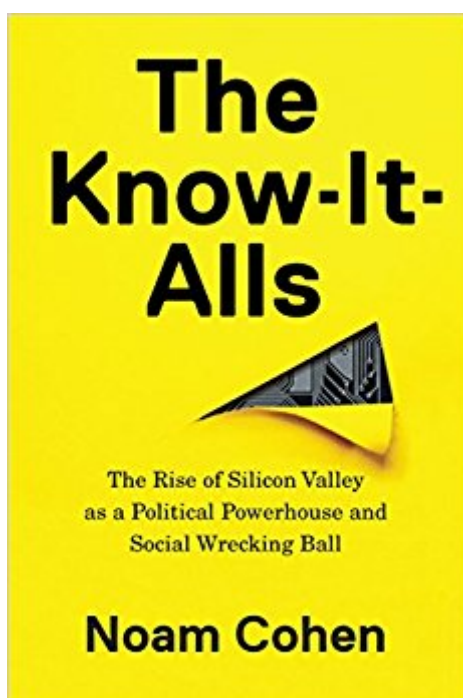


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The Know-It-Alls: The Rise Of Silicon Valley As A Political Powerhouse And Social Wrecking Ball



Synopsis

In *The Know-It-Alls* former New York Times technology columnist Noam Cohen chronicles the rise of Silicon Valley as a political and intellectual force in American life. Beginning nearly a century ago and showcasing the role of Stanford University as the incubator of this new class of super geeks, Cohen shows how smart guys like Jeff Bezos, Peter Thiel, Sergey Brin, Larry Page, and Mark Zuckerberg fell in love with a radically individualistic ideal and then mainstreamed it. With these very rich men leading the way, unions, libraries, public schools, common courtesy, and even government itself have been pushed aside to make way for supposedly efficient market-based encounters via the Internet. Donald Trump's election victory was an inadvertent triumph of the "disruption" that Silicon Valley has been pushing: Facebook and Twitter, eager to entertain their users, turned a blind eye to the fake news and the hateful ideas proliferating there. The Rust Belt states that shifted to Trump are the ones being left behind by a "meritocratic" Silicon Valley ideology that promotes an economy where, in the words of LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman, each of us is our own start-up. A society that belittles civility, empathy, and collaboration can easily be led astray. *The Know-It-Alls* explains how these self-proclaimed geniuses failed this most important test of democracy.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for *The Know-It-Alls*: "[Cohen] shows how the cult of personality for tech entrepreneurs developed out of a combination of a hacker's arrogance and an entrepreneur's greed and . . . helps chip away at the power these men (another crucial quality) have carved out for themselves. . . . An enlightening breakdown of how Silicon Valley

billionaires have shifted popular discourse in their favor. — Kirkus Reviews

— Noam Cohen — The Know-It-Alls provides a provocative and illuminating examination of Silicon Valley. Using profiles of its core digital capitalist giants and the immense political, economic and cultural power they have quickly come to possess, Cohen raises troubling questions about how this can possibly square with a fair, decent, humane, and democratic society. This immensely readable book should be mandatory reading. — Robert W. McChesney, author of Digital Disconnect

— Individualism is a big part of what makes America great — until it becomes a euphemism for selfishness and arrogance among lucky winners who prefer to believe that luck and other people had nothing to do with their success. The Know-It-Alls is a terrific case study of some of the unreckoned costs of the digital revolution, and how one piece of the American idea threatens to overwhelm the others. — Kurt Andersen

— The Know-It-Alls is a fascinating intellectual profile of the people who have increasingly come to rule our world. With precision and skill, Noam Cohen tweaks the pretensions of a handful of tech oligarchs, whose self-styled project to better our lives results in little more than a power grab at our economy and our democracy. As America's center of gravity inexorably shifts to Silicon Valley, and the original vision of a decentralized Internet of personal expression gets drowned in a sea of commerce and advertising, I'll be turning to Cohen's insights into the profiteers responsible again and again. — David Dayen, author of Chain of Title

Noam Cohen covered the influence of the Internet on the larger culture for the New York Times, where he wrote the Link by Link column, beginning in 2007. He lives in Brooklyn with his family. This is his first book.

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