting analysis of an embodied political weapon of last resort and a meditation on the nature of modern state and carceral power and resistance to it." **REGINA KUNZEL**, author of *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality*

"A true tour de force. Shah's writing is clear and accessible and simultaneously engages with high-level critical discourse; it invites the reader, no matter one's background, into a serious and sustained study of hunger striking and the marginalized subjects who practice it." **PATRICK ANDERSON**, author of *So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance, and the Morbidity of Resistance*

THE POWER OF THE HUNGER STRIKE LIES IN ITS

utter simplicity. The ability to choose to forgo eating is universally accessible, even to those living under conditions of maximal constraint. By choosing to hunger strike, a prisoner wields a last-resort personal power that communicates viscerally, undeniably—especially when broadcast over prison barricades, through media, and to movements outside.

In this ambitious but concise book, Nayan Shah observes how hunger striking stretches and recasts to turn a personal agony into a collective social anguish in conflicts and contexts around the world. From suffragettes in Britain and the US in the early twentieth century to Irish political prisoners, Bengali prisoners, and detainees at post-9/11 Guantánamo Bay; from Japanese Americans in US internment camps to conscientious objectors in the 1960s; from South Africans fighting apartheid to asylum seekers in Australia and Papua New Guinea, Shah shows the importance of context for each case and the interventions the protesters faced. *Refusal to Eat* revolves around a core of moral, practical, and political questions that hunger strikers raise, investigating what it takes to resist and oppose state power.



NAYAN SHAH is Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity and History at the University of Southern California and author of *Contagious Divides* and *Stranger Intimacy*.