

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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To Caroline
Who always wants stories

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