

The Naked Crowd



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In *The Naked Crowd*, acclaimed author Jeffrey Rosen makes an impassioned argument about how to preserve freedom, privacy, and security in a post-9/11 world. How we use emerging technologies, he insists, will be crucial to the preservation of essential American ideals. In our zeal to catch terrorists and prevent future catastrophic events, we are going too far—largely because of irrational fears—and violating essential American freedoms. That’s the contention at the center of this persuasive new polemic by Jeffrey Rosen, legal affairs editor of *The New Republic*, which builds on his award-winning book *The Unwanted Gaze*. Through wide-ranging reportage and cultural analysis, Rosen argues that it is possible to strike an effective and reasonable balance between liberty and security. Traveling from England to Silicon Valley, he offers a penetrating account of why well-designed laws and technologies have not always been adopted. Drawing on a broad range of sources—from the psychology of fear to the latest Code Orange alerts and airport security technologies—he also explores the reasons that the public, the legislatures, the courts, and technologists have made feel-good choices that give us the illusion of safety without actually making us safer. He describes the dangers of implementing poorly thought out technologies that can make us less free while distracting our attention from responses to terrorism that might work. Rosen also

considers the social and technological reasons that the risk-averse democracies of the West continue to demand ever-increasing levels of personal exposure in a search for an illusory and emotional feeling of security. In Web logs, chat rooms, and reality TV shows, an increasing number of citizens clutter the public sphere with private revelations best kept to themselves. The result is the peculiar ordeal of living in the Naked Crowd, in which few aspects of our lives are immune from public scrutiny. With vivid prose and persuasive analysis, The Naked Crowd is both an urgent warning about the choices we face in responding to legitimate fears of terror and a vision for a better future.

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