

claims, Huerta presents a compelling and urgent counter-narrative through the sharing of human stories corroborated by evidence from the social sciences. Personal narratives of *los de abajo* alongside academic literature points to a similar conclusion: protecting the labor rights of immigrant workers benefits all workers and treating Latinx immigrants with compassion and dignity strengthens all communities.

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Power in Action: Democracy, Citizenship and Social Justice

By Steven Friedman. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2018. 288 pp., \$30.00 Paperback.

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In this book, Friedman provides an unflashy, yet resolutely positive, extended essay on democracy. No phrases are coined; no new concepts are propounded. Rather, he evaluates and reflects on conceptual thinking about democracy over the past 30 years or so. An unashamed democrat, Friedman puts popular sovereignty at the center of his thinking. Although it is not simply a book about South Africa, its post-1994 experience informs much of the discussion.

I found much to admire in this book. Friedman sets out his key arguments convincingly: most supposedly “consolidated” democracies (Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, etc.) are not completely “democratic”; popular sovereignty matters; no one is “unable” or “unready” to govern themselves. Friedman interrogates the established literature in a robust and scholarly fashion over seven chapters while making a strong case for collective action as the foundation of democracy.

He starts by providing an extended, critical consideration of the literature and debates about “democratic consolidation.” This becomes more convincing after it begins to discuss the concrete weaknesses of democracies generally considered “consolidated.” It suggests to me that scholars of “democratization” need to talk more to scholars who study elections and institutions in apparently “consolidated” countries? Perhaps the recent talk of “voter suppression” in American politics will make this more likely in the future.

He then looks in detail at how states can become more democratic – both “deeper and broader” to use his terms. His criticism of “democratic elitism” is central to the subsequent chapters. He highlights the ways in which elitist thinking about citizens has crept into mainstream democratic thought, before turning his focus towards collective

action and how to extend and deepen accountability, making the key point that democracies are unequal because not all people have equal ability to engage politically.

Friedman dismisses the cultural relativist *canard* that “Africa” is incompatible with democracy, before moving on to call for political scientists to pay more attention to citizens, and their ability to hold leaders to account: “the test of a broad and deep democracy is whether all have access to routine collective action *when they need it*, not the frequency with which citizens act in concert.” p. 123 (*italics in original*). In exploring the puzzle of why the exploited groups often do not challenge their domination, he draws on John Gaventa’s tremendously useful writings about power and powerlessness and explores the delicate balance needed between institutions and agency.


Having agreed with most of Friedman’s analysis, I am struck that he does not interrogate the origins of these ideas more. For example, the often-heard claims that people of country x “aren’t ready for democracy” (p. 48) do not just come from academics or even political elites but derive from colonial discourse and the experience of qualified franchises, as well as disillusionment with poor institutions and corrupt leaders. I was also disappointed not to encounter more engagement with people writing about politics all over the continent—the real living stuff of political science. Much of the key literature discussed was familiar from my student years—now several decades in the past. As a result, some of the discussions felt rather dry and dated.

This is a well-written, carefully structured book. I underlined many pithy lines and will reflect more on the key arguments in my own research on citizenship and political accountability. It is not, however, a page-turner. Even though I am familiar with most of the literature discussed and have grappled with many of the same issues in my own reading and teaching, it was not a quick read. That said, it rewards careful reading. We need more books like this—thoughtful, measured reflections on literature and real life, embracing a commitment to a vision of South Africa—and the world—“in which everyone decides” (p. 218).

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Ignored Racism: White Animus toward Latinos

By Mark D. Ramirez and David A. M. Peterson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 238 pp., \$24.99. Paperback.

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“White Americans’ attitudes about politics are inextricably linked to their attitudes about Latinos,” conclude Mark D. Ramirez and David A. M. Peterson in *Ignored*