

# THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

## SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE FIGHT FOR PUBLIC SPACE

Don Mitchell

"In this wide-ranging tour de force, Don Mitchell offers us a rich and geographically grounded exploration of struggles over urban public space. This is scholarship in the best sense of the word: politically engaged, theoretically informed, and powerfully argued. Urban public space emerges not only as a site of brutal and often violent control, but also as a space of liberation and hope. Mitchell shows us that public spaces—the streets and parks of the everyday—matter, and are worth fighting for."

—Nicholas K. Blomley, Simon Fraser University, Canada

"Complex yet comprehensible, the book balances the ideas of legal scholars, cultural theorists, and social scientists with Mitchell's singular voice based on his extensive thinking and research in the area. Mitchell thoughtfully argues that the struggle for rights actually produces public space and thus insists that rights be taken seriously, especially by leftist scholars, as they are central to counteracting exclusionary practices and the pervasive power of the state. This book is especially appropriate for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on the city."

—Sallie A. Marston, University of Arizona

"Polemical, stirring, and angry, this book is required reading for anyone who cares about the fate of our cities and our fragile democracy."

—Andy Merrifield, Clark University

Efforts to secure the American city have life-or-death implications. Yet demands for heightened surveillance and security throw into sharp relief timeless questions about the nature of public space, how it is to be used, and under what conditions. Blending historical and geographical analysis, this book examines the vital relationship between struggles over public space and movements for social justice in the United States. Presented are a series of linked cases that explore the judicial response to public demonstrations by early twentieth-century workers, and comparable legal issues surrounding anti-abortion protests today; the Free Speech Movement and the history of People's Park in Berkeley; and the plight of homeless people facing new laws against their presence in urban streets. The central focus is how political dissent gains meaning and momentum—and is regulated and policed—in the real, physical spaces of the city.

A 2014 Postscript explores the ramifications of Occupy Wall Street for the right to the city—and for the fate of homeless people—and provides updates on some of the issues discussed in the book.

Don Mitchell is Distinguished Professor of Geography at Syracuse University.

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