What's wrong with rights? Social movements, law and liberal imaginations


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**TITLE**

What's Wrong With Rights? Social Movements, Law and Liberal Imaginations

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**ABSTRACT**

Through mapping the rights discourse and the transformations in transnational finance capitalism since the world wars, and interrogating the connections between the two, Radha D’Souza examines contemporary rights in theory and practice through the lens of the struggles of the people of the Third World, their experiences of national liberation and socialism and their aspirations for emancipation and freedom.

Social movements demand rights to remedy wrongs and injustices in society. But why do organisations like the World Bank and IMF, the G7 states and the World Economic Forum want to promote rights? Activists and activist scholars are critical of human rights in their diagnosis of problems. But in their prognosis, they reinstate human rights and bring back through the backdoor what they dismiss through the front.

Why are activists and activist scholars unable to ‘let go’ of human rights? Why do indigenous peoples find the need to invoke the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People to make their claims sound reasonable? Are rights in the 20th and 21st centuries the same as rights in the 17th and 18th centuries?

This book examines what is entailed in reducing rights to ‘human’ rights and in the argument ‘our understandings of rights are better than theirs’ that is popular within social movements and in critical scholarship.

**KEYWORDS**

Rights; liberalism; transnational monopoly finance capitalism; global governance; international organisations; new property rights; international election monitoring; international criminal justice; IMF; World Bank; social movements; good governance programmes.

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Social movements demand rights to remedy wrongs and injustices in society. But why do organisations like the World Bank and IMF, the G7 states and the World Economic Forum want to promote rights? Activists and activist scholars are critical of human rights in their diagnosis of problems. But in their prognosis, they reinstate human rights and bring back through the backdoor what they dismiss through the front. Why are activists and activist scholars unable to 'let go' of human rights? Why do indigenous peoples find the need to invoke the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People Social Movements, Law and Liberal Imaginations by Radha D'Souza. Add to my bookshelf.

Rights occupy a strange position in global politics. On the one hand, they're used by business and governments as a justification for globalization—if the spread of corporate capitalism also helps lead to improvements in human rights, then globalization must be good, right? At the same time, though, even those on the left who are skeptical of that discourse tend to hew to a belief in rights themselves, like the right to food, medicine, housing, free speech, assembly, and religion. How can these conflicting attitudes towards rights be reconciled?