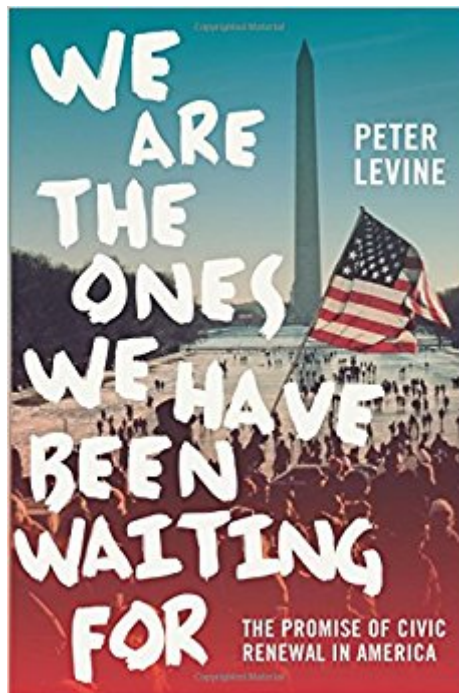




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# We Are The Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise Of Civic Renewal In America



## Synopsis

Chronic unemployment, deindustrialized cities, and mass incarceration are among the grievous social problems that will not yield unless American citizens address them. Peter Levine's *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For* is a primer for anyone motivated to help revive our fragile civic life and restore citizens' public role. After offering a novel theory of active citizenship, a diagnosis of its decline, and a searing critique of our political institutions, Levine—one of America's most influential civic engagement activists—argues that American citizens must address our most challenging issues. People can change the norms and structures of their own communities through deliberative civic action. He illustrates rich and effective civic work by drawing lessons from YouthBuild USA, Everyday Democracy, the Industrial Areas Foundation, and many other civic groups. Their organizers invite all citizens—including traditionally marginalized people, such as low-income teenagers—to address community problems. Levine explores successful efforts from communities across America as well as from democracies overseas. He shows how cities like Bridgeport, CT and Allentown, PA have bounced back from the devastating loss of manufacturing jobs by drawing on robust civic networks. The next step is for the participants in these local efforts to change policies that frustrate civic engagement nationally. Filled with trenchant analysis and strategies for reform, *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For* analyzes and advocates a new citizen-centered politics capable of tackling problems that cannot be fixed in any other way.

## Book Information

Paperback: 248 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Reprint edition (December 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0190464429

ISBN-13: 978-0190464424

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 0.8 x 6.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #167,825 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > Local #128 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Elections & Political Process > Political Advocacy #169 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Urban Planning & Development

## Customer Reviews

Wielding an impressive command of research and statistics, as well as finer points of moral and political philosophy, Levine's discussion of the benefits and contours of public engagement draw on lucid analogies and real-world examples..Broad in scope yet eminently practical, this book should be an enduring contribution to the study of democratic theory and social action." --Publishers Weekly

"Peter Levine is a remarkable asset-a scholar whose research is rigorous and unflinching but whose passion for democracy brims with optimism and engagement. In this book, he catalogues all the ways our institutional systems discourage engagement among citizens. But he finds and lifts up a million people doing civic work for a better world, and asks us to join and harness that energy for real change. It's clear-eyed and a clarion call-and a must read whether you're a full time advocate or 'just' a citizen hoping to make a difference." --Miles Rapoport, President, Demos

"We know what it means to get better leaders. But how are we supposed to produce better citizens? That's the question Peter Levine brings into focus. If the examples he describes can spur the one million most active citizens into a movement for civic renewal, we will all benefit from communities that are more deliberative, more collaborative, and more engaged." --Alberto Ibarra, President and CEO, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

"In an America now rife with inequality, institutionalized corruption, a jobless recovery and more prisoners than any other country, many sense that we stand at a nadir of democracy. With inspiring erudition, Levine points to an unlikely solution: the people themselves. Drawing from experiences from schools in Washington, D.C. to neighborhoods in San Antonio, he develops a pragmatic approach to civic revitalization that builds upon developments in organizing, deliberation, civic education, and public service, but goes far beyond any of these to reach for an ambitious vision of participatory democracy. He asks us to join the emerging civic movement he describes, and we all should." --Archon Fung, Ford Foundation Professor of Citizenship and Democracy, Harvard Kennedy School

"As America has wallowed through an unprecedented decline in civic engagement, Peter Levine has been a lighthouse warning of the dangers of civic alienation. Now, he makes the encouraging case that although we will live for a while with the consequences of past mistakes, the worst of the storm is over. Professor Levine concludes with ten common sense strategies that can energize the people and their governmental institutions while preparing a new generation of Americans with the values and competencies to sustain our reinvigorated democracy." --Bob Graham, United States Senator (1986-2004)

Peter Levine is Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship and Public Affairs in the Jonathan Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University and Director of The Center for

Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). He is the author most recently of *Reforming the Humanities: Literature and Ethics from Dante through Modern Times* and *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens*.

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