

## Stories of Peoplehood

How can we build thriving political communities? In this provocative account of how societies are bound together, Rogers Smith examines the importance of ‘stories of peoplehood’, narratives that promise economic or political power and define political allegiances in religious, cultural, racial, ethnic, and related terms. Smith argues that no nations are purely civic: all are bound in part by stories that seek to define elements intrinsic to their members’ identities and worth. These types of stories can support valuable forms of political life but they also pose dangers that must be understood if they are to be confronted. In contrast to much contemporary writing, *Stories of Peoplehood* argues for community-building via robust contestation among sharply differing views. This original argument combines accessible theory with colourful examples of myths and stories from around the world and over 2,500 years of human history.

Rogers M. Smith is the Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. He has published over seventy articles and is author or co-author of the following books: *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (with Philip A. Klinkner, 1999); *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (1997); *Citizenship without Consent: The Illegal Alien in the American Polity* (with Peter H. Schuck, 1985); and *Liberalism and American Constitutional Law* (1985, rev. edn. 1990).

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As the twenty-first century begins, major new political challenges have arisen at the same time as some of the most enduring dilemmas of political association remain unresolved. The collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War in the east reflect a victory for democratic and liberal values, yet in many of the western countries that nurtured those values there are severe problems of urban decay, class and racial conflict, and failing political legitimacy. Enduring global injustice and inequality seem compounded by environmental problems, disease, the oppression of women, racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and the relentless growth of the world's population. In such circumstances, the need for creative thinking about the fundamentals of human political association is manifest. This new series in contemporary political theory is needed to foster such systematic normative reflection.

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# Stories of Peoplehood

*The Politics and Morals of Political Membership*

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Rogers M. Smith



Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-0-521-81303-7 — Stories of Peoplehood  
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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521813037](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521813037)

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First published 2003

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-81303-7 Hardback  
ISBN 978-0-521-52003-4 Paperback

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*To Caroline*

Who always wants stories

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## Acknowledgments

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After the publication of my 1997 book, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, I had many occasions to discuss its themes. In doing so I found myself expanding upon that book's explanatory and normative arguments, in ways that led me to write this one. As a result, its writing involves debts to far more individuals than I can list or even recall. My thanks to all who made criticisms and suggestions at panels or talks held at the American Political Science Association; Amherst College; Arizona State University; the Center for Area Studies in Osaka, Japan; the Claremont Colleges; the University of California at Davis; the University of Chicago; the CUNY Graduate Center; the University of Connecticut; Cornell University; Harvard University; the Evangelie Akademie Loccum, Germany; the University of Michigan; New School University; Northwestern University; the University of Notre Dame; Ohio State University; Princeton University; and the University of Wisconsin, among other locations.

Like most of my writing, this book has been heavily shaped by discussions with two of my erstwhile colleagues at Yale University, Ian Shapiro, who prompted me to write it, and Adolph Reed, Jr., who prodded me to do better. "Part I" began as the 1999 Charles E. Lindblom Lecture at Yale. It was my privilege to teach for over two decades in the home department of Ed Lindblom, who, along with Robert Dahl and Robert Lane, provided an inspiring example of what scholars of politics could be, as well as great intellectual stimulation and friendship. The ideas in this book were deeply influenced by many other Yale colleagues, particularly Bruce Ackerman, Nancy Cott, John McCormick, Jennifer Pitts, Peter Schuck, Steven Smith, and Norma Thompson, along with participants in various Yale seminars. Elizabeth Cohen and Sarah Song provided both valuable research assistance and important insights. Without Sarah's work during a Yale-sponsored leave in 2000–2001 the book would not yet be done.

I am also deeply indebted to my new colleagues and students at the University of Pennsylvania, especially Anne Norton, Andrew Norris, Nancy Hirschmann, Brendan O'Leary, Douglas Massey, and the participants

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in my graduate seminar on citizenship. Penn students David Greene and Jennifer Spiegel provided superb research assistance, funded in part by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Richard Zinman, David Hollinger, Mary Katzenstein, Joseph Carens, James Hollifield, Denis LaCorne, and Yohann Aucante, offered very useful comments on parts of the manuscript, as did anonymous press reviewers. John Haslam at the Cambridge University Press has been an endlessly patient and helpful editor.

For almost fifteen years, Mary Summers has contributed more to everything I do than anyone else, including me. My children Virginia, Caroline, and Reed do their best to get me to do other things, which makes life better in many ways.