



In his new book *COVERING: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*, acclaimed Yale Law School professor Kenji Yoshino presents a new way of thinking about civil rights. Why do we let the pressures of society force us to “cover,” to tone down an aspect of our personality so we fit in with the mainstream? Who decides what is and isn't socially acceptable? And, in a culture that often unfairly demands conformity, how can we present our authentic selves? Fusing legal manifesto with his own personal story, Yoshino throws down the gauntlet for a new paradigm of civil rights.

Yoshino argues that each of us, every one, covers, and the demand to cover can pose a hidden threat to our civil rights. Today race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, and disability are all protected by civil rights, but we still routinely deny equal treatment to people who refuse to downplay differences along these lines. Racial minorities are pressed to “act white” by changing their names, languages, or cultural practices. Women are told to “play like men” at work. Gays are asked not to engage in public displays of same-sex affection. The devout are instructed to minimize expressions of faith, and individuals with disabilities are urged to conceal the paraphernalia that permit them to function. In a wide-ranging analysis, Yoshino demonstrates that the civil rights revolution has stalled and the law has generally ignored the threat posed by these covering demands.

What distinguishes *Covering* from prior books on identity politics is that while Yoshino presents a progressive agenda, he challenges many of the pieties of traditional liberalism. He not only argues against the balkanization of America into different identity groups, but also draws on his expertise in law to articulate the limits of what law can do. The result is a transcendent vision of civil rights that focuses on the freedoms that draw us together as Americans rather than on the distinctions that drive us apart. This is a vision in which we all--conservative or liberal--have a stake, because it addresses the yearning for human emancipation that exists within us all.

Yoshino's argument draws deeply on his personal experiences as a gay Asian American. He follows the Romantics in his belief that if a human life is described with enough particularity, the universal will speak through it. The result is a work that combines one of the most moving memoirs written in years with a landmark manifesto on the civil rights of the future.

Kenji Yoshino is professor of law and deputy dean for intellectual life at Yale Law School. He was educated at Harvard, Oxford (where he was a Rhodes Scholar), and Yale Law School. A specialist in constitutional law, antidiscrimination law, and law and literature, he has published work in a wide variety of academic journals, including the *Columbia Law Review*, *Michigan Law Review*, *Stanford Law Review*, and *Yale Law Journal*. His writing has been featured in *The Boston Globe*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, and *The Village Voice* and he has appeared on *The Charlie Rose Show*, and Fox News Channel's *The O'Reilly Factor*.

“Seldom has a work of such careful intellectual rigor and fairness been so deeply touching...this book has tremendous potential as a touchstone in the struggle for universal human dignity.”

-- *Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

“This brilliantly argued and engaging book does two things at once, and it does them both astonishingly well. First, it's a finely grained memoir of young man's struggles to come to terms with his

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sexuality, and second, it's a powerful argument for a whole new way of thinking about civil rights and how our society deals with difference. This book challenges us all to confront our own unacknowledged biases, and it demands that we take seriously the idea that there are many different ways to be human. Kenji Yoshino is the face and the voice of the new civil rights.”

-- Barbara Ehrenreich

“Yoshino offers his personal search for authenticity as an encouragement for everyone to think deeply about the ways in which all of us have covered our true selves. And he presents his story and weaves in the legal cases in such an engaging way that we really do feel newly inspired.”

--*The New York Times Sunday Book Review*

“Yoshino argues convincingly in this book, part luminous, moving memoir, part cogent, level-headed treatise, that covering is going to become more and more a civil rights issue as the nation (and the nation's courts) struggle with an increasingly multiethnic America.”

--*San Francisco Chronicle*

“The personal and political collide head-on in *Covering*, Yale law professor Kenji Yoshino's remarkable debut . . . [Yoshino's] sense of justice is pragmatic and infectious.”

--*Time Out New York*

“[*Covering*] is, at heart, a memoir, written by a legal scholar who might have missed his calling as a poet. In some of its most powerful sections, Yoshino [struggles] with what it means to be a gay man . . . This probably says less about the writer's personal courage -- he's got that in spades, as one discovers throughout the book -- than about the pervasiveness and strength of the societal pressures he so eloquently describes.”

--*The Village Voice*

“Who'd expect a book on civil rights and the law to be warmly personal, elegantly written, and threaded with memorable images? [T]he beauty of Yoshino's book lies in the poetry he brings to telling his own story.”

--*O Magazine*

“A lush, frequently elegant account . . . Yoshino is a skillful narrative guide with a gift for describing the small dramas of still situations.”

--*Legal Affairs*

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