


# DEMOCRACY MEANS BORDERS



Our forebears overthrew kings and dictators, but they didn't abolish the institutions by which kings and dictators ruled: they *democratized* them. Yet whoever operates these institutions—whether it's a king, a president, or an electorate—the experience on the receiving end is roughly the same. Laws, bureaucracy, and police came before democracy; they function the same way in a democracy as in a dictatorship. The only difference is that, because we can cast ballots about how they should be applied, we're supposed to regard them as *ours* even when they're used against us.

Democracy presumes a line between participants and outsiders, between legitimate and illegitimate. Only a fraction of the men could vote in ancient Athens; the Founding Fathers owned slaves. Citizenship still imposes a barrier between included and excluded, shutting over 10 million undocumented residents out of the decisions that shape their lives.

The liberal answer is to expand the lines of inclusion, extending rights and privileges until everyone is integrated into one vast democratic project. But as long as all power must flow through one bottleneck, there are bound to be imbalances and outsiders. The alternative would be *anarchy*: abolishing centralized power structures and all the borders they impose. Without borders, people would only live and work together of their own free will, flowing freely between communities without top-down control.

