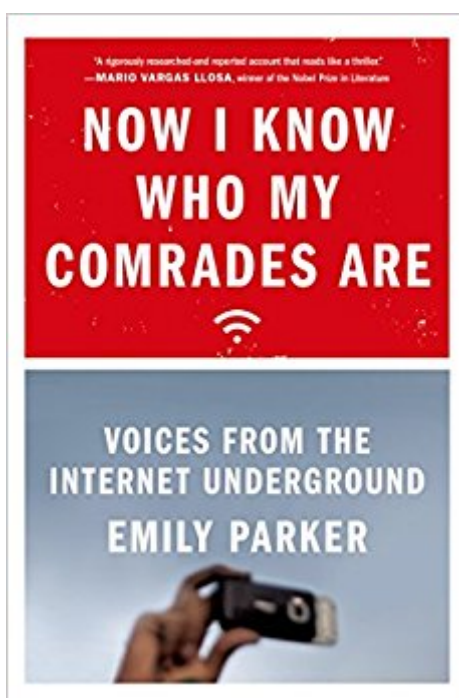


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Now I Know Who My Comrades Are: Voices From The Internet Underground



Synopsis

In China, university students use the Internet to save the life of an attempted murder victim. In Cuba, authorities unsuccessfully try to silence an online critic by sowing seeds of distrust in her marriage. And in Russia, a lone blogger rises to become one of the most prominent opposition figures since the fall of the Soviet Union. Authoritarian governments try to isolate individuals from one another, but in the age of social media freedom of speech is impossible to contain. Online, people discover that they are not alone. As one blogger put it, "Now I know who my comrades are." In her groundbreaking book, *Now I Know Who My Comrades Are: Voices from the Internet Underground*, Emily Parker, formerly a State Department policy advisor, writer at *The Wall Street Journal* and editor at *The New York Times*, provides on-the-ground accounts of how the Internet is transforming lives in China, Cuba, and Russia. It's a new phenomenon, but one that's already brought about significant political change. In 2011 ordinary Egyptians, many armed with little more than mobile phones, helped topple a thirty-year-old dictatorship. It was an extraordinary moment in modern history. *Now I Know Who My Comrades Are* takes us beyond the Middle East to the next major civil rights battles between the Internet and state control. Star dissidents such as Cuba's Yoani Sánchez and China's Ai Weiwei are profiled. Here you'll also find lesser-known bloggers, as well as the back-stories of Internet activism celebrities. Parker charts the rise of Russia's Alexey Navalny from ordinary blogger to one of the greatest threats to Vladimir Putin's regime. This book introduces us to an army of bloggers and tweeters, generals and foot soldiers alike. These activists write in code to outsmart censors and launch online campaigns to get their friends out of jail. They refuse to be intimidated by surveillance cameras or citizen informers. Even as they navigate the risks of authoritarian life, they feel free. *Now I Know Who My Comrades Are* is their story.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Parker, formerly with the policy-planning staff for digital diplomacy at the U.S. State Department, explores the lives of bloggers in China, Cuba, and Russia who are active critics of their governments. Through multiple interviews, her subjects discuss the ways in which they have challenged authority via social media. Although dissident use of the Internet is already part of the twenty-first-century story, Parker goes beyond the obvious headlines to the grinding daily battles of people and situations that receive only passing media notice. Some of what she reveals is stunning (2012 estimates find that only 5 percent of Cubans have regular access to the web), but the book's greatest strength is the intimacy with which she describes the lives of her subjects. Parker portrays reluctant activists drawn into action for a variety of personal reasons who are alternately bemused and surprised by their resulting renown. In every case, they take their largely unfunded work seriously and embrace the struggle to bring openness to closed societies. Parker profiles fascinating people and effectively shows why, in hands like theirs, social media is one of the most important tools for conducting positive political and social change around the world. --Colleen Mondor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"One can practically overdose on the levels of intrigue at play in this account of "netizens," bloggers turned social crusaders turned Internet rock stars." [Boston Globe](#)

"It is [Parker's] tracing of the more subtle, psychological effects the internet has had on activists, regular folks, and authorities that makes this book an essential read...if one is restricted to a few voices, oh what voices Parker has chosen." [The Los Angeles Review of Books](#)

"Parker's reporting...captures well the online activists' pervasive feeling of being constantly monitored." [The Wall Street Journal](#)

"One of the merits of Parker's work is to have captured these characters not just glued to their keyboards...but also in their intimate reality, in the cafes or pubs where they seek refuge, in their families, in the political rallies they support or in the hiding places they seek out when persecuted. That fills this book with color and life...Some of the personalities in Parker's book stick to memory with the same vivacity and dynamism of a Joseph Conrad or Andre Malraux character." [The New](#)

Republic

“Now I Know Who My Comrades Are” is a valuable reminder of social networks beyond Facebook and Twitter...The book also succeeds in introducing readers to the wilds of Chinese, Spanish and Russian webs unexplored by English-speakers

The Economist

“Parker’s work is a shining example for women writers around the world; this book is a clear showing of her prowess as both writer and researcher.

The California Journal of Women Writers

“Parker...argues that online communication can undermine authoritarian rule even when its effects don’t make their way to the streets.

The New Yorker

“Emily Parker’s book *Now I Know Who My Comrades Are: Voices from the Internet Underground* is a rigorously researched and reported account that reads like a thriller...It’s been a while since I have read a book that is so entertaining, not to mention one so encouraging for the culture of liberty.

Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel Prize-winning author of *The War of the End of the World* and *The Time of the Hero*

“*Now I Know Who My Comrades Are* is a timely and necessary book. Story by story, Emily Parker shows how the Internet has changed lives and social realities in three oppressive countries. The clarity, honesty, and intelligence of her writing make this book both admirable and enjoyable.

Ha Jin, National Book Award-winning author of *Waiting* and *War Trash*

“Emily Parker tells us enthralling and beautifully detailed stories about bloggers and Internet activists in China, Russia, and Cuba, showing us the power of human connection even as she describes and analyzes it. The combination of her humanism and keen insight illuminates dimensions of the Internet that we so often miss, the ways it can create the personal ties and trust that are the foundation of collective action. A great read for both the nightstand and the scholar’s shelf.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, president and CEO of the New America Foundation, and Former Director of policy planning for the U.S. State Department

“The heroes of this terrific book are ‘Internet foot soldiers,’ not the usual foreign ministers and businessmen, and those soldiers are changing Russia, China, and Cuba...and the world. Emily Parker is among a handful of the most promising new foreign policy commentators who weave together technology, culture, society, and politics with hard facts and clear analysis.

Leslie H. Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations

“This book is a must read for anyone interested in how the Internet and social media serve as instruments of change in societies where information has been tightly controlled by authoritarian regimes. Through a wealth of personal anecdotes enriched by judicious commentary, Emily Parker deftly shows both the possibilities and limitations of the Internet’s ability to promote greater political openness.

J. Stapleton Roy, former U.S. ambassador to China, Singapore and Indonesia

“This book is

about twenty times better reported or written than any book ever written about the Internet, period. — Tim Wu, author of *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires* — “In this fascinating book, Emily Parker shows that the Internet affects politics by affecting the psychology of its users. *Now I Know Who My Comrades Are* demonstrates how much it can matter for citizens to have a voice, and to discover that they are not alone. — Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* — “Parker’s book is clearly written, well researched, and contextualized. Her long-lasting relationships—she meets Chinese dissident Michael Anti for the first time in 2004, for example—allow her to create a narrative history of these bloggers’ personal evolution as potential reformers, of Internet activism as a whole as seen through their experiences, and of government responses to it. — *The Brooklyn Rail*

As a native Russian speaker and a product of the former Soviet Union, I have to say Parker’s section on Russia is spot on. The characters are vivid, the environment they operate in - painfully familiar and real. She gets that very illusive Russianness in her coverage of a relatively new Internet phenomenon. Having read the book I cannot help but view the events unfolding in Venezuela and Ukraine in a different, richer light. Parker adds a politically and culturally significant dimension to a layperson’s understanding of the word blogger and the notion of a modern day political activist. The China and Cuba perspectives are fascinating, even to someone with only a basic understating of these countries. That is because Parker’s book is not about cold technology and the Internet. It is about people: funny, controversial, selfish, brave and altogether very human. People who want to live like human beings and willing to push the boundaries of the ruling regimes using the Internet as a tool of resistance. Their stories are the heart of the book and their collective experiences define today’s political arena - even in repressive societies.

The best book I’ve read on digital activism, and the best book I’ve read in 2015. Parker focuses on heart wrenching stories that take place in China, Russia, and Cuba, and details in an unparalleled way the human element of online activists. I don’t know how else to put it, but Parker gets it. She understands the cultural context in which activism is taking place, and does a good job in explaining how activism leads to non-uniform results that are heavily dependant on the personalities of the members involved and constraints of the societies in which they live. Having worked at the State Department on human rights and now working at Facebook, I am constantly frustrated with little errors or lazy narratives in documentaries, news, and books on digital activism outside the US.

Comrades does not suffer from these problems. I don't know enough about Russia and Cuba to cross check, but her account of activism in China puts books like *Age of Ambition*, *China Airborne*, or *No Place to Hide* to shame. What is additionally impressive is that Parker relies on a massive body of original research, taking the time to understand the stories of activists that have not learned how to capture the spotlight of western media. If you want to understand how technology is affecting activism, read this book. If you want to understand how technology is affecting Chinese society, read this book. It's not just better than other books on similar subjects, it's the only one I've found that goes into sufficient depth to get beyond CNN tropes. I finished the book enlightened but worried. There is a lot at stake, and even more to do.

What I love about Parker's book is that her storytelling brings you in on the ground floor with her as she sets out to explore how the Internet is changing the lives of Cuban, Russian and Chinese citizens. It is clear she put in the time to gain her subjects' trust and formulate her own nuanced analysis of a topic that is often oversimplified or misunderstood by the outside world. I commend this work, it is a beautiful read both stylistically and content-wise!

I'm not one for non-fiction reading but this book was truly an enjoyable read. It's recently published and very timely, extremely detailed and well-written. It describes the countries and their political atmospheres, and also details the individual champions - both large and small - of the internet dissident world. There was obviously an immense amount of research that went into writing this book and you can tell from the personal style of the writing that this was a very significant time investment for the author. I really enjoyed it and highly recommend it. It would of course be excellent for those already interested in the intersection of technology and politics but is also an excellent read for those who have little knowledge of the subject (like myself). Either way you will not only learn a lot but also will be inspired by the persons described in the book.

Emily Parker is a first-rate storyteller who vividly brings to life the young journalists and Internet activists who appear throughout her book. Parker doesn't wade into the heady debates about whether the Internet is an intrinsically democratic medium or a new means for state surveillance, but rather lets the people on the front lines of the digital media revolution speak for themselves and lets us, the readers, draw our own conclusions. The characters in this story are chock-full of the hope and the anxiety, the ego and the insecurity, that arises from the new modes and methods of expression that the Internet affords. The personalities make this book so entertaining. The foreign

policy implications make it so urgent. Buy this book!

Not being a social media fan (and possessing little knowledge of the subject), I came to Emily Parker's book wondering if I would understand it, and if it would be aimed at generations much younger than mine. I needn't have worried. The stories in "Now I Know Who My Comrades Are" are both instructive and moving, reflecting cultures reacting to current information technology in very different ways. All this new technology is undiscovered country, and Ms. Parker maps it out observingly and lucidly, with a richness of anecdote and a narrative flow that should appeal to all readers, technologically literate or not. An excellent read about a fascinating subject.

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