

Pragmatism and Social Hope



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Since 9/11, citizens of all nations have been searching for a democratic public philosophy that provides practical and inspiring answers to the problems of the twenty-first century. Drawing on the wisdom of past and present pragmatist thinkers, Judith M. Green maps a contemporary form of citizenship that emphasizes participation and cooperation and reclaims the critical role of social movements and nongovernmental organizations. Starting with empowering processes of storytelling, truth and reconciliation, and collaborative vision-questing that allow individuals to give voice and new meaning to their loss, anxiety, and hope, Green frames cooperative inquiries to guide transformative actions. From this "second strand" of the democratic experience, leaders and participating citizens can help to shape a more desirable democratic future. In dialogue with Richard Rorty, Judith Butler, James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr., Elie Wiesel, Viktor Frankl, Cornel West, and other contemporary thinkers, Green defines the need for deeper understanding and fulfillment of the potentials of the democratic ideal. Drawing insights from Thomas Jefferson, Walt Whitman, William James, John Dewey, Jane Adams, and other earlier thinkers, Green

frames a pragmatist understanding of emerging realities and possibilities, growing wells of shared truths, multifaceted histories, and mutually transformative experiences of citizenship. Employing examples from America's complex history and from recent world events, Green locates four sites for effective citizen activism: government at all levels, nonprofit organizations, issue-focused campaigns and social movements, and daily urban living. Green shows how citizens can revive social hope and deepen the democratic experience by drawing on their own knowledge and developing their capabilities through inclusive civic participation.

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