



negative feelings often falls flat as she merely suggests “don’t let your digital persona overwhelm you” or to “cut yourself some slack” (56–57).

Omerod discusses how social networking sites have become a source of constant critique of how others live their lives—one of the most targeted groups is mothers. Social media has turned a watchful eye on how women choose to parent their children, whether it be using formula instead of breastfeeding or being a working or stay-at-home mom—social media users feel inclined to share their opinion. There is also constant comment and expectation on quickly losing baby weight and becoming fit. This pressure is unhealthy, both mentally and physically. New moms are under the extreme stress of taking care of an infant and often dealing with symptoms of postpartum depression. While social media does provide a community for new moms to share and connect, it doesn’t outweigh the images of stick-thin moms months after giving birth or silence the constant stream of “advice” from “friends.” Again, Omerod’s advice for dealing with this intrusiveness falls flat. She suggests you simply give yourself some space and ignore the haters.

Social media is now firmly centered not only in our social lives but our financial lives as well. Our posts are centered around filtered versions of ourselves, including how we spend our money. Images of high-end meals and cocktails or run-throughs of our new shopping spree or exotic vacations make users seem relevant and as if everyone around us is living a life of luxury. It can put added financial stress on users to seem up-to-date when they are only scraping by financially. These stressors contribute to the false narrative we present through our posts; often these vacations or work trips are stressful and not the pleasurable time we post about (179). The other side is influencers, who are being paid to post ads. Many celebrities or celebrity bloggers can make all of their income from endorsing products on Instagram. This turns into its own debacle of pay based on your follower counts.

While others are seemingly jet-setting around the world for their glamorous jobs, those of us left behind in the cubicle are left to follow online (190). The temptation to check your phone repeatedly throughout the work day greatly affects workplace performance. Taking frequent breaks from work to check social media accounts rewires our brains’ functioning and thus creates a big issue with attention deficit. If we are constantly rewarding ourselves with little media breaks we are interrupting our workflow and harming our attention span. Soon we start reaching for the phone and taking these quick breaks without even noticing it.

We have all noticed the infiltration of political opinions on media feeds. Social media has offered the opportunity to share opinions with a safe distance between us and our followers. This has led to people being much more open and vocal about political beliefs, but at the same time much more closed-minded and hostile to opposing beliefs. As we learned with this past election, users seem very willing to post articles that align with their own beliefs without checking the validity of the source. The spread of fake news is as alarming as the people who believe it even when confronted with its faults. Facebook is a free app; it makes its money from selling user data. So it’s no surprise that they cashed in on the windfall of the 2016 election, selling data and posting user targeted ads regardless of the intent behind the ad. After the election, many American Facebook users admitted that the Facebook ads and articles they were shown influenced their voting decisions.

It is important to note that Omerod herself is an Instagram fashion blogger who builds her career on her social media presence, and while she offers insightful thoughts she ultimately gives no concrete solutions for today’s problems with social media. *Why Social Media Is Ruining Your Life* is easily digestible for all readers and suitable for anyone with a surface interest in social media.

We the People: A Progressive Reading of the Constitution for the Twenty-First Century

Author _ Erwin Chemerinsky

Publisher _ Picador, 2018. 320 pp. Paperback. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-1-2501-6600-5.

Reviewer _ Ross Allan Sempek, Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee

With government machinations, scandals, and conflict bombarding our American consciousness, it’s easy to overlook the core of our country’s identity: the US

Constitution. The first three words of this dearly regarded text remind us that we are the constituents who fulfill the ideals of this document. We the People are the progressive



catalyst this country needs to realize the lofty ideals of our Constitution.

In the eponymous book, *We the People*, Erwin Chemerinsky uses the US Constitution's preamble to inform an interpretation of the historical document with the hopes that it will guide progressives in future eras. For this reviewer, *We the People* is an understated yet powerful introduction to a legal treatise. It is at once inclusive and unifying; diverse and galvanizing. And its humanistic overtones inspire one of the few preambles that omits a supreme deity. Indeed, it deserves recognition beyond that of a perfunctory recitation for high school civics students. *We the People* is not just a title, it's a legal philosophy that underlies his core argument: the Constitution should work for everyone, and ensuring such an equitable outcome requires us to reform how we use the Constitution. While wielding the broad scope of the preamble he tackles many issues including abortion, police accountability, gerrymandering, privacy, and gun control, among others.

So, if you intuited that "progressive" reads "liberal," then you'd be right. Chemerinsky minces no words in this regard, and calls out Republicans for "using [the] constitution to advance their own agenda." And in the very first paragraph, he speculates that President Trump's Supreme Court picks will erode progressive values. He equitably decries Democrats in some of his arguments, but these are few in comparison to his examples of the far right's political priorities. But *We the People* isn't merely a platform to air grievances; it promulgates a liberal framework for the Constitution. This progressive reading is about "empowering varying levels of government" in order to uphold the magnanimous values of the Constitution and serve all US residents.

But government services are often controversial. The author notes that conservatives' beef with entitlement programs is that the Constitution was written as a document of negative liberties; it spells out what the government cannot do. Chemerinsky disagrees here, and in a cogent argument, shows that you can simply take these negative liberties and restate them in progressive-speak as government obligations. When you focus on what the government could and should be doing for its citizens, then everyone has the potential to benefit from the Constitution.

Indeed, JFK's famous plea, "Ask not what your country can do for you . . ." does not apply here. The people already work for the government by virtue of being taxed. So it's only fair that we ask what our country can do for us.

From a formal standpoint, *We The People* is an enjoyable read due to its impeccable design. Its structure allows

for a smooth progression of ideas all while captivating the reader with modern anecdotes and historical precedents. Chemerinsky is always on topic, and he writes about dense concepts in a way that can be grasped by the layperson. An intimidating topic becomes approachable, and his legal philosophy becomes digestible. But, unfortunately, this seamless feat frays where quotations' differing tones grate against his breezy, modern prose. He does his best to contextualize some of the more difficult passages, but it can still be challenging for the average reader. With some such sections I would press on after a handful of rereads, content that I at least got the gist of his arguments.

The content was equally engaging, and considering this publication for which I'm writing this review, I was eager to read the section on privacy and perhaps extrapolate how librarians might use this text for good. But, sadly, Chemerinsky lost me in the first few pages. His introduction to twenty-first-century privacy laws centers on a regrettable anecdote. *Maryland v. King* was a Supreme Court case in which a man who, after being arrested for assault, had his cheek swabbed by the police to collect his DNA. This was done to potentially tie him to any previous crimes via a database cross-check, and as a result he was convicted of rape and sentenced to life in prison. The author considers such swabbing an intrusive overreach of government power. But splitting hairs over a rapist's privacy is irrelevant to me when compared to the lifetime of trauma he inflicted on his victim. His main argument against the majority opinion (in favor of Maryland) in this case is that the swabbing was upheld due to the potential benefits to law enforcement's ability to efficiently process criminals. He sees a precipitation of government interference as a result of pardoning such police activity. But he missed the inference about upholding public safety as a compelling government interest. Considering the massive backlog of unprocessed rape kits in the US, and the impact of the #MeToo movement, this passage is hardly progressive and totally tone-deaf.

He then moves on to digital privacy; a welcome subject in a time when legislators are sluggish to regulate industry giants. But due to the scope of his arguments, his progressive reading of this topic was lacking. With another real-life example, he argues against warrantless government searches of cell phone data via telecom providers. In *Carpenter v. United States*, the FBI garnered 127 days' worth of information on Timothy Carpenter's location and movements from his cellphone provider. Said company granted this information to law enforcement without blinking an eye or looking for a warrant. However, the only thing keeping this anecdote in the book is government



involvement. The fact that a company keeps that info for so long apparently isn't worth mentioning. I agree that police should need a warrant in order to cull information from a phone, tablet, or computer; but his focus on governmental overreach obviates a critical discussion of the data-collecting practices in the private industry like those of Google, Amazon, and Facebook. The only reason the person in the case was convicted was because this information existed in the first place—warrant or none. Ground-level privacy violations occur at the behest of these companies, but that's moot to Chemerinsky. He just doesn't want the feds to violate your privacy a second time. With this reading, privacy is not the issue at hand, it's the presence of a warrant. This is even more baffling to me when he mentions "control over information" as one of the "three distinct rights" he seeks to protect with his progressive reading of privacy.

Privacy is certainly a worthy liberty due to its unique position as a cornerstone for other freedoms: intellectual freedom, the right to read and receive information,

and the right to general welfare. But our liberties do not exist within a vacuum. In a maxim apt for librarianship, Chemerinsky observes that there exists a perennial tension between liberty and equality. When more liberties are afforded by the government, equality takes a back seat. And when a government affords its people high levels of equality, individual liberties suffer. The efficacy of legislation, and even library policies, are proven through balancing these competing factions in a way that is both pragmatic and equitable. It's hard work, but that's what makes it worth doing.

So, despite our differences in opinion, this book is a good read—it is enlightening, informative, and would be an asset for all kinds of readers. Politicians, activists, legislators, and the US Constitution buff would benefit from the philosophies and acumen contained within its pages. While it is admirable for the author to champion the People's rights in the face of government oppression and gamesmanship, I challenge him to extend these values to regulate those analogous tools of private industry.

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