

## The DNA of Democracy

**Richard Lyons**

Lylea Creative Resources (Apr 15, 2019)

(385pp)

978-0-9600723-0-9

*The DNA of Democracy is a thorough and praise-filled history of democracy.*

Richard Lyons's political history *The DNA of Democracy* lauds human progression from the tyranny of ancient civilizations toward the democracies of the early twentieth century.

The book explains how absolute monarchies worked, all in service of explaining—through vignettes, battle scenes, and descriptions—how American democracy came about. Diagrams are used to illustrate the key building blocks that form the foundation, or DNA, of a successful democracy, starting with ancient Egypt's pharaohs as an example of pure tyranny.

Asserting that Israel, Greece, and Italy all possessed elements of democracy in between their despotic rulers, the book traces political progressions among tyrannical monarchs in Western Europe and the British Isles and leading up to the Magna Carta and the seeds of democratic governance. It highlights the colonies in North America as they grew dissatisfied with European leadership and worked toward a democratic ideal.

While the text focuses on a few men of power, even when praising a more general democratic process, special care is given to cover women's roles in democracy and their push for universal suffrage. Slavery is treated as an impediment to American democracy, though some of the founding fathers were slave owners. The text also points out that interactions between colonial Americans and Native Americans were driven by notions of egalitarianism on both sides.

Quotes from people as ranging as Aeschylus and George Washington on topics of democracy and tyranny pepper the work, highlighting the research and nuance behind it. Chapter openings tend toward poetics, for example referring to society as a "magical alchemy" and praising democratic behavior in a world biased toward oppression. There is some repetition because of this and fewer concrete conclusions. Such language sits at odds with the book's conveyance of historical facts and center in political commentary.

Close readings of democratic documents are included, with line-by-line analyses that show which statements, in particular, stripped power away from a few and handed it to the many. Commentary and synopses end each chapter, showcasing what their particular conflicts have to say about democracy and tyranny.

The book's illustrations—pyramids that show concentrated power at the top, representing an oppressive society—often feel superfluous, though maps of the places mentioned in the text, and tables that summarize its key principles, help with clarifications.

As drawn here, the arc of world and American history is inspiring. The book's narrative about greater and greater equality and independence feels natural and works toward a conclusion that emphasizes increasing inclusion and equality in politics.

*The DNA of Democracy* is a thorough and praise-filled history of democracy.

LAURA LEAVITT (June 11, 2019)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*