

## PART NINE

# Contemporary Dissent, 1975–Present

## INTRODUCTION: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM—GLOBALIZATION VS. JIHAD

Throughout the nation's history, there was always the assumption that politicians were corruptible, but generally speaking people tended to have faith in the president and in his pronouncements. When FDR, Ike, or JFK spoke to the public, people believed them. The Johnson administration's deceptions, however, revealed by the publication of the Pentagon Papers in the *New York Times*, began to change that. When Richard Nixon was forced to resign over the Watergate scandal, what remaining faith the majority had in the integrity of Washington evaporated. Ford and Carter were honest men and did help to restore some confidence in the political process, but ever since the 1970s, the American people are far more cynical about government.

After the excitement of the 1960s and Watergate, many people simply wanted to have a breather and return to some sense of business as usual. Dissent and protest did continue, but with the big issues apparently solved, activists concentrated on specific local concerns. Ecology, of course, is a global issue, but environmentalists generally acted locally by demonstrating against industrial polluters, such as General Electric in New York, in an effort to get laws passed that would restrict the amount of toxic waste companies were allowed to dump in rivers and streams or release into the atmosphere. Pete Seeger, whose activism spans several decades and multiple causes, organized the Clearwater Hudson River Revival, an annual folk festival dedicated to putting pressure on the industries that were polluting the Hudson River. The success of this local movement was quite apparent by the 1980s, when sturgeon appeared again in the cleaner







press had a field day with the antiwar and civil rights protests in America, which were depicted as proof of the "anti-imperialist struggle under capitalism." According to cold war scholar Vladislav Zubok, this was a serious miscalculation on the part of the Soviet propaganda machine. One of the reasons communism failed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is that people living under communism became painfully aware that the American people could at least march, protest, and dissent. This proved that the United States was indeed a freer society than the Soviet Union. As a result, many Soviet citizens began to overcome their distrust of the United States. When they saw protestors and demonstrators in the streets, they saw democracy at work and therefore realized that the United States, despite its faults, was a democratic society. In this way the United States as early as the 1960s unwittingly motivated a minority of dissidents and educated youth in the eastern bloc countries to strive for democracy. "We knew," a Soviet citizen once told Zubok, "we had to create democracy when we saw American protestors take to the streets."

In November 1989, one of the most memorable events of the twentieth century took place. The East German government, after months of unrest and economic crisis, opened the Berlin Wall. It was the moment the cold war disintegrated. Thousands of Germans flocked to Berlin. From east and west, they came, and they brought their sledgehammers and chisels, and the wall came down. Within months, each of the Soviet satellite nations abandoned communism and voted in new democratic regimes. The Soviet Union itself, in December 1991, was dissolved. Mikhail Gorbachev, who had intended to allow dissent and discussion to build "socialism with a human face" along the model of the Prague Spring of 1968, had instead opened a Pandora's box that wound up being far more momentous than anyone could have imagined, and by doing away with the Soviet Union, Gorbachev no longer had a job.

At first Americans were jubilant, believing, as many did, that "we won the cold war," and that now the terrible threat of a nuclear confrontation that could potentially destroy civilization was gone. The world, it was assumed, was a safer place. Indeed, when Saddam Hussein invaded neighboring Kuwait, the unity of the coalition that fought the Persian Gulf War<sup>1</sup> to remove the Iraqis from Kuwait boosted this optimistic view. But within a few years a new reality emerged, and grave doubts began to creep in.

The Clinton administration concentrated on the economy, which did indeed rebound during his two terms in office. In fact, the economy soared so high that most Americans considered that Clinton was doing such an excellent job of running the country that they were able to overlook the Monica Lewinsky scandal that swamped his administration. The domestic issue that proved controversial enough to arouse dissenters was globalization. Clinton had backed the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs

and Trade. Antiglobalists were vehemently opposed to this spreading of free enterprise, claiming that it was merely an updated version of capitalist imperialism. A wide variety of diverse groups came together to oppose the World Trade Organization: Labor unions were concerned that more American jobs would disappear; environmentalists were alarmed that moving industrial plants and factories to third world nations, where environmental standards were laxer than they were in the United States, would exacerbate the problems of global warming and the destruction of the environment; human rights activists were troubled about the exploitation of children and poor people in third world sweatshops. Criticizing the pro-business collaboration of both Republicans and Democrats, Ralph Nader ran for president in 1996 and in 2000 as the standard-bearer of the Green Party.

Other dissenters made their voices heard in the 1990s. Along with the continuation of pro-life activists picketing abortion clinics and pro-choice advocates demanding the safeguarding of a woman's right to choose, various right-wing groups protested what they viewed as too much government intrusion into their lives. The Michigan Militia, the Freemen in Montana, and other groups called for individuals to arm themselves and be ready to resist any attempt by the government in Washington to undermine the Bill of Rights. Timothy McVeigh was responsible for the single most devastating act of domestic terrorism in American history when he detonated a bomb at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people. Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber, killed people with letter bombs because he believed technology, and those promoting it, was a disaster for the human race. There was also a proliferation of right-wing talk-show hosts like Rush Limbaugh, who protested zealously and effectively against the Clinton administration. Such critics, although they might appear on the surface to be part of the dissenting tradition, are not actually genuine protestors advocating social change but instead the cutting edge of a well-organized, well-funded, and ultimately successful Republican offensive to regain power.

In the post-cold-war world, Clinton's foreign policy had to feel its way along as diplomats were forced to learn the new rules of engagement. Confrontation between two superpowers was a thing of the past, but new, more complex realities surfaced. The United States continued to maintain a military presence in Saudi Arabia after the Persian Gulf War had come to an end. This fact, along with U.S. support of Israel, angered many Arabs. The inexorable spread of American mass culture and consumerist values around the world also created resistance from people who believed their own values and culture would be subverted and eventually destroyed. Political Scientist Benjamin R. Barber has called this confrontation between traditional societies and American globalism "jihad vs. McWorld."

Terrorism has been around for centuries, but in the 1970s and 1980s it began to be employed more frequently by disempowered groups who felt there was no other alternative for them to get their point across. Palestinians in particular, knowing the most powerful nation in the world supported Israel, felt

<sup>1</sup> Many Americans, including soldiers Jeff Paterson, Glen Motil, David Wiggins, and numerous others, were vocal antiwar dissenters. (For an interview with USMC Corporal Jeff Paterson see the full edition of *Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation*.)



helpless. Regularly, members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) would hijack a commercial jet, make their demands (perhaps the release of other terrorists who were serving prison sentences), and, after the demands were met, escape. By the 1990s, however, terrorism had begun to have a new, more terrifying face. Increasingly, terrorists used suicide missions. As early as 1983, suicide bombers struck in Lebanon, when a truck filled with explosives rammed into the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 Marines. During Clinton's presidency, in 1996, suicide bombers struck at the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, killing 224 people. The terrorists behind this were not Palestinians but Saudis linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. Clinton's response was to order a missile attack on reputed al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and a chemical plant in Somalia. Some observers believe this retribution only exacerbated the problem. Chalmers Johnson, for instance, in his book *Blowback*, published a year before September 11, suggests that the appropriate response would have been to remove American military personnel from Saudi Arabia. If bin Laden was behind the embassy bombings, Johnson wrote, then we still do not know what the blowback will be from Clinton's missile attack in Afghanistan. Perhaps the response occurred in 2000, when al-Qaeda suicide bombers blew a hole in the side of the U.S. destroyer *Cole* in Yemen, killing 17 sailors.

At first, after George W. Bush was declared the winner of the contested 2000 election, the new president concentrated on resurrecting the defense projects of the Reagan administration, specifically the missile defense shield. But on September 11, 2001, it became devastatingly apparent that such highly sophisticated methods of national security were helpless in the face of a relatively low-tech type of attack. The terrorists who hijacked four jetliners—turning them into highly explosive missiles that brought down the twin towers of the World Trade Center, ripped open the Pentagon, and killed nearly 3000 innocent people—were able to accomplish their feat using box cutters.

In the aftermath of the attacks, the United States has been forced to face a different truth. It is not simply that the "world changed" on September 11. The world was pretty much the same on the twelfth as it was on the tenth. What had changed is that Americans had lost their innocence (or perhaps we should say naïveté). They awoke to the fact that the perception many others around the world, including our allies, have about America does not match the way we see ourselves. The aftermath of September 11 saw the advent of the war on terrorism. For many people, this has meant fighting back and making our nation more secure against such threats. For some people, it has also meant a time of self-reflection and reevaluation of America's priorities. Dissent, which had seemed subdued in the 1990s with the exception of the World Trade Organization demonstrations, once again reared its head. As the United States bombed Afghanistan, thousands of protestors took to the streets. When the PATRIOT Act was passed, many more feared that in our quest for security we were eroding the basic constitutional principles that has made this country great. Even before the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, millions of people took to the streets to demonstrate against such a war.

The communications revolution brought about by modern technology, the mass media, and the Internet has created new levels of dissent. The career of Michael Moore illustrates this new reality. Moore, with a bestselling book, *Stupid White Men*, and three films (the Academy Award-winning exploration of violence in America, *Bowling for Columbine*; the Cannes Award-winning exposé of the Bush administration's rationale for invading Iraq, *Fahrenheit 9/11*; and his castigating of the American healthcare system, *Sicko*), has become an international phenomenon—a "celebrity dissenter." Like many dissenters, such as the nineteenth-century abolitionists who were intensely contentious and blatantly disruptive, Moore has used hyperbole and selected factual evidence to advance his causes. Similarly, Moore has relied on humor as an effective tool of political dissent, just as medieval court jesters, H. L. Mencken, and Jon Stewart's *Daily Show* all have. However, Moore's use of black comedy and his uncompromising contempt have lifted him to a different level of recognition. It is difficult for many people to regard a person who has found such a spectacularly lucrative way to express dissent as a representative of the poor, the disenfranchised, or the disempowered. Furthermore, many feel that Moore's message often goes over the top and loses its effectiveness. In his 2004 film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, for example, critics suggest that if Moore's sermonizing had been toned down, the film would have been much more effective—less would have been more. The message of *Fahrenheit 9/11* is considered valid by most people, especially in its uncovering the fictitious reasons for going to war, but Moore hammers the message so hard that he winds up preaching only to the choir while offending and alienating the people he seeks to convince.

We cannot know what lies in store. We do know that as long as the United States is the United States, there will always be differences of opinion on social, political, diplomatic, and military issues and that people from all walks of life, from all political persuasions, Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, Libertarians, will speak their minds. In a time of war, however, when national security itself is threatened, is it unpatriotic to dissent? Have those who protest given up on the American dream? Are dissenters undermining the very society that guarantees the right to dissent? What takes precedence, national security or civil liberties? Or is dissent itself an expression of patriotism?

## Paul Weyrich (1941–)

Paul Weyrich, founder of the American Legislative Exchange Council, chairman and CEO of the Free Congress Foundation, and founder (with Joseph Coors) of the Heritage Foundation, is a persuasive, passionate conservative. An advocate of free trade and family values and the coiner of the term "moral majority," he has been called "one of the conservative movement's more vigorous thinkers." He has written perceptive policy reports and numerous articles, all espousing a conservative, religious



viewpoint. In 1987, in response to the Iran-Contra affair, he wrote "A Conservative's Lament," condemning the manner in which the Reagan administration was contravening the Constitution in the way it was conducting its covert foreign policy. Weyrich believes that the United States must live up to its ideals of preserving freedom.

## "A CONSERVATIVE'S LAMENT: AFTER IRAN, WE NEED TO CHANGE OUR SYSTEM AND GRAND STRATEGY," MARCH 8, 1987

As proponents of a strong foreign policy and defense, conservatives have a special responsibility. Our advocacy brings with it the burden of doing the job competently. We must be leaders in thinking deeply and carefully about America's role in the world, about relating goals to means and about our national strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and constraints they impose. If we fail to do this, we lose our legitimacy as advocates.

In the Iran-contra mess, conservatives have failed. Obviously, they failed in the way the matter was handled. But the failure is really much more profound than that. The scandal is not a disease, but a symptom. It is a symptom of some underlying contradictions in our national strategy and national institutions.

Conservatives should have identified and addressed these long ago, but we did not. Now, conservative leaders seem to be looking little if at all beyond the details of the scandal—and how to distance themselves from it. That merely compounds the failure.

Instead, as conservatives, we should be taking the lead in looking for the roots of the crisis. There are three.

First, our national strategy is outdated, dysfunctional and insupportable. Essentially it is still containment, a strategy developed in the late 1940s. It was an arguable strategy even then. But at least we had the power to carry it out. We had only one rival: the Soviet Union. Europe and Asia were both power vacuums. We moved to fill those vacuums, lest the Soviets do so.

Today, the situation is vastly different. Europe, Asia and the Middle East are power centers, not vacuums. The concept of a superpower is waning rapidly. The world includes many other forces—China, Islamic nationalism, Polish Catholicism—which are more powerful locally than either the United States or the Soviet Union.

In pursuit of containment, we still thrust ourselves into everything that happens around the world. But what we put forward, increasingly, is weakness, not strength. In a world where we control far less of the total sum of power than we

did forty years ago, we cannot do otherwise. The real strength is no longer there. We are propping up a hollow facade, vast commitments unsupported by either capabilities or popular will. So we stumble from failure to failure; in Southeast Asia, in Iran, in Lebanon and now in the Iran-contra mess.

It is time for a new national grand strategy. Nothing less will address the real problem. Conservatives have a responsibility to take the lead in developing one.

Second, there is a basic contradiction between the structure of our government and our role as a great power. Our government was designed not to play great-power politics but to preserve domestic liberty. To that end—at which it has been remarkably successful—it was structured so as to make decisions difficult. Separation of powers, congressional checks on executive authority, the primacy of law over *raison d'état*—all of these were intentionally built into our system. The Founding Fathers knew a nation, with such a government could not play the role of great power. They had no such ambition for us—quite the contrary.

For about 20 years after World War II, we were able to act as a great power without running into this contradiction. We could do so because we had only one serious rival, and even over that rival, our superiority was immense. Now, we have to play on a much more crowded and competitive field. Our institutions are not adequate to the game. If the executive does what it must in the international arena, it violates the domestic rules. If the Congress enforces those rules, as it is supposed to do, it cripples us internationally.

Since Watergate, some 140 measures have been passed by Congress to restrict the president's power to conduct foreign policy.

Third, our current system institutionalizes amateurism. Unlike European parliamentary democracies, we have no "shadow cabinet," no group of experts who are groomed by their party for decades before they take high office. Our presidents can be peanut farmers or Hollywood actors. They can choose their top advisors either from among "professionals" who may not share their goals or supporters who often have no background or expertise in policy. Either way, they lose, and so does the country.

The current crisis could not make the point better; our foreign policy was set by an admiral and a Marine lieutenant colonel, neither of whom had any background in the field. The resulting failure is not their fault. The system by which they were chosen is defective.

If we are going to be a serious nation, we need a serious system for selecting our leaders and advisors. We need some type of shadow government, in which leaders and top advisors can be identified and developed, and through which our politics can be better focused on policy choices. The world is a professional league, and we cannot win fielding amateur teams.

If the crisis leads us to get at the systemic problems it manifests, it will, on the whole, have been a good thing. But that is not what we are doing. We are letting ourselves be captured by the symptoms and ignoring the disease.

We—especially conservatives—owe the country something better. On foreign policy and the institutions that make it, it is a time for us to show some leadership—or give it over to someone who can do a better job.

SOURCE: Paul M. Weyrich, "A Conservative's Lament: After Iran, We Need to Change Our System and Grand Strategy," in the *Washington Post*, March 8, 1987, B-5.



## ACT UP

In 1987, when the AIDS crisis was exploding across the nation, many gays and lesbians were outraged that the Reagan administration was doing nothing to deal with the epidemic. AIDS was viewed by Washington as a problem that concerned only homosexuals and intravenous drug users, not the white, middle-class, heterosexual majority. Politicians often conveyed an attitude that such people deserved what they got. In response to this cavalier indifference, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was formed as an in-your-face, direct-action organization that would coordinate protests in an effort to force the do-nothing federal government to do something about the epidemic. Although ACT UP was formed by gay men, the organization, from the beginning, welcomed others who were affected by AIDS (e.g., drug users, hemophiliacs), as well as anyone else who felt that all people should be treated with fairness and respect. Adopting the tactics of the civil rights and antiwar movements, ACT UP held its first demonstration on March 24, 1987, on Wall Street, where they singled out the pharmaceutical companies that were withholding vital AIDS drugs in order to increase profits, as well as the homophobia that lay behind the government's unwillingness to act. Within a few months, ACT UP demonstrations were attracting hundreds and even thousands of participants, whose pressure eventually induced the Food and Drug Administration to grant approval for the release of the controversial AIDS drugs.

*The following is an excerpt from a speech delivered by Vito Russo at a 1988 demonstration. (For more ACT UP documents, see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

### VITO RUSSO, "WHY WE FIGHT," 1988

A friend of mine in New York City has a half-fare transit card, which means that you get on buses and subways for half price. And the other day, when he showed his card to the token attendant, the attendant asked what his disability was and he said, I have AIDS. And the attendant said, no you don't, if you had AIDS, you'd be home dying. And so, I wanted to speak out today as a person with AIDS who is not dying. You know, for the last three years, since I was diagnosed, my family thinks two things about my situation. One, they think I'm going to die, and two, they think that my government is doing absolutely everything in their power to stop that. And they're wrong, on both counts.

SOURCE: Video transcript of speech delivered at the ACT UP Demonstration, Albany, NY, May 9, 1988, and the ACT UP Demonstration at the Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC, October 10, 1988. Retrieved on 5/4/2006 from [www.actupny.org/documents/whifight.html](http://www.actupny.org/documents/whifight.html).

So, if I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from homophobia. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from racism. If I'm dying from anything, it's from indifference and red tape, because these are the things that are preventing an end to this crisis. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from Jesse Helms. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from the President of the United States. And, especially, if I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from the sensationalism of newspapers and magazines and television shows, which are interested in me, as a human interest story—only as long as I'm willing to be a helpless victim, but not if I'm fighting for my life.

If I'm dying from anything—I'm dying from the fact that not enough rich, white, heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anybody to give a shit. You know, living with AIDS in this country is like living in the twilight zone. Living with AIDS is like living through a war which is happening only for those people who happen to be in the trenches. Every time a shell explodes, you look around and you discover that you've lost more of your friends, but nobody else notices. It isn't happening to them. They're walking the streets as though we weren't living through some sort of nightmare. And only you can hear the screams of the people who are dying and their cries for help. No one else seems to be noticing.

And it's worse than a war, because during a war people are united in a shared experience. This war has not united us, it's divided us. It's separated those of us with AIDS and those of us who fight for people with AIDS from the rest of the population.

Two and a half years ago, I picked up *Life* magazine, and I read an editorial which said, "it's time to pay attention, because this disease is now beginning to strike the rest of us." It was as if I wasn't the one holding the magazine in my hand. And since then, nothing has changed to alter the perception that AIDS is not happening to the real people in this country.

It's not happening to us in the United States, it's happening to them—to the disposable populations of fags and junkies who deserve what they get. The media tells them that they don't have to care, because the people who really matter are not in danger. Twice, three times, four times—*The New York Times* has published editorials saying, don't panic yet, over AIDS—it still hasn't entered the general population, and until it does, we don't have to give a shit.

And the days, and the months, and the years pass by, and they don't spend those days and nights and months and years trying to figure out how to get hold of the latest experimental drug, and which dose to take it at, and in what combination with other drugs, and from what source? And, how are you going to pay for it? And where are you going to get it? Because it isn't happening to them, so they don't give a shit.

And they don't sit in television studios, surrounded by technicians who are wearing rubber gloves, who won't put a microphone on you, because it isn't happening to them, so they don't give a shit.

And they don't have their houses burned down by bigots and morons. They watch it on the news and they have dinner and they go to bed, because it isn't happening to them, and they don't give a shit.

And they don't spend their waking hours going from hospital room to hospital room, and watching the people that they love die slowly—of neglect and



bigotry, because it isn't happening to them and they don't have to give a shit. They haven't been to two funerals a week for the last three or four or five years—so they don't give a shit, because it's not happening to them.

And we read on the front page of *The New York Times* last Saturday that Anthony Fauci now says that all sorts of promising drugs for treatment haven't even been tested in the last two years because he can't afford to hire the people to test them. We're supposed to be grateful that this story has appeared in the newspaper after two years. Nobody wonders why some reporter didn't dig up that story and print it 18 months ago, before Fauci got dragged before a Congressional hearing.

How many people are dead in the last two years, who might be alive today, if those drugs had been tested more quickly? Reporters all over the country are busy printing government press releases....

Someday, the AIDS crisis will be over. Remember that. And when that day comes—when that day has come and gone, there'll be people alive on this earth—gay people and straight people, men and women, black and white, who will hear the story that once there was a terrible disease in this country and all over the world, and that a brave group of people stood up and fought and, in some cases, gave their lives, so that other people might live and be free.

So, I'm proud to be with my friends today and the people I love, because I think you're all heroes, and I'm glad to be part of this fight. But, to borrow a phrase from Michael Callen's song: all we have is love right now, what we don't have is time.

In a lot of ways, AIDS activists are like those doctors out there—they're so busy putting out fires and taking care of people on respirators, that they don't have the time to take care of all the sick people. We're so busy putting out fires right now, that we don't have the time to talk to each other and strategize and plan for the next wave, and the next day, and next month and the next week and the next year.

And, we're going to have to find the time to do that in the next few months. And, we have to commit ourselves to doing that. And then, after we kick the shit out of this disease, we're all going to be alive to kick the shit out of this system, so that this never happens again.

Vito Russo, 1988

## Gay Liberation

*During the 1980s and 1990s, many gays and lesbians demonstrated passionately for their rights, and the gay liberation movement became far more visible. In 1994 the House of Representatives held hearings, during which a number of gay activists testified to urge Congress to pass legislation that would end discrimination against gays in the workforce. (For more gay activist statements, see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

## STATEMENT OF PHILL WILSON, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY, AIDS PROJECT, LOS ANGELES, 1994

My name is Phill Wilson. I am Director of Public Policy for AIDS Project Los Angeles, one of the largest AIDS service organizations in the country. I am also the founder of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum.

A national climate of fear and discrimination has thrust APLA into the role of having to preserve and protect the dignity and self-respect of persons affected by HIV and AIDS. We provide critically needed education to the public, health care providers, educators, business and religious leaders, the media, public officials and other opinion leaders.

... I am honored to speak to you on an issue of paramount importance to me personally as a black gay man who is living with AIDS. That issue is the elimination of discrimination against gay and lesbians in general, and particularly the eradication of prejudice faced by people of color in this country.

Too often I am faced with young black men who carry with them the promise and the dreams of their family. Often they are the first ones in their families to go to college. I meet them when they have their first bout of pneumocystis or they find a Kaposi's sarcoma lesion. I always ask them, "Why didn't you come forward sooner? Why didn't you find out your HIV status? Why didn't you exercise the possibility of accessing treatment?" All too often the response is, "I didn't want anyone to know that I was gay. I was afraid to lose my job." All too often this fear around losing their job has cost them their lives.

We have a crisis in America that affects all our communities, not just African Americans and other people of color, not just lesbians and gay men, but every person who has ever come to the table in search of justice, but was met with discrimination....

A recent court ruling in the State of Arizona attests to this fact. In the case of *Blaine vs. Golden State Container Company*, the Arizona Court of Appeals held that gays and lesbians are not protected from discrimination by private employers.

In addition to this ruling, a proposed amendment to the Nevada State constitution says that objection to homosexuality based upon one's convictions is a liberty and right of conscience and shall not be considered discrimination related to civil rights.

Both of these examples highlight a troubling situation in this country. States categorically deny basic civil rights to a group of their own law-abiding, tax-paying residents. Basic civil rights such as protection from harassment in the workplace and wrongful termination, granted as a matter of course to the majority of citizens, are legally denied to lesbians and gay men in most States.

SOURCE: Congress, House, Committee on Education and Labor, *Employment Discrimination Against Gay Men and Lesbians*, 103d Congress, 2d Session, June 20, 1994 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994). Retrieved on 12/27/2003 from <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6463/>.



A widespread misconception is that lesbians and gay men have legal recourse when discrimination occurs in the workplace. We do not. There is no Federal law against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

We need a Federal bill enacted that explicitly protects gays and lesbians from discrimination in all aspects of life, especially in the workplace. . . .

This country is a special place. It is special because at our core is the ideal of equality. At our core is the understanding that equality, equal rights, are not special.

Special rights is the banner under which opponents to a Federal bill will rally. There is nothing special about the right to a job for which you are qualified. There is nothing special about the right to perform your job free of harassment and fear. There is nothing special about the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In 1968, an act of violence took the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I was 11 years old, but I remember the day clearly. More importantly, I remember Dr. King's words as he told of his dream.

"I have a dream today," he said, and when he spoke about the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners, he made no distinction between the gay ones and the straight ones. When Dr. King sang, "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last," he included all of us.

I am the great-grandson of a slave. I was a part of that dream, as all of us are. From the floor of the Democratic national convention, I quote Mel Boozar: "I have been called a nigger and I have been called a faggot and I can describe for you the difference in the marrow of my soul. I can describe difference in one word: None."

Many people compare the discrimination based on sexual orientation to the discrimination based on race. I do not believe they are the same. I do not think it is important that they be the same. The tragedies that happen in Mogadishu are not the tragedies that are happening in Sarajevo, and yet we understand that the tragedies in Mogadishu and the tragedies in Sarajevo are both wrong.

When you deny someone a job because they are gay or you deny someone a job because they are a woman or you deny someone a job because they are black, when you deny someone a home because they are gay or lesbian, or you deny someone a home because they are black or you deny someone a home because they are a woman, in the end, you have people who are jobless, you have people who are homeless. . . .

## STATEMENT OF LETITIA GOMEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LATINO/A LESBIAN AND GAY ORGANIZATION, 1994

My name is Letitia Gomez and I am Executive Director of the National Latino Lesbian and Gay Organization, LLEGO. LLEGO is committed to educating the public, in general, as well as the gay and lesbian Latino community, in particular, about the contributions of gay and lesbian Latinos in the U.S.

Our mission is to work toward providing resources to the gay and lesbian Latino community that will facilitate self-empowerment and enable gay and lesbian Latinos to deal effectively with the issues of civil rights, health and culture. . . .

I am glad to testify before you today about employment discrimination against gay men, lesbians and bisexual people who are Latinos. Unlike gays, lesbians and bisexual people who are white or African American, lesbians and gay Latinos are viewed as foreigners, although a majority of Latinos in the United States are U.S. born. The gay and lesbian Latino community is a mirror of the larger Latino community in that we are young and growing in population and in the work force.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual Latinos work in the government and private sector as professionals, technicians, and administrative staff in many service jobs. We are unlike the larger Latino community in that many times it is difficult for us to separate discrimination against us based on sexual orientation from racial discrimination, because when you are a person of multiple oppressions you have to wonder if the discrimination is about your race, gender, if you are a woman, or sexual orientation.

Discrimination forces some gay, lesbian and bisexual Latinos to live in a climate of fear that their livelihood could be jeopardized and therefore perpetuates self-hatred that has an adverse impact on their psychological, economic and social well-being. I would like to provide you with a specific example of what I am talking about.

In 1986 Angela Romero, a veteran of the Denver police department and a member of the Denver police department's School Resource Program was called out of a lecture at one of her assigned schools and told to report to her supervisor's office immediately. When she arrived at his office, her supervisor told her that her division chief and sergeant had information that would damage her work integrity. While they did not say so in the meeting, the implication was that her lesbianism made her a threat to children. She would later learn that the session was raised because she had stopped one day to buy a book at a lesbian bookstore. Her supervisor asked Angela if she had anything to say to him about this.

Angela didn't know quite what to make of her supervisor's inquiry. Up to this point in her career, she received outstanding reviews from all the schools; however, she and her sergeant had had a difficult relationship during the previous year. Angela thought his behavior towards her was because she was a Mexican. Her supervisor's inquiries started her to think about the damaging information that her sergeant purported to have.

Alcohol and drugs were not a part of her life and she had never discussed her sexual orientation with any of her fellow police officers. When she confronted her supervisor with the nature of the information, he refused to say what it was.

The next thing Angela knew, she was asked to transfer out of the School Resource Program to the IID unit. She refused, even though she was guaranteed that she could keep her recent promotion. After she protested her transfer, Angela was relieved of her duties with the schools and was assigned to street



patrol. Sometime later, she learned that the underlying reason for the personnel action was because she was suspected of being a lesbian.

Angela decided to come out to protect her job so that she could do the work she most wanted to do. Angela spent more than four years fighting the system, virtually alone. She had nowhere to turn inside of the police department that would offer her protection or support. She consulted outside agencies.

One equal employment opportunity specialist told her that it was too bad her case was not based on the fact that she was Hispanic, because it would be a lot tougher to get support for discrimination against her based on sexual orientation. The local American Civil Liberties Union would not take her case. The Denver gay and lesbian community was not in a position to support or help her.

When she finally found a private practice lawyer who specialized in employment discrimination, this lawyer told her that the statute of limitations for a case based on sexism or racism had expired. She was determined not to quit her job, but make the State change its sexual harassment policy.

During this process, Angela continued to work. And as I stated earlier, she was assigned to work street patrol. There were several occasions when her fellow officers would not respond to her calls for backup. She began to fear for her life.

During roll call, disparaging remarks were made about homosexuals and lesbians in her presence and about her. She found herself calling her superiors on their homophobia and sexism and she documented all the retaliation. One aspect of her superior's response was to place unmarked cars in front of her house and the houses of the friends she visited in off-duty hours.

Just when the system seems to be shutting down on her, the City of Denver passed its civil rights ordinance. Shortly afterwards, the Denver Police Department amended its sexual harassment policies to include sexual orientation. Today, Angela is still an officer for the Denver Police Department, but the memory of this series of events is still difficult for her to talk about. However, she is proud of the fact that she decided not to compromise who she is as a Latino lesbian for the job she loves, being a police officer.

I have to emphasize, however, that this discrimination did exact a price on Angela that she could almost not pay. She paid a high personal price for the emotional and mental torment that she endured as a result of the unprofessional behavior of her fellow police officers. She also came close to losing her life or risking severe injury several times because of the failure to get backup on high risk calls. This failure also resulted in dangerous criminals staying on the street longer than they should have because her only recourse at times was to retreat...

Therefore, I ask this committee to seriously consider the merit of legislation that will protect the rights of gay men, lesbians and bisexual people and our friends to work regardless of their sexual orientation. And please do not be led into the discussion that we, lesbians, gay men and bisexual people, want special rights. This is about the equal right to work in the U.S. As we are all painfully aware in this day and time, we need to be about keeping people employed and providing safe workplace environments so that they can carry out their jobs...

## The Michigan Militia

*After the destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, many newspaper articles were written about the Michigan Militia and other right-wing organizations and militias. Timothy McVeigh, who set off the bomb that killed 168 people, had had some ties with the militia, as did his partner, Terry Nichols. The Michigan Militia denied having any involvement with the bombings but concern heightened about the climate of hate and distrust that such extralegal militias were breeding around the country. Militias are particularly angry about heavy-handed, violent federal responses to groups that have set themselves apart from American society, especially the 1992 FBI shootout with members of a white supremacist group at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and the 1993 ATF confrontation with David Koresh's Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. But even if armed confrontations between the government and such groups did not occur, many militias, especially in the western states, remain adamantly opposed to any governmental interference in their lives. American citizens, they believe, should be allowed to free themselves of the constraints of the federal government and return to the days of "rugged individualism." Their argument, however, overlooks the fact that much of the land that was supposedly settled by pioneering rugged individualists was given to the settlers at nominal prices by the federal government, that the railroads that took settlers west were built with federal subsidies, that the irrigation projects that made much of the land arable were constructed with federal funds, and that even the interstate highway system was built by the federal government. To be sure, only a very small minority of people want to return to a (largely mythical) simpler existence, but the fact that they have armed themselves in an effort to protect the Constitution has caused some concern—especially in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing. Some observers claim that the militia ideology is just a smokescreen for racism and that their objection to the federal government derives more from their perception that the government, through welfare legislation and entitlements, favors minorities, primarily African Americans.*

### IN DEFENSE OF LIBERTY II, 1995

What is the militia?

The militia is: all able-bodied citizens who are capable of bearing arms; the absolute last line of defense against any threat to the State or Country, whether that threat is natural or man made, foreign or domestic.

SOURCE: Retrieved on 5/4/2006 from [www.michiganmilitia.com/literature/in\\_defense\\_of\\_liberty.htm](http://www.michiganmilitia.com/literature/in_defense_of_liberty.htm).



Our motivation is patriotism and a sincere desire to defend the Constitution. Our goal is to encourage all citizens to achieve a high level of preparedness for a wide variety of possible emergencies.

We support a Constitutionally limited government and defend the American ideals of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. We are open to all citizens regardless of race, sex, religion, or political affiliation. Groups not open to public membership and/or which are organized for any other purposes are not militias. The militia, as an organization, has no religious theme; is not racial in nature; nor does it advocate terrorism or violence.

Why would you want to join an extremist organization like the militia?

The militia as an organization, represents beliefs in: the inalienable right to keep and bear arms; the American ideals of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; freedom and love of country. If being a patriot has become so unfashionable with the general populace as to be considered extreme, then so be it. We joined because these qualities, whether popular or not, are honorable.

Is militia activity legal?

Yes, we all have the inalienable rights of self-defense: to keep and bear arms; freedom of speech; and to peaceably assemble. These cover the majority of militia activities. The Constitution of the United States prohibits government, at any level, from interfering or infringing on these rights. Additionally, the Geneva Convention, Hague Protocols, International Law, Laws of Land Warfare, as well as Michigan State Law and Federal Law, all specifically provide for citizen militias, with or without state recognition.

Is the government going to target me if I join the militia?

If you are asking this question there is obviously something enormously wrong; it places emphasis on the fact that people are fearful of government reprisal for engaging in legal activities. Law-abiding American citizens participating in legal activities are afraid of their government! Unfortunately, we cannot answer this question for you, we can only speculate. You will have to ask the government, as we do not speak for them. However, the fear behind this question should compel you to at least look into the patriot movement. . . .

The members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard and the state and local police are all sworn to protect and uphold the Constitution. Why do we need militias or even armed citizens? As Americans, it is "everyone's" responsibility to uphold and defend the Constitution; this is a requirement of a free people.

The militia is needed as the absolute last line of defense against any threat, whether natural or man-made, foreign or domestic; it is everyone's responsibility to be prepared to protect and defend state and country.

As to the need for armed citizens, as a human being you have the right to live for your own sake, and while living, you are responsible for defending the life of you and yours.

It is irresponsible, unwise, cowardly, and just plain un-American to deny these responsibilities. "If a people expect to be ignorant and free, they expect what never was and never will be."

Are you terrorists?

No, the militia does not advocate terrorism or violence. Only lunatics, including those in government, destroy buildings full of men, women, and children. The militia is a dedicated group of citizen patriots who volunteer their time and energy to further the cause of freedom. The only thing we blow to pieces are bowling pins; and if we are ever attacked by them, we will win! (Bowling pins are commonly used for target practice at militia training.)

What good does the militia do? What is your contribution to society?

The militia fulfills a long-established American tradition as the ultimate and final guarantor of freedom; it establishes that as a free people we are ready, willing and able to defend our lives and country.

We hold informative monthly meetings, update those in attendance on topics such as: pending legislation, civic activities, current events, safety bulletins; and we offer training opportunities in the areas of: weapons safety, CPR, first aid, land navigation, and other useful field techniques. We strongly encourage everyone to vote and become involved in the safeguarding of rights within their local communities. We believe that the educated, responsible citizen is the best possible guarantee of all our freedoms. . . .

## Theodore Kaczynski (1942-)

*Harvard graduate Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, was a brilliant mathematician who, after teaching briefly at the University of California at Berkeley, left academia in 1971 and began his reclusive life in Montana. Kaczynski can be viewed as a twentieth-century Luddite, but instead of breaking factory machines, as did the eighteenth-century British Luddites opposing the industrial revolution, he began mailing letter bombs to universities and research laboratories. In 1978 he sent off his first letter bomb (to a professor at the University of Chicago), which, when it was opened, injured a police officer. For the next 18 years, he sent more sophisticated, more lethal bombs to academics who specialized in technological subjects at universities and to research and development people at high-tech companies. The FBI doggedly pursued him without much success. The break came when he insisted that his "Manifesto" denouncing technology and progress be published in several mainstream newspapers (like the New York Times). When his younger brother read the manifesto, he immediately recognized the style and*



*phrasing, as well as many of the ideas, as his brother's. He tipped off the FBI, and in 1996 Kaczynski was arrested in his cabin in the Montana woods. Here are a few passages from his long, rambling manifesto, along with an excerpt from an interview Kaczynski gave to a reporter from Earth First! Journal.*

## THE UNABOMBER MANIFESTO, 1996

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race. They have greatly increased the life-expectancy of those of us who live in "advanced" countries, but they have destabilized society, have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world. The continued development of technology will worsen the situation. It will certainly subject human beings to greater indignities and inflict greater damage on the natural world, it will probably lead to greater social disruption and psychological suffering, and it may lead to increased physical suffering even in "advanced" countries.

2. The industrial-technological system may survive or it may break down. If it survives, it MAY eventually achieve a low level of physical and psychological suffering, but only after passing through a long and very painful period of adjustment and only at the cost of permanently reducing human beings and many other living organisms to engineered products and mere cogs in the social machine. Furthermore, if the system survives, the consequences will be inevitable: There is no way of reforming or modifying the system so as to prevent it from depriving people of dignity and autonomy.

3. If the system breaks down the consequences will still be very painful. But the bigger the system grows the more disastrous the results of its breakdown will be, so if it is to break down it had best break down sooner rather than later.

4. We therefore advocate a revolution against the industrial system. This revolution may or may not make use of violence: it may be sudden or it may be a relatively gradual process spanning a few decades. We can't predict any of that. But we do outline in a very general way the measures that those who hate the industrial system should take in order to prepare the way for a revolution against that form of society. This is not to be a POLITICAL revolution. Its object will be to overthrow not governments but the economic and technological basis of the present society....

## INTERVIEW WITH THEODORE KACZYNSKI, JUNE 1999

TK: ... I read Edward Abbey in mid-eighties and that was one of the things that gave me the idea that, 'yeah, there are other people out there that have the same attitudes that I do.' I read *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, I think it was. But what first motivated me wasn't anything I read. I just got mad seeing the machines ripping up the woods and so forth....

EF: Why, I asked, did he personally come to be against technology? His immediate response was,

TK: Why do you think? It reduces people to gears in a machine, it takes away our autonomy and our freedom.... The honest truth is that I am not really politically oriented. I would have really rather just be living out in the woods. If nobody had started cutting roads through there and cutting the trees down and come buzzing around in helicopters and snowmobiles I would still just be living there and the rest of the world could just take care of itself. I got involved in political issues because I was driven to it, so to speak. I'm not really inclined in that direction....

Unquestionably there is no doubt that the reason I dropped out of the technological system is because I had read about other ways of life, in particular that of primitive peoples. When I was about eleven I remember going to the little local library in Evergreen Park, Illinois. They had a series of books published by the Smithsonian Institute that addressed various areas of science. Among other things, I read about anthropology in a book on human prehistory. I found it fascinating. After reading a few more books on the subject of Neanderthal man and so forth, I had this itch to read more. I started asking myself why and I came to the realization that what I really wanted was not to read another book, but that I just wanted to live that way....

I don't think it [fixing the system] can be done. In part because of the human tendency, for most people, there are exceptions, to take the path of least resistance. They'll take the easy way out, and giving up your car, your television set, your electricity, is not the path of least resistance for most people. As I see it, I don't think there is any controlled or planned way in which we can dismantle the industrial system. I think that the only way we will get rid of it is if it breaks down and collapses. That's why I think the consequences will be something like the Russian Revolution, or circumstances like we see in other places in the world today like the Balkans, Afghanistan, Rwanda. This does, I think, pose a dilemma for radicals who take a non-violent point of view. When things break down, there is going to be violence and this does raise a question, I don't know if I exactly want to call it a moral question, but the point is that for those who realize the need to do away with the techno-industrial system, if you work for its



collapse, in effect you are killing a lot of people. If it collapses, there is going to be social disorder; there is going to be starvation, there aren't going to be any more spare parts or fuel for farm equipment, there won't be any more pesticide or fertilizer on which modern agriculture is dependent. So there isn't going to be enough food to go around, so then what happens? This is something that, as far as I've read, I haven't seen any radicals facing up to. . . .

The big problem is that people don't believe a revolution is possible, and it is not possible precisely because they do not believe it is possible. To a large extent I think the eco-anarchist movement is accomplishing a great deal, but I think they could do it better. . . . The real revolutionaries should separate themselves from the reformers. . . . And I think that it would be good if a conscious effort was being made to get as many people as possible introduced to the wilderness. In a general way, I think what has to be done is not to try and convince or persuade the majority of people that we are right, as much as try to increase tensions in society to the point where things start to break down. To create a situation where people get uncomfortable enough that they're going to rebel. So the question is how do you increase those tensions? I don't know. . . .

## Ralph Nader (1934—)

In the years 1996, 2000, and 2004, the Green Party nominated Ralph Nader for president. Nader and his followers believed that the Democratic and Republican parties no longer responded to the needs of the people, but instead only answered to corporate interests that were the single biggest threat to American democracy. *The United States, as Nader often put it, was a government "of the Exxons, by the General Motors and for the DuPonts."*

In 1965 his book *Unsafe at Any Speed* took on General Motors and launched the Princeton- and Harvard-educated lawyer's long career as the nation's leading consumer advocate. Nader's book detailed how the quest for profit led to faulty automobile design, especially in GM's Corvair, which frequently had lethal results. Like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which swayed Congress to pass the Pure Food and Drug Act 60 years earlier, the uproar over the book resulted in the passage of the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act, shifting the power to determine motor vehicle safety from the automobile manufacturers to the federal government. Over the subsequent decades, Nader and the activist attorneys he employed, Nader's Raiders, put pressure on the government to pass protective legislation and create several watchdog agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and others. However, in the 1980s, President Reagan cut the funding for many of these regulatory agencies, and as a result corporations

had more leeway to exploit the environment and workers. Profits soared, the gap between the rich and the poor widened, and Nader found much of what he had worked for slipping away.

In the 1990s, Nader shifted his focus away from congressional regulation to the growing issue of globalization, which he believed was endangering democracy by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few multinational corporations. When the Clinton administration sponsored the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), creating a free-trade zone linking the United States with Canada and Mexico, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), establishing the World Trade Organization, Nader became convinced that the Democrats were just as much a tool of big business as the Republicans and that therefore the time had come to create a third party that would look after the interests of the people. He ran for president in 1996 and again in 2000, but never got more than 2.7 percent of the popular vote. The impact in 2000, however, had long-range consequences that are still unfolding. Because many of Nader's supporters were disillusioned Democrats, the Greens drew enough votes away from Al Gore in Florida that George W. Bush wound up winning the election, even though Gore had won the popular vote nationally. Many people therefore believed that the Green Party was culpable for the Republican victory.

Here is Nader's attack on "corporate welfare." (For the 2000 Green Party platform, see the full edition of *Dissent* in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)

## IT'S TIME TO END CORPORATE WELFARE AS WE KNOW IT, 1996

The issue of concentration of power and the growing conflict between the civil society and the corporate society is not a conflict that you read about or see on television. So unfortunately, most of us grow up corporate; we don't grow up civic.

If I utter the following words, what images come to mind: crime, violence, welfare and addictors? What comes to mind is street crime; people lining up to get their welfare checks; violence in the streets; and drug dealers—the addictors. And yet, by any yardstick, there is far more crime, and far more violence, and far more welfare disbursement (and there are far more addictors) in the corporate world than in the impoverished street arena. The federal government's corporate welfare programs number over 120. They are so varied and embedded that we actually grow up thinking that the government interferes with the free enterprise system, rather than subsidizing it.



It's hard to find a major industry today whose principal investments were not first made by the government—in aerospace, telecommunications, biotechnology and agribusiness. Government research and development money funds the drug and pharmaceutical industry. Government research and development funds are given freely to corporations, but they don't announce it in ads the next day.

Corporate welfare has never been viewed as debilitating. Nobody talks about imposing welfare requirements on corporate welfare recipients or putting them on a program of "two years and you're out." Nobody talks about aid to dependent corporations. It's all talked about in terms of "incentives."

At the local community level, in cities that can't even refurbish their crumbling schools—where children are without enough desks or books—local governments are anteing up three, four, five hundred million dollars to lure very profitable baseball, football and basketball sports moguls who don't want to share the profits. Corporate sports are being subsidized by cities.

Corporations have perfected socializing their losses while they capitalize on their profits. There was the savings-and-loan debacle—and you'll be paying for that until the year 2020. In terms of principal and interest, it was a half-trillion-dollar bailout of 1,000 savings-and-loans banks. Their executives looted, speculated and defrauded people of their savings—and then turned to Washington for a bailout.

Foreign and domestic corporations can go on our land out West. If they discover gold, they can buy the acreage over the gold for no more than \$5 an acre. That's been the going rate since the Mining Act of 1872 was enacted. That is taking inflation-fighting too far.

There's new drug called Taxol to fight ovarian cancer. That drug was produced by a grant of \$31 million of taxpayer money through the National Institutes of Health, right through the clinical testing process. The formula was then given away to the Bristol-Myers Squibb company. No royalties were paid to the taxpayer. There was no restraint on the price. Charges now run \$10,000 to \$15,000 per patient for a series of treatments. If the patients can't pay, they go on Medicaid, and the taxpayer pays at the other end of the cycle, too.

Yet what is the big issue in this country and in Washington when the word "welfare" is spoken? It is the \$300 monthly check given a welfare mother, most of which is spent immediately in the consumer economy. But federal corporate welfare is far bigger in dollars. At the federal, state and local levels there is no comparison between the corporate welfare and poverty welfare programs.

We have 179 law schools and probably only 15 of them (and only recently) offer a single course or seminar on corporate crime. You think that's an accident? Law school curricula are pretty much shaped by the job market, and if the job market has slots in commercial law, bankruptcy law, securities and exchange law, tax law or estate planning law, the law schools will oblige with courses and seminars.

One professor studying corporate crime believes that it costs the country \$200 billion a year. And yet you don't see many congressional hearings on corporate crime. You see very few newspapers focusing on corporate crime. Yet 50,000 lives a year are lost due to air pollution, 100,000 are lost due to toxics and

trauma in the workplace, and 420,000 lives are lost due to tobacco smoking. The corporate addictor has a very important role here, since it has been shown in recent months that the tobacco companies try to hook youngsters into a lifetime of smoking from age 10 to 15.

When you grow up corporate, you don't learn about the reality of corporate welfare. The programs that shovel huge amounts of taxpayer dollars to corporations through inflated government contracts via the Pentagon, or through subsidies, loan guarantees, giveaways and a variety of clever transfers of taxpayer assets get very little attention.

We grow up never learning what we own together, as a commonwealth. If somebody asks you what you and your parents own, you'd say: homes, cars and artifacts. Most of you would not say that you are owners of the one-third of America that is public land or that you are part owners of the public airwaves.

When you ask students today who owns the public airwaves you get the same reply—"the networks," or maybe "the government." We own the public airwaves and the Federal Communications Commission is our real estate agent. The radio and TV stations are the tenants who are given licenses to dominate their part of the spectrum 24 hours a day, and for four hours a day they decide who says what. You pay more for your auto license than the biggest TV station pays for its broadcast license. But if you, the landlord, want in on its property, the radio and TV stations say, "Sorry, you're not going to come in." These companies say they've got to air trash TV—sensual TV, home shopping and rerun movies.

We have the greatest communications system in the world and we have the most demeaning subject matter and the most curtailed airing of public voices (known in the trade as the "sound bite"). The sound bite is down to about five seconds now.

You and your parents also may be part owners of \$4 trillion in pension funds invested in corporations. The reason this doesn't get much attention is that although we own it, corporations control it. Corporations, banks and insurance companies invest our pension money. Workers have no voting mechanism regarding this money. If they did, they'd have a tremendous influence over corporations that have major pension trust investments.

Not controlling what we own should be a public issue, because if we begin to develop control of what we own, we will marshal vast existing assets that are legally ours for the betterment of our society. That will not happen unless we talk about why people don't control what they own.

All of the reforms require a rearrangement of how we spend our time. The women who launched the women's right-to-vote movement decided to spend time—in the face of incredible opposition. The people who fought to abolish slavery also decided to spend time. The workers who fought to abolish slavery also decided to spend time. The workers who formed trade unions gave time. Historically, how have we curbed corporate power? By child labor prohibition, by occupational health and safety rules, by motor vehicle standards and food and drug safety standards. But the regulatory agencies in these areas are now on their knees. Their budgets are very small—far less than 1 percent of the federal budget.



Their job is to put the federal cop on the corporate beat against the illegal dumping of toxics. But these laws do not get high compliance by corporations, and the application of regulatory law and order against corporate crime, fraud, abuse and violence is at its lowest ebb. I've never seen some of these agencies as weak as they are now. President Ronald Reagan started it and President George Bush extended it. And now we have "George Ronald Clinton" making the transition very easy.

The dismantling of democracy is perhaps now the most urgent aspect of the corporatization of our society. And notice, if you will, two pillars of our legal system—tort law and contract law.

The principle of tort law is that if you are wrongfully injured, you have a remedy against the perpetrator. That's well over 200 years old. And now, in state legislatures and in Congress, laws have been passed, or are about to be passed, that protect the perpetrators, the harm-doers—that immunize them from their liability.

When the physicians at the Harvard School of Public Health testify that about 80,000 people die in hospitals every year from medical malpractice—a total larger than the combined fatalities in motor vehicle accidents, homicides and death by fire each year in the U.S.—it raises the issue of why our elected representatives are vigorously trying to make it more difficult for victims of medical malpractice to have their day in court.

As in the Middle Ages, 1 percent of the richest people in this country own 90 percent of the wealth. The unemployment rate doesn't take into account the people who looked for a job for six months and gave up, and it doesn't take into account the underemployed who work 20 hours a week. Part of growing up corporate is that we let corporations develop the yardsticks by which we measure the economy's progress.

Democracy is the best mechanism ever devised to solve problems. That means the more we refine it—the more people practice it, the more people use its tools—the more likely it is we will not only solve our problems or at least diminish them, we also will foresee and forestall risk levels. When you see corporations dismantling democracy, you have to take it very seriously and turn it into a public political issue.

Among the five roles that we play, one is voter-citizen, another is taxpayer, another is worker, another is consumer and another is shareholder through worker pension trusts. These are critical roles in our political economy. Yet they have become weaker and weaker as the concentration of corporate power over our political and cultural and economic institutions has increased year by year.

We're supposed to have a government of, by and for the people. Instead we have a government of the Exxons, by the General Motors and for the DuPonts. We have a government that recognizes the rights and liabilities and privileges of corporations, which are artificial entities created by state charters, against the rights and privileges of ordinary people.

Jefferson warned us that the purpose of representative government is to counteract "the excesses of the monied interests"—then the merchant class, now the corporations. Beware of the government that doesn't do that.

## Ani DiFranco (1970—)

Ani DiFranco, self-described feminist, bisexual, and "righteous babe," is one of the most creative and electrifying voices on the contemporary singer-songwriter-poet scene. She has performed in numerous venues all over the world, from the Hudson River Clearwater Revival and Carnegie Hall in New York to the Fuji Rock Festival in Japan. Her recordings are all self-produced so that she can maintain complete autonomy over her work. In spite of not being signed by a major label (she has turned down offers), she has achieved astonishing success over the past decade. Her songs and poetry deal with feminist, political, and social issues.

Shortly after September 11, 2001, she posted the following poem on her Web site. Although she specifically blasts President George W. Bush, the poem is not merely a partisan anti-Republican diatribe. DiFranco, in looking for the cause of the September 11 terrorist attacks, lays blame on American energy policy and foreign policy in general, and therefore just as much of the culpability can be assigned to the Clinton administration as well as those of George H. W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and every administration since the onset of the cold war.

### "SELF EVIDENT," 2001

yes,  
us people are just poems  
we're 90% metaphor  
with a leanness of meaning  
approaching hyper-distillation  
and once upon a time  
we were moonshine  
rushing down the throat of a giraffe  
yes, rushing down the long hallway  
despite what the p.a. announcement says  
yes, rushing down the long stairs  
with the whiskey of eternity  
fermented and distilled  
to eighteen minutes  
burning down our throats  
down the hall  
down the stairs  
in a building so tall  
that it will always be there



yes, it's part of a pair  
 there on the bow of noah's ark  
 the most prestigious couple  
 just kickin back parked  
 against a perfectly blue sky  
 on a morning beatific  
 in its indian summer breeze  
 on the day that america  
 fell to its knees  
 after strutting around for a century  
 without saying thank you  
 or please

and the shock was subsonic  
 and the smoke was deafening  
 between the setup and the punch line  
 cuz we were all on time for work that day  
 we all boarded that plane for to fly  
 and then while the fires were raging  
 we all climbed up on the windowsill  
 and then we all held hands  
 and jumped into the sky

and every borough looked up when it heard the first blast  
 and then every dumb action movie was summarily surpassed  
 and the exodus uptown by foot and motorcar  
 looked more like war than anything i've seen so far  
 so far  
 so fierce and ingenious  
 a poetic specter so far gone  
 that every jackass newscaster was struck dumb and stumbling  
 over 'oh my god' and 'this is unbelievable' and on and on  
 and i'll tell you what, while we're at it  
 you can keep the pentagon  
 keep the propaganda  
 keep each and every tv  
 that's been trying to convince me  
 to participate

in some prep school punk's plan to perpetuate retribution  
 perpetuate retribution  
 even as the blue toxic smoke of our lesson in retribution  
 is still hanging in the air  
 and there's ash on our shoes  
 and there's ash in our hair  
 and there's a fine silt on every mantle

from hell's kitchen to brooklyn  
 and the streets are full of stories  
 sudden twists and near misses  
 and soon every open bar is crammed to the rafters  
 with tales of narrowly averted disasters  
 and the whiskey is flowin  
 like never before  
 as all over the country  
 folks just shake their heads  
 and pour

so here's a toast to all the folks who live in palestine  
 afghanistan  
 iraq

el salvador

here's a toast to the folks living on the pine ridge reservation  
 under the stone cold gaze of mt. rushmore

here's a toast to all those nurses and doctors  
 who daily provide women with a choice  
 who stand down a threat the size of oklahoma city  
 just to listen to a young woman's voice

here's a toast to all the folks on death row right now  
 awaiting the executioner's guillotine  
 who are shackled there with dread and can only escape into their heads  
 to find peace in the form of a dream

cuz take away our playstations  
 and we are a third world nation  
 under the thumb of some blue blood royal son  
 who stole the oval office and that phony election  
 i mean  
 it don't take a weatherman  
 to look around and see the weather  
 jeb said he'd deliver florida, folks  
 and boy did he ever

and we hold these truths to be self evident:  
 #1 george w. bush is not president  
 #2 america is not a true democracy  
 #3 the media is not fooling me  
 cuz i am a poem heeding hyper-distillation  
 i've got no room for a lie so verbose  
 i'm looking out over my whole human family



and i'm raising my glass in a toast  
 here's to our last drink of fossil fuels  
 let us vow to get off of this sauce  
 shoo away the swarms of commuter planes  
 and find that train ticket we lost  
 cuz once upon a time the line followed the river  
 and peeked into all the backyards  
 and the laundry was waving  
 the graffiti was teasing us  
 from brick walls and bridges  
 we were rolling over ridges  
 through valleys  
 under stars  
 i dream of touring like duke ellington  
 in my own railroad car  
 i dream of waiting on the tall blonde wooden benches  
 in a grand station aglow with grace  
 and then standing out on the platform  
 and feeling the air on my face

give back the night its distant whistle  
 give the darkness back its soul  
 give the big oil companies the finger finally  
 and relearn how to rock-n-roll  
 yes, the lessons are all around us and a change is waiting there  
 so it's time to pick through the rubble, clean the streets  
 and clear the air  
 get our government to pull its big dick out of the sand  
 of someone else's desert  
 put it back in its pants  
 and quit the hypocritical chants of  
 freedom forever

cuz when one lone phone rang  
 in two thousand and one  
 at ten after nine  
 on nine one one  
 which is the number we all called  
 when that lone phone rang right off the wall  
 right off our desk and down the long hall  
 down the long stairs  
 in a building so tall  
 that the whole world turned  
 just to watch it fall  
 and while we're at it

remember the first time around?  
 the bomb?  
 the ryder truck?  
 the parking garage?  
 the princess that didn't even feel the pea?  
 remember joking around in our apartment on avenue D?  
 can you imagine how many paper coffee cups would have to change their design  
 following a fantastical reversal of the new york skyline?

it was a joke, of course  
 it was a joke  
 at the time  
 and that was just a few years ago  
 so let the record show  
 that the FBI was all over that case  
 that the plot was obvious and in everybody's face  
 and scoping that scene  
 religiously  
 the CIA  
 or is it KGB?  
 committing countless crimes against humanity  
 with this kind of eventuality  
 as its excuse  
 for abuse after expensive abuse  
 and it didn't have a clue  
 look, another window to see through  
 way up here  
 on the 104th floor  
 look  
 another key  
 another door  
 10% literal  
 90% metaphor  
 3000 some poems disguised as people  
 on an almost too perfect day  
 should be more than pawns  
 in some asshole's passion play  
 so now it's your job  
 and it's my job  
 to make it that way  
 to make sure they didn't die in vain  
 sflhhhh...  
 baby listen  
 hear the train?



## Protest Music III

By the mid-1970s, the innovative and political aspect of popular music had succumbed to commercialism. Songs were losing their power. With the Vietnam War coming to an end, songwriters were no longer writing antiwar songs. Disco came on the scene, and rock and roll seemed stale. Punk and later grunge were efforts to inject some life into music, but the jaded messages that were being put across lacked the passion and freshness of earlier protest music. African American rap music and hip hop, and artists like Talib Kweli, The Coup, and Public Enemy, however, brought more fervor and excitement in their lyrical condemnation of life in a racist society. Recently, many performers have begun to take on broader issues, such as globalization and American diplomacy. This is most notably seen in Mos Def's "New World Water," which departs from the racial theme and touches on the issues of globalization and the "new world order," and in Immortal Technique's "The 4th Branch," which contemptuously condemns American foreign policy. Still, there are many songwriters, such as Steve Earle, Dan Bern, James Seward, and Ani DiFranco, who continue to write songs along the more traditional lines of 1960s songwriters. It is clear, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that protest songs still reach a wide audience and still have the power to raise important questions and impact people's lives. (For protest songs from *Rage Against the Machine* and *Public Enemy*, see the full edition of *Dissent* in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)

### Mos Def, "NEW WORLD WATER," 1999

[Mos Def]

There's nothing more refreshing (that cool refreshing drink)  
Than a cool crisp clean glass of water  
On a warm summer's day (That cool refreshing drink)  
Try it with your friends

New World Water make the tide rise high  
Come in and it'll make your house go "Bye" (My house!)  
Fools done upset the Old Man River  
Made him carry slave ships and fed him dead niggas  
Now his belly full and he about to flood somethin'  
So I'ma throw a rope that ain't tied to nothin'  
Til your crew use the H2 in wise amounts since

SOURCE: Mos Def, *Black on Both Sides*, Priority Records, 1999.

it's the New World Water; and every drop counts  
You can laugh and take it as a joke if you wanna  
But it don't rain for four weeks some summers  
And it's about to get real wild in the half  
You be buying Evian just to take a fuckin' bath  
Heads is acting wild, sippin' poor, puffin' dank  
Competin' with the next man, but how your playa rank?  
See I ain't got time try to be Big Hank,  
Fuck a bank; I need a twenty-year water tank  
Cause while these knuckleheads is out here sweatin' they goods  
The sun is sitting in the treetops burnin' the woods  
And as the flames from the blaze get higher and higher  
They say, "Don't drink the water! We need it for the fire!"  
New York is drinkin' it (New World Water)  
Now all of California is drinkin' it (New World Water)  
Way up north and down south is drinkin' it (New World Water)  
Used to have minerals and zinc in it (New World Water)  
Now they say it got lead and stink in it (New World Water)  
Four carbons and monoxide  
Push the water table lopside  
Used to be free now it cost you a fee  
Cause all things fully loaded they roam cross the sea  
Man, you gotta cook with it, bathe and clean with it (That's right)  
When it's hot, summertime you fend for it (Let em know)  
You gotta put it in the iron you steamin' with (That's right)  
It's what they dress wounds and treat diseases with (Shout it out)  
The rich and poor, black and white got need for it (That's right)  
And everybody in the world can agree with this (Let em know)  
Assumption promotes health and easiness (That's right)  
Go too long without it on this earth and you leavin' it (Shout it out)  
Americans wastin' it on some leisure shit (Say word?)  
And other nations be desperately seekin' it (Let em know)  
Bacteria washin' up on they beaches (Say word?)  
Don't drink the water, son they can't wash they feet with it (Let em know)  
Young babies and professional neediness (Say word?)  
Epidemics hoppin' up off the petri dish (Let em know)  
Control centers try to play it all secretive (Say word?)  
To avoid public panic and freakiness (Let em know)  
There are places where TB is common as TV  
Cause foreign-based companies go and get greedy  
The type of cats who pollute the whole shore line  
Have it purified, sell it for a dollar twenty-five  
Now the world is drinkin' it  
Your moms, wife, and baby girl is drinkin' it  
Up north and down south is drinkin' it



You just have to go to your sink for it  
The cash registers is goin to chink for it  
Four carbons and monoxide  
Got the fish lookin cockeyed  
Used to be free now it cost you a fee  
Cause it's all about gettin that cash (Money)

Said it's all about gettin that cash (Money)(x9)

Johnny cash (Money)

Roseland cash (Money)

Give me cash (Money)

Cold cash (Money)

(Repeat to fade)

Cash rules everything around me,  
Move!

## IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE, "THE 4TH BRANCH," 2003

[Talking]

The new age is upon us

And yet the past refuses to rest in its shallow grave

For those who hide behind the false image of the son of man

shall stand before God!!! It has begun

The beginning of the end

Yeah . .

Yeah . . yeah, yeah

[Verse 1]

The voice of racism preaching the gospel is devilish

A fake church called the prophet Muhammad a terrorist

Forgetting God is not a religion, but a spiritual bond

And Jesus is the most quoted prophet in the Qur'an

They bombed innocent people, tryin' to murder Saddam

When you gave him those chemical weapons to go to war with Iran

This is the information that they hold back from Peter Jennings

Cause Condoleezza Rice is just a new age Sally Hemmings

I break it down with critical language and spiritual anguish

The Judas I hang with, the guilt of betraying Christ

You murdered and stole his religion, and painting him white

Translated in psychologically tainted philosophy

Conservative political right wing, ideology

Glued together sloppily, the blasphemy of a nation  
Got my back to the wall 'cause I'm facin' assassination  
Guantanamo Bay, federal incarceration  
How could this be, the land of the free, home of the brave?  
Indigenous holocaust, and the home of the slaves  
Corporate America, dancin' offbeat to the rhythm  
You really think this country, never sponsored terrorism?  
Human rights violations, we continue the saga  
El Salvador and the contras in Nicaragua  
And on top of that, you still wanna take me to prison  
Just cause I won't trade humanity for patriotism

[Hook]

It's like MK-ULTRA, controlling your brain

Suggestive thinking, causing your perspective to change

They wanna rearrange the whole point of view of the ghetto

The fourth branch of the government, want us to settle

A bandana full of glittering, generality

Fighting for freedom and fighting terror, but what's reality?

Read about the history of the place that we live in

And stop letting corporate news tell lies to your children

[Verse 2]

Flow like the blood of Abraham through the Jews and the Arabs

Broken apart like a woman's heart, abused in a marriage

The brink of holy war, bottled up, like a miscarriage

Embedded correspondents don't tell the source of the tension

And they refuse to even mention, European intervention

Or the massacres in Jenin, the innocent screams

U.S. manufactured missiles, and M-16s

Weapon contracts and corrupted American dreams

Media censorship, blocking out the video screens

A continent of oil kingdoms, bought for a bargain

Democracy is just a word, when the people are starvin'

The average citizen, made to be, blind to the reason

A desert full of genocide, where the bodies are freezin'

And the world doesn't believe that you fightin' for freedom

Cause you fucked the Middle East, and gave birth to a demon

It's open season with the CIA, bugging my crib

Trapped in a ghetto region like a Palestinian kid

Where nobody gives a fuck whether you die or you live

I'm tryin' to give the truth, and I know the price is my life

But when I'm gone they'll sing a song about Immortal Technique

Who beheaded the President, and the princes and sheiks

You don't give a fuck about us, I can see through your facade



Like a fallen angel standing in the presence of God  
Bitch niggaz scared of the truth, when it looks at you hard

[Hook]

It's like MK-ULTRA, controlling your brain

Suggestive thinking, causing your perspective to change

They wanna rearrange the whole point of view in the ghetto

The fourth branch of the government, want us to settle

A bandana full of glittering, generality

Fighting for freedom and fighting terror, but what's reality?

Marital law is coming soon to the hood, to kill you

While you hanging your flag out your project window

[Talking]

Yeah ..

The fourth branch of the government AKA the media

Seems to now have a retirement plan for ex-military officials

As if their opinion was at all unbiased

A machine shouldn't speak for men

So shut the fuck up you mindless drone!

And you know it's serious

When these same media outfits are spending millions of dollars on a PR

campaign

To try to convince you they're fair and balanced

When they're some of the most ignorant, and racist people

Giving that type of mentality a safe haven

We act like we share in the spoils of war that they do

We die in wars, we don't get the contracts to make money off

'em afterwards!

We don't get weapons contracts, niggas!

We don't get cheap labor for our companies, niggas!

We are cheap labor, niggas!

Turn off the news and read, niggas!

Read... read... read...

## STEVE EARLE, "RICH MAN'S WAR," 2004

Jimmy joined the army 'cause he had no place to go

There ain't nobody hirtin'

'round here since all the jobs went  
down to Mexico

SOURCE: Steve Earle, *The Revolution Starts Now*, Artemis Records, 2004.

Reckoned that he'd learn himself a trade maybe see the world  
Move to the city someday and marry a black haired girl  
Somebody somewhere had another plan  
Now he's got a rifle in his hand  
Rollin' into Baghdad wonderin' how he got this far  
Just another poor boy off to fight a rich man's war

Bobby had an eagle and a flag tattooed on his arm  
Red white and blue to the bone when he landed in Kandahar  
Left behind a pretty young wife and a baby girl  
A stack of overdue bills and went off to save the world  
Been a year now and he's still there  
Chasin' ghosts in the thin dry air  
Meanwhile back at home the finance company took his car  
Just another poor boy off to fight a rich man's war

When will we ever learn  
When will we ever see  
We stand up and take our turn  
And keep tellin' ourselves we're free

Ali was the second son of a second son  
Grew up in Gaza throwing bottles and rocks when the tanks would come  
Ain't nothin' else to do around here just a game children play  
Somethin' 'bout livin' in fear all your life makes you hard that way  
He answered when he got the call  
Wrapped himself in death and praised Allah  
A fat man in a new Mercedes drove him to the door  
Just another poor boy off to fight a rich man's war

## Amnesty International

As would be expected in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, many people were detained and questioned. Amnesty International (AI), founded in London in 1961, is an independent international organization that investigates and takes action on human rights issues around the globe. In the weeks and months following the attacks, AI received testimony from many sources that rights abuses were occurring in the United States. AI issued a report, which is here excerpted.



## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERNS REGARDING POST-SEPTEMBER 11 DETENTIONS IN THE U.S.A., MARCH 14, 2002

In the two months following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, more than 1,200 non-U.S. nationals were taken into custody in the USA, in nationwide sweeps for possible suspects. Partial data released by the government last November revealed that most were men of Arab or South Asian origin detained for immigration violations. Another 100 or so were charged with criminal offences, none directly relating to the events of 11 September.

Six months on, some 300 people arrested in the post September 11 (post 9.11) sweeps are believed to remain in the custody of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS); an unknown number of others have been deported or released on bail, sometimes after months in custody. . . .

There continues to be a disturbing level of secrecy surrounding the detentions, which has made it difficult to monitor the situation. To date, the government has provided only limited data, which includes neither the names nor the places of detention of those held in post 9.11 INS custody, and immigration proceedings in many such cases have been ordered closed to public scrutiny. However, AI has gathered information from various sources, including a recent visit to two jails identified as housing detainees and extensive interviews with attorneys, detainees, relatives and former detainees.

Amnesty International's findings confirm many of the organization's earlier concerns and suggest that a significant number of detainees continue to be deprived of certain basic rights guaranteed under international law. These include the right to humane treatment, as well as rights which are essential to protection from arbitrary detention, such as the right of anyone deprived of their liberty to be informed of the reasons for the detention; to be able to challenge the lawfulness of the detention; to have prompt access to and assistance from a lawyer; and to the presumption of innocence. . . .

Amnesty International fully recognizes the government's obligation to take all necessary measures to protect its borders and investigate crimes and potential threats to national security. However, the organization is concerned that the government has used its expanded powers to detain non-nationals in the wake of September 11 without the necessary safeguards under international law. AI is concerned that the detentions in some cases may amount to arbitrary deprivation of liberty in violation of Article 9(1) of the ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights]. The secrecy surrounding the detention process has, further, created a serious lack of public accountability. Transparency in the process is necessary to ensure that all persons deprived of their

liberty can fully exercise their rights under U.S. and international law. Amnesty International urges the U.S. Government to:

Provide in full the information requested under the FOIA [Freedom of Information Act]; make public information on the number and nationalities of those still detained; the reasons for their detention; the date and place of arrest; date and charges; and place of detention; provide information on the numbers and nationalities of those deported or removed under voluntary departure arrangements and the countries to which they have been returned.

Ensure that all persons in federal custody, including those held in local or county jails, are treated humanely in accordance with international standards and that no-one is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The Department of Justice should fully investigate all allegations of ill-treatment of detainees or prisoners and take appropriate action in the case of those found guilty of misconduct.

Ensure respect for the rights of everyone arrested or detained as set out under international standards, including Article 9 of the ICCPR and the Body of Principles. Such rights include the right to be informed of the reasons for arrest and to be given prompt access to attorneys and relatives and consular officials or representatives of relevant international organizations as requested. Ensure that all detained persons are provided with written notification of their rights as guaranteed by international standards and U.S. law, in a language they understand.

Ensure that all arrested or detained persons are brought promptly before a judge and have access to the courts and a procedure in which they may challenge the lawfulness of their detention.

Ensure that no-one is detained on national security grounds unless charged with a recognizable offence or action is being taken to deport within a reasonable period. There must be a realistic possibility of deportation being effected.

Ensure that no-one is removed or deported to a country where they risk being subjected to serious human rights abuses.

Ensure that asylum seekers are not generally detained and that anyone claiming asylum is allowed a full and fair hearing of their claim as provided under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees should be granted access to all asylum seekers and refugees in detention.

Ensure that restraints are applied only when strictly necessary as a precaution against escape, on medical grounds or to prevent damage or injury, in accordance with international standards. Under no circumstances should detainees be shackled when appearing before immigration judges. . . .



## Earth Liberation Front

According to the FBI, the radical Earth Liberation Front (ELF), which preaches a policy of "ecoterrorism," is one of the top domestic terrorist organizations in the United States. ELF has taken credit for many acts of sabotage and arson against lumber companies, ski lodges, and even the U.S. Forestry Service in an effort to thwart industrial and tourist encroachment into the natural habitat of endangered species. ELF claimed, for example, that the reason it torched a Vail, Colorado, ski lodge in 1998 was to prevent the ski company from expanding into 885 acres of forest that was the habitat for the Canada lynx. Though little is known about the origins of ELF, which is said to be an offshoot of Earth First!, it does issue press releases taking responsibility for its members' actions. One of the people associated with ELF is "spokesperson" Craig Rosebraugh. Rosebraugh claims that he is merely an "intermediary" between the organization and the media who reports information that was passed on to him about ELF activities. In 2002, while the United States was stepping up its antiterrorism campaign, domestic terrorism, too, became a significant target of federal law enforcement agencies and congressional investigations. The following testimony was submitted by Rosebraugh to a congressional hearing on ecoterrorism. (For more ELF materials, see the full edition of *Dissent* in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)

### WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUPPLIED TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE FEBRUARY 12, 2002, HEARING ON "ECOTERRORISM"

Submitted to the House on February 7, 2002

*When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce [the people] under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.*

*The oppressed should rebel, and they will continue to rebel and raise disturbance until their civil rights are fully restored to them and all partial distinctions, exclusions and incapacitations are removed.*

Thomas Jefferson, 1776

... Throughout my childhood and adolescent years, the education I received from my parents, schools, popular media and culture instilled in me a pride for my country, for my government, and everything the United States represented. I was taught about the great American history, our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and our legacy of being at the forefront of democracy and freedom. I considered myself to be just an average boy taking an active part in the popular American pastimes of competitive sports, consumer culture, and existing within a classic representation of the standard, middle-class suburban lifestyle....

Particularly, with the advent of the industrial revolution in the United States, the destruction of the natural world took a sharp turn for the worse. The attitude, more so than ever, turned to one of profits at any cost and a major shift from sustainable living to stockpiling for economic benefit. This focus on stockpiling and industrial productivity caused hardship on communities, forcing local crafters and laborers to be driven out of business by overly competitive industries. Additionally, with this new focus on sacrificing sustainable living for financial gain, natural resources were in greater demand than ever. Semi-automatic to automatic machinery, production lines, the automobile, the roadway system, suburbs, and the breakup of small, fairly self-sufficient communities all came about, at least in part, due to the industrial revolution. This unhealthy and deadly transgression of course was supported and promoted by the U.S. government, always eager to see growth in the domestic economy.

All of this set the stage for the threatening shortage of natural resources and the massive environmental pollution and destruction present today in the United States. In cities such as Los Angeles, Detroit, and Houston, the air and soil pollution levels are so extreme people have suffered and continue to face deadly health problems. Waterways throughout the country, including the Columbia Slough in my backyard, are so polluted from industries it is recommended that humans don't even expose themselves to the moisture let alone drink unfiltered, unbotled water. The necessary and crucial forests of the Pacific Northwestern region of the country have been systematically destroyed by corporations such as Boise Cascade, Willamette Industries, and others within the timber industry whose sole motive is profits regardless of the expense to the health of an ecosystem. In Northern California, the sacred old growths, dreamlike in appearance, taking your breath away at first glance, have been continuously threatened and cut by greedy corporations such as Pacific Lumber/Maxxam. The same has occurred and still is a reality in states including Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Colorado....

The popular environmental movement in the United States, which arguably began in the 1960s, has failed to produce the necessary protection needed to ensure that life on this planet will continue to survive. This is largely due to the fact that the movement has primarily consisted of tactics sanctioned by the very power structure that is benefiting economically from the destruction of the natural world. While a few minor successes in this country should be noted, the overwhelming constant trend has been the increasingly speedy liquidation of natural resources and annihilation of the environment.



The state sanctioned tactics, that is, those approved by the U.S. government and the status quo and predominantly legal in nature, rarely, if ever, actually challenge or positively change the very entities that are responsible for oppression, exploitation, and, in this case, environmental destruction. Throughout the history of the United States, a striking amount of evidence indicates that it wasn't until efforts strayed beyond the state sanctioned that social change ever progressed. In the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad, public educational campaigns, in addition to slave revolts, forced the federal government to act. With the Suffragettes in the United States, individuals such as Alice Paul acting with various forms of civil disobedience added to the more mainstream efforts to successfully demand the vote for women. Any labor historian will assert that in addition to the organizing of the workplace, strikes, riots, and protests dramatically assisted in producing more tolerable work standards. The progress of the civil rights movement was primarily founded upon the massive illegal civil disobedience campaigns against segregation and disenfranchisement. Likewise, the true pressure from the Vietnam anti-war movement in this country only came after illegal activities such as civil disobedience and beyond were implemented. Perhaps the most obvious, yet often overlooked, historical example of this notion supporting the importance of illegal activity as a tool for positive, lasting change, came just prior to our war for independence. Our educational systems in the United States glorify the Boston Tea Party while simultaneously failing to recognize and admit that the dumping of tea was perhaps one of the most famous early examples of politically motivated property destruction.

In the mid-1990s, individuals angry and disillusioned with the failing efforts to protect the natural environment through state sanctioned means, began taking illegal action. At first, nonviolent civil disobedience was implemented, followed by sporadic cases of nonviolent property destruction. In November 1997, an anonymous communiqué was issued by a group called the Earth Liberation Front claiming responsibility for their first-ever action in North America.

Immediately, the label of *ecoterrorism* appeared in news stories describing the actions of the Earth Liberation Front. Where exactly this label originated is open for debate, but all indications point to the federal government of the United States in coordination with industry and sympathetic mass media. Whatever the truth may be regarding the source of this term, one thing is for certain—the decision to attach this label to illegal actions taken for environmental protection was very conscious and deliberate. Why? The need for the U.S. federal government to control and mold public opinion through the power of propaganda to ensure an absence of threat is crucial. If information about illegal actions taken to protect the natural environment were presented openly to the public without biased interpretation, the opportunity would exist for citizens to make up their own minds about the legitimacy of the tactic, target, and movement. By attaching a label such as “terrorism” to the activities of groups such as the Earth Liberation Front, the public is left with little choice but to give in to their preconceived notions negatively associated with that term. For many in this country, including

myself, information about terrorism came from schools and popular culture. Most often times, the definition of terrorism was overtly racist associated frequently in movies and on television shows with Arabs and the *others* our government told us were threatening. Terrorism usually is connected with violence, with politically motivated physical harm to humans.

Yet, in the history of the Earth Liberation Front, both in North America and abroad in Europe, no one has ever been injured by the group's many actions. This is not a mere coincidence, but rather a deliberate decision that illustrates the true motivation behind the covert organization. Simply put and most fundamentally, the goal of the Earth Liberation Front is to save life. The group takes actions directly against the property of those who are engaged in massive planetary destruction in order for all of us to survive. This noble pursuit does not constitute terrorism, but rather seeks to abolish it. . . .

Here in the United States, the growth of the empire, of capitalism, and of industry, has meant greater discrepancies between the wealthy and poor, a continued rise in the number of those considered to be a threat to the system, as well as irreversible harm done to the environment and life on the planet. Corporations in the United States literally get away with murder, facing little or no repercussions due to their legal structures. The U.S. government, which sleeps in the same bed as U.S. corporations, serves to ensure that the “business as usual” policies of imperialism can continue with as little friction as possible. Anyone questioning the mere logic of this genocidal culture and governing policy is considered a dissident and, more often than not, shipped off to one of the fastest growing industries of all, the prison industrial complex. . . .

U.S. imperialism is a disease, one that continues to grow and become more powerful and dangerous. It needs to be stopped. One of the chief weapons used by those protecting the imperialist policies of the United States is a slick, believable propaganda campaign designed to ensure U.S. citizens do not question or threaten the “American way of life.” Perhaps the strongest factor in this campaign is the phenomenon of capitalism. By creating a consumer demand for products, corporations, greatly aided by the U.S. government, can effectively influence people's dreams, desires, wants, and life plans. The very American Dream promoted throughout the world is that anyone can come to the United States, work hard, and become happy and financially secure. Through the use of the propaganda campaign designed, promoted, and transmitted by the U.S. ruling class, people are nearly coerced into adopting unhealthy desires for, often times, unreachable, unneeded, and dangerous consumer goods. Through impressive societal mind control, the belief that obtaining consumer products will equal security and happiness has spread across the United States, and much of the planet at this point, like some extreme plague. The fact that the policies of the United States murder people on a daily basis is unseen, forgotten, or ignored, as every effort is made by people to fit into the artificial model life manufactured by the ruling elite. . . .

All power to the people. Long live the earth liberation front. Long live the animal liberation front. Long live all the sparks attempting to ignite the revolution. Sooner or later the sparks *will* turn into a flame!



# Not in Our Name

*As the United States prepared for war with Iraq in the winter of 2003, despite overwhelming popular support for the administration, a wave of dissent swept across the nation. One group, Not in Our Name, NION, circulated an antiwar petition on the Internet. A remarkable thing about the antiwar movement in 2003 was that a large minority of American citizens were opposed to a war that had not even begun. It took four years of fighting in Vietnam before the antiwar movement began to attract such numbers in the late 1960s.*

*The NION Statement of Conscience is the petition that was signed by more than 65,000 people. However, it had no effect on deterring the administration's decision to go to war.*

## STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE, 2003

Let it not be said that people in the United States did nothing when their government declared a war without limit and instituted stark new measures of repression.

The signers of this statement call on the people of the U.S. to resist the policies and overall political direction that have emerged since September 11, 2001, and which pose grave dangers to the people of the world.

We believe that peoples and nations have the right to determine their own destiny, free from military coercion by great powers. We believe that all persons detained or prosecuted by the United States government should have the same rights of due process. We believe that questioning, criticism, and dissent must be valued and protected. We understand that such rights and values are always contested and must be fought for.

We believe that people of conscience must take responsibility for what their own governments do—we must first of all oppose the injustice that is done in our own name. Thus we call on all Americans to RESIST the war and repression that has been loosed on the world by the Bush administration. It is unjust, immoral, and illegitimate. We choose to make common cause with the people of the world. We too watched with shock the horrific events of September 11, 2001. We too mourned the thousands of innocent dead and shook our heads at the terrible scenes of carnage—even as we recalled similar scenes in Baghdad, Panama City, and, a generation ago, Vietnam. We too joined the anguished questioning of millions of Americans who asked why such a thing could happen.

But the mourning had barely begun, when the highest leaders of the land unleashed a spirit of revenge. They put out a simplistic script of "good vs. evil" that was taken up by a pliant and intimidated media. They told us that asking

why these terrible events had happened verged on treason. There was to be no debate. There were by definition no valid political or moral questions. The only possible answer was to be war abroad and repression at home.

In our name, the Bush administration, with near unanimity from Congress, not only attacked Afghanistan but abrogated to itself and its allies the right to rain down military force anywhere and anytime. The brutal repercussions have been felt from the Philippines to Palestine, where Israeli tanks and bulldozers have left a terrible trail of death and destruction. The government has waged an all-out war on and occupied Iraq—a country which has no connection to the horror of September 11. What kind of world will this become if the U.S. government has a blank check to drop commandos, assassins, and bombs wherever it wants?

In our name, within the U.S., the government has created two classes of people: those to whom the basic rights of the U.S. legal system are at least promised, and those who now seem to have no rights at all. The government rounded up over 1,000 immigrants and detained them in secret and indefinitely. Hundreds have been deported and hundreds of others still languish today in prison. This snacks of the infamous concentration camps for Japanese-Americans in World War 2. For the first time in decades, immigration procedures single out certain nationalities for unequal treatment.

In our name, the government has brought down a pall of repression over society. The President's spokesperson warns people to "watch what they say." Dissident artists, intellectuals, and professors find their views distorted, attacked, and suppressed. The so-called Patriot Act—along with a host of similar measures on the state level—gives police sweeping new powers of search and seizure, supervised if at all by secret proceedings before secret courts.

In our name, the executive has steadily usurped the roles and functions of the other branches of government. Military tribunals with lax rules of evidence and no right to appeal to the regular courts are put in place by executive order. Groups are declared "terrorist" at the stroke of a presidential pen.

We must take the highest officers of the land seriously when they talk of a war that will last a generation and when they speak of a new domestic order. We are confronting a new openly imperial policy towards the world and a domestic policy that manufactures and manipulates fear to curtail rights.

There is a deadly trajectory to the events of the past months that must be seen for what it is and resisted. Too many times in history people have waited until it was too late to resist.

President Bush has declared: "you're either with us or against us." Here is our answer: We refuse to allow you to speak for all the American people. We will not give up our right to question. We will not hand over our consciences in return for a hollow promise of safety. We say NOT IN OUR NAME. We refuse to be party to these wars and we repudiate any inference that they are being waged in our name or for our welfare. We extend a hand to those around the world suffering from these policies; we will show our solidarity in word and deed.

We who sign this statement call on all Americans to join together to rise to this challenge. We applaud and support the questioning and protest now going on, even



as we recognize the need for much, much more to actually stop this juggernaut. We draw inspiration from the Israeli reservists who, at great personal risk, declare "there is a limit" and refuse to serve in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

We also draw on the many examples of resistance and conscience from the past of the United States: from those who fought slavery with rebellions and the underground railroad, to those who defied the Vietnam war by refusing orders, resisting the draft, and standing in solidarity with resisters.

Let us not allow the watching world today to despair of our silence and our failure to act. Instead, let the world hear our pledge: we will resist the machinery of war and repression and rally others to do everything possible to stop it.

## Veterans Against the Iraq War

*Of the many thousands of Vietnam veterans who were against the Vietnam War, many have resurfaced to oppose the Iraq War. A smaller number of Desert Storm veterans also came out strongly against the latest war.*

*Within weeks of the invasion, there were documented cases of soldiers resisting the war. Marine Corps Reservist Stephen Funk, for example, refused to serve and turned himself in to military authorities on April 1, 2003.*

*A nonpartisan group of U.S. veterans issued the Call to Conscience from Veterans to Active Duty Troops and Reservists, urging all current military personnel to examine their consciences and reevaluate their stance on war with Iraq. The second selection is by West Point graduate David Wiggins, a conscientious objector during the First Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm), is a physician who has been writing and publishing antiwar articles on the Internet aimed at the military. This is an open letter asking troops to examine whose interests would be served by a war in Iraq. (For more by Wiggins see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

### CALL TO CONSCIENCE FROM VETERANS TO ACTIVE DUTY TROOPS AND RESERVISTS, 2003

We are veterans of the United States armed forces. We stand with the majority of humanity, including millions in our own country, in opposition to the United States' all-out war on Iraq. We span many wars and eras, have many political views and we all agree that this war is wrong.

Many of us believed serving in the military was our duty, and our job was to defend this country. Our experiences in the military caused us to question much

of what we were taught. Now we see our REAL duty is to encourage you as members of the U.S. armed forces to find out what you are being sent to fight and die for and what the consequences of your actions will be for humanity. We call upon you, the active duty and reservists, to follow your conscience and do the right thing.

In the last Gulf War, as troops, we were ordered to murder from a safe distance. We destroyed much of Iraq from the air, killing hundreds of thousands, including civilians. We remember the road to Basra—the Highway of Death—where we were ordered to kill fleeing Iraqis. We bulldozed trenches, burying people alive. The use of depleted uranium weapons left the battlefields radioactive. Massive use of pesticides, experimental drugs, burning chemical weapons depots and oil fires combined to create a toxic cocktail affecting both the Iraqi people and Gulf War veterans today. One in four Gulf War veterans is disabled.

During the Vietnam War we were ordered to destroy Vietnam from the air and on the ground. At My Lai we massacred over 500 women, children and old men. This was not an aberration, it's how we fought the war. We used Agent Orange on the enemy and then experienced first hand its effects. We know what Post Traumatic Stress Disorder looks, feels and tastes like because the ghosts of over two million men, women and children still haunt our dreams. More of us took our own lives after returning home than died in battle.

If you choose to participate in the invasion of Iraq you will be part of an occupying army. Do you know what it is like to look into the eyes of a people that hate you to your core? You should think about what your "mission" really is. You are being sent to invade and occupy a people who, like you and me, are only trying to live their lives and raise their kids. They pose no threat to the United States even though they have a brutal dictator as their leader. Who is the U.S. to tell the Iraqi people how to run their country when many in the U.S. don't even believe their own President was legally elected?

Saddam is being vilified for gassing his own people and trying to develop weapons of mass destruction. However, when Saddam committed his worst crimes the U.S. was supporting him. This support included providing the means to produce chemical and biological weapons. Contrast this with the horrendous results of the U.S.-led economic sanctions. More than a million Iraqis, mainly children and infants, have died because of these sanctions. After having destroyed the entire infrastructure of their country including hospitals, electricity generators, and water treatment plants, the U.S. then, with the sanctions, stopped the import of goods, medicines, parts, and chemicals necessary to restore even the most basic necessities of life.

There is no honor in murder. This war is murder by another name. When, in an unjust war, an errant bomb dropped kills a mother and her child it is not "collateral damage," it is murder. When, in an unjust war, a child dies of dysentery because a bomb damaged a sewage treatment plant, it is not "destroying enemy infrastructure," it is murder. When, in an unjust war, a father dies of a heart attack because a bomb disrupted the phone lines so he could not call an ambulance, it is not "neutralizing command and control facilities," it is murder. When, in an



unjust war, a thousand poor farmer conscripts die in a trench defending a town they have lived in their whole lives, it is not victory, it is murder.

There will be veterans leading protests against this war on Iraq and your participation in it. During the Vietnam War thousands in Vietnam and in the U.S. refused to follow orders. Many resisted and rebelled. Many became conscientious objectors and others went to prison rather than bear arms against the so-called enemy. During the last Gulf War many GIs resisted in various ways and for many different reasons. Many of us came out of these wars and joined with the antiwar movement.

If the people of the world are ever to be free, there must come a time when being a citizen of the world takes precedence over being the soldier of a nation. Now is that time. When orders come to ship out, your response will profoundly impact the lives of millions of people in the Middle East and here at home. Your response will help set the course of our future. You will have choices all along the way. Your commanders want you to obey. We urge you to think. We urge you to make your choices based on your conscience. If you choose to resist, we will support you and stand with you because we have come to understand that our REAL duty is to the people of the world and to our common future.

## MESSAGE TO THE TROOPS: RESIST!, OCTOBER 11, 2002

Dear Soldier of the U.S. Military:

Considering the common practice of talking about "supporting the troops" in times of hostilities, I should let you know how I feel.

With all due respect, I want you to know that if you participate in this conflict, you are not serving me, and I don't support you. Speaking for myself, I feel those who participate will be damaging my reputation as an American, and further endangering me and my children by creating hatred that will someday be returned to us—perhaps someday soon. Your actions will not lead to a safer world, but a more dangerous world of pre-emption and unilateral decisions to commit mayhem. I don't support that.

This talk of "supporting the troops" is just another method our government uses to manipulate and control us. I don't support the troops, but I certainly fear for the lives of the troops. I would support the troops staying home. I regret that our so-called leaders have involved the troops in such a foolish, misguided undertaking. I would support the troops disobeying orders. I feel sorry for the troops' families. I would support the troops if they realized that the best way to defend their families would be to stay alive and healthy and resist this war.

The only people the troops are possibly serving are those who agree with this act of military aggression. Perhaps you are not even serving them if they end up suffering retribution for your actions.

Oh yes, and you are serving the President, of course—the man who avoided combat duty and deserted his National Guard unit. You are serving the man who enriched himself through crony capitalism, shady accounting practices and insider trading while running multiple corporations into bankruptcy. You will be serving the man who lost the popular vote for president, but was handed the presidency by a Supreme Court influenced by his father and through voting irregularities in a state governed by his brother. You will be serving the man who, as President, turned the budget surplus into a deficit and presided over the largest stock market decline since the great depression. You will be serving the man who unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, ignored the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and rejected the International Criminal Court and Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming.

If you are involved in an invasion of Iraq, you will be faced with some difficult ethical decisions. Are the Iraqi foot soldiers really the guilty party here? Is it reasonable to expect them to refuse orders to defend themselves against an invading force (you)? Is this conflict really necessary at all? If not, why kill these people? If it is, are there other means our Commander-in-Chief and others are not exploring that might prevent you from having to kill these people and possibly civilians too, and possibly die yourself or contribute to your friend's death? I'm glad I don't have to make those decisions.

I feel for you and the difficult decisions you must make. I hope this note frees you of any sense of obligation to serve me you must feel, and helps you make a conscientious decision that you will be proud to accept complete responsibility for making. Please pass the sentiments I expressed in this letter on to your fellow soldiers.

David Wiggins

## *The American Civil Liberties Union*

*The mission of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), founded in 1920 during the Red Scare that followed the First World War, is to safeguard the Bill of Rights. Throughout the years, the nonpartisan ACLU has taken on many controversial issues on all sides of the political spectrum. The central concern for the ACLU, though, always comes down to whether it is guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. The ACLU has battled for the right of free speech for everyone, from antiwar protestors and civil rights demonstrators to the Ku Klux Klan.*

*In May 2003, the ACLU issued a report, *Freedom Under Fire: Dissent in Post-9/11 America* (a portion of which is here excerpted), detailing some of the civil liberties infractions that have occurred in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. According to the ACLU, the government, in its efforts to create unanimity of opinion backing the decision to go to war with Iraq, is stifling free speech and dissent and is therefore overstepping its bounds.*



# FREEDOM UNDER FIRE: DISSENT IN POST-9/11 AMERICA, MAY 2003

## INTRODUCTION

There is a pall over our country. In separate but related attempts to squelch dissent, the government has attacked the patriotism of its critics, police have barricaded and jailed protesters, and the New York Stock Exchange has revoked the press credentials of the most widely watched television network in the Arab world. A chilling message has gone out across America: Dissent if you must, but proceed at your own risk.

Government-sanctioned intolerance has even trickled into our private lives. People brandishing anti-war signs or slogans have been turned away from commuter trains in Seattle and suburban shopping malls in upstate New York. Cafeterias are serving "freedom fries." Country music stations stopped playing Dixie Chicks songs, and the Baseball Hall of Fame cancelled an event featuring "Bull Durham" stars Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon, after they spoke out against the war on Iraq.

Compounding the offense is the silence from many lawmakers. There is palpable fear even in the halls of Congress of expressing an unpopular view.

Why should this disturb us? Because democracy is not a quiet business. Its lifeblood is the free and vibrant exchange of ideas. As *New York Times* columnist and author Thomas L. Friedman has pointed out, the war on terror is also a war of ideas. How are we going to convince holdouts in other countries about the importance of free speech and civil liberties if we show so little faith in our own? With U.S. forces deployed overseas, and concerns about safety and freedom at home, we ought to be having as robust a debate as possible...

Yes, some government officials, including local police, have come down hard on protesters, as this report makes clear. But in most of the cases that have come to light, protesters have stood firm. Lawsuits alleging excessive force, wrongful arrest and denial of due process have been filed on behalf of hundreds of protesters in New York and Washington alone. Undaunted by suspensions, arrests or other actions taken against them, a high school student in Michigan, a pair of college students in Iowa, a shopkeeper in Colorado and two grandmothers in Tampa are among those stepping forward to challenge those who would violate their First Amendment rights.

These democratic stirrings encourage us. We recall that although some of the greatest names in American liberalism (President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Supreme Court Justices Earl Warren and Hugo Black) supported the Japanese interments after Pearl Harbor, history has exonerated the people of good hearts and minds who opposed them.

Dissenters who take unpopular positions in their own times are often seen as heroes later on. We believe that when future generations look at what was done to our core freedoms and values after 9/11, the voices of dissent will stand out as the true defenders of democracy.

Anthony D. Romero  
Executive Director, ACLU

## FREEDOM UNDER FIRE: DISSENT IN POST-9/11 AMERICA

In the tense time following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, Attorney General John Ashcroft mocked government critics and assailed their patriotism, calling their concerns "phantoms of lost liberty." And the American Civil Liberties Union shot back with a national ad campaign asserting our right to be "safe and free."

"The nation's highest ranking law enforcement officer is using his bully pulpit to shut down dissent and debate," ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero charged, declaring that free and robust debate is the engine of social and political justice.

But Ashcroft's words were just the opening volley in a war of intimidation. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer also warned Americans to "watch what they say." Conservative commentators like Bill O'Reilly suggested prosecuting war protesters as "enemies of the state." Since 2001, hundreds have been arrested for exercising their constitutionally protected freedoms, and some have lost their jobs or been suspended from school. Many have called on the ACLU for assistance.

We need to stop and consider the direction in which we are going, for we are in danger of allowing ourselves to be governed by our fears rather than our values. We are not the first generation to face this challenge.

Since the administration of President John Adams, who feared that sympathy with the radical ideas of the French Revolution would throw America into upheaval, there have been attempts to silence dissent. The Alien Act of 1798, which gave Adams the power to deport any non-citizen he judged dangerous, was never enforced, but his Sedition Act was used to suppress freedom of the press. President Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus during the Civil War. And President Woodrow Wilson used the Espionage Act of 1917 not to catch spies but to mount a full-scale assault on free speech.

Faced with strong domestic opposition to the First World War from citizens who believed he was less interested in "making the world safe for democracy" than in protecting the investments of the wealthy, Wilson encouraged "patriotic citizens" to report on neighbors they suspected of disloyalty. His Justice Department prosecuted more than 2,000 critics of the war and judges were quick to hand down harsh punishments. In 1918, Congress also enacted a Sedition Act, restricting criticism of the government, the Constitution, the flag and the military.

The decades that followed ushered in some of the most shameful chapters in American history: the World War II interments of Japanese Americans; the McCarthy hearings; the Pentagon Papers, Watergate and FBI spy scandals.



All involved government restrictions on speech, the press and freedom of movement. All were popular at the time, and are now seen as abhorrent to the national interest....

Dissent since 9/11 has taken three principal forms: mass protests and rallies, messages on signs or clothing, and other acts of defiance by communities and individuals. These have ranged from silent vigils in parks to the passage of resolutions by dozens of local governments protesting federal measures that threaten fundamental freedoms.

Some government officials, including local police, have gone to extraordinary lengths to squelch dissent wherever it has sprung up, drawing on a breath-taking array of tactics—from censorship and surveillance to detention, denial of due process and excessive force. Police have beaten and maced protesters in Missouri, spied on law-abiding activists in Colorado and fired on demonstrators in California, and campus police have helped FBI agents to spy on professors and students in Massachusetts. Ashcroft's Justice Department has further asserted the right to seize protesters' assets and deport immigrants under anti-terrorism statutes rushed through Congress after the attacks, and debated whether to revoke U.S. citizenship in some cases....

## MASS MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON

In a class-action lawsuit filed March 27, 2003, the ACLU of the National Capital Area charged police with deliberately violating the constitutional rights of more than 400 peaceful anti-war demonstrators and bystanders by directing them into a police trap and then arresting them—though they had not violated any law.

"In this country, the government is not supposed to arrest you unless you break the law," said local ACLU Legal Director Arthur Spitzer. "But the evidence will show that the police deliberately rounded up hundreds of people who had not broken any law, many of whom were not even involved in the demonstration. No one in the neighborhood was safe from the lawless conduct of the D.C. police."

The arrests occurred on Sept. 27, 2002, in Pershing Park, two blocks from the White House. Arrestees were charged with failing to obey a police order—though no order to disperse was ever given; in fact, people who tried to leave were physically prevented from doing so, according to the ACLU complaint. One demonstrator suffered broken ribs after being knocked down by the police. The true purpose of the mass arrests, the ACLU contends, was to disrupt and prevent peaceful political demonstrations scheduled for that weekend....

## PEACE OFFENSE IN NEW YORK

Oddly, a T-shirt promoting "Peace" brought out the cavalry at a mall in upstate Guilderland, N.Y., where Stephen Downs, a 61-year-old lawyer, was arrested for refusing to leave or remove a shirt he'd bought there. The New York Civil Liberties Union on March 11, 2003, wrote the operators of the Crossgates Mall after Downs was led away in handcuffs on a trespassing charge. "Give Peace a Chance," his shirt

said on one side, and "Peace On Earth" on the other. Downs was accompanied by his 31-year-old son Roger, who also wore an anti-war T-shirt, but was allowed to leave after removing it.

The mall operators later asked the Guilderland Police Department to drop the trespassing charge but the news coverage made Downs a local hero and the NYCLU erected a billboard in protest near the entrance. "Welcome to the mall, you have the right to remain silent," it said. The security officer who called police was way out of line, NYCLU Executive Director Donna Lieberman said; decades earlier, at the height of the Vietnam War, the Supreme Court had even upheld the right of a protester (in *Cohen v. California*) to wear a jacket emblazoned with "Fuck the Draft" in a county courthouse.

"While the issue of free speech in shopping malls came to a head with Mr. Downs' arrest at Crossgates, it remains an issue at malls across the country," Lieberman said. "When, as here, the mall replaces Main Street as a center of commercial and social activity, the censorship of expression has a devastating effect on the freedom and diversity that is at the heart of a free society."...

## MoveOn.org

By September 1998, Californians Joan Blades and Wes Boyd had had enough. They were exasperated that Congress was enmeshed in a political fight over the impeachment of President Bill Clinton while far more significant issues, like health care reform, were left to languish. As a result, Blades and Boyd set up an online petition to "Censure President Clinton and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation." Within days, thousands of people had signed up, and the MoveOn.org organization was born.

As a political action committee, MoveOn.org seeks to motivate all Americans to involve themselves in the political process, to overcome their apathy and take responsibility for forcing politicians to respond to the people's wishes. Like the 1960s organization Students for a Democratic Society,

MoveOn.org advocates participatory democracy not only within the nation but within its own organizational structure. "Every member has a voice in choosing the direction for both MoveOn.org Political Action and MoveOn.org Civic Action." Every member is encouraged to propose tactics and strategies to influence elections and make politicians accountable. On its Web site MoveOn.org states that it "provides individuals, who normally have little political power, an opportunity to aggregate their contributions with others to gain a greater voice in the political process, and brings people together to take important stands on the most important issues facing our country."

After September 11, 2001, MoveOn.org, along with peace activist Eli Pariser, expanded its mission and began mounting a vigorous antiwar campaign. As the United States went to war against Iraq, MoveOn



produced a documentary film, *Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War*, which investigated convincing evidence that Saddam Hussein had not been stockpiling or producing weapons of mass destruction and that the Bush administration had knowingly "cherry picked" intelligence in order to convince the American people to back the decision to go to war. Truth, MoveOn.org claimed, was the first casualty of the war.

The organization continues to produce films and commercials aimed at informing and awakening Americans about the issues it feels are most pressing: campaign finance reform, ecological awareness, opposition to the repeal of the estate tax, and the effort to explore viable ways for America to overcome its addiction to oil. MoveOn also pushes for a more discerning and scrupulous media that will cease cheerleading for the administration and return to its original purpose of being the fourth branch of government whose duty it is to challenge, criticize, and prod public officials. In 2006, MoveOn's stated purpose was to continue conducting a drive to protect "the Supreme Court from a hard-right justice" and to go all-out in an effort "to defeat the right wing and elect moderates and progressives in 2006. But in contrast to most PACs, which funnel industry contributions to candidates in exchange for access, MoveOn.org Political Action brings hundreds of thousands of small donors together to elect candidates who will represent the American people."

In 2004, MoveOn published a book, *MoveOn's 50 Ways to Love Your Country*, in which fifty members contributed personal vignettes on how they were working to effect change.

One of these vignettes is reprinted here. (For another, see the full edition of *Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation*.)

## THE MANY FACES OF THE MEDIA, 2004

### "READ MORE, WATCH TV NEWS LESS"

by Kate Cox, 27, Astoria, Queens, New York

My father is a journalist. He has written for the same newspaper for 30 years. The children in my family were bred with a healthy respect for freedom of the press, as well as freedom of speech and expression. My parents taught us to view every issue with a critical eye and to analyze any given situation for truthful content, not merely sentiment. I have taken those lessons with me into the workplace, the community, and the voting booth.

On September 11, 2001, my critical eye was tested. While the mass media have always bombarded us with images of human suffering and injustice, for me, this was different. This was my city on fire. These were my friends and neighbors running for their lives. Any amount of desensitization I might have developed in the past was shattered in an instant. Like many people in this country, I was glued to my television set for weeks on end, watching images of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon play over and over, while commentators tried to make sense of the events for us. I went to bed every night with a deeper and deeper sense of foreboding about what our world was quickly evolving into.

In nightly phone conversations with my father, I ran down the list of things I'd heard and seen on television that day that I found sad or terrifying. The nation was entering a very scary time, and I was firmly in the grip of intense fear and anxiety. Each night as I ended the conversations with my father, he said, "Remember, read more than you watch." In daily emails, he also urged me to start the day with a newspaper, instead of the morning news programs. He told me that limiting myself to a half hour of coverage per night would help me sleep better. My father reminded me that we are all incredibly susceptible to images and pictures, especially those set to softly touching music. If we allow ourselves to take all of our information from the footage we see on the nightly news, we lose sight of the truth in any given situation. We lose our ability to relate. We become uninformed. He told me that pictures tell only part of the story.

My father was right. I started to read everything I could get my hands on, from newspapers and magazines to social and historical commentary. I read articles and essays written by theologians, teachers, and scientists. I became a subscriber to several publications to ensure that I would always have information first, before images. Each time I sat down to read, my critical eye became more able to focus. I found a sense of perspective and learned to put world events into a historical context. For every essay that said the world was ending, there was one that said it was being rebuilt.

I slowly began to sleep better. I began to feel I had power in a situation that had previously made me feel powerless. I read about opportunities for participation and service, and I started to see myself as a vessel of peace and a force for change.

I am still deeply moved by the images of profound suffering and injustice I see in every corner of the world. I am still brought to tears each time I see footage of the collapse of the World Trade Center. I have learned, however, always to read what's behind the picture. There, I find hope, truth, and details. For me, there is healing in those details. Information is power.

### MoveOn Tips

In your search for information, include types of written material that you have not previously explored, such as published sermons, speeches, and essays. Read material featuring viewpoints that differ from yours politically, spiritually, or emotionally. This will help you see all sides of an issue.

SOURCE: From MoveOn's *50 Ways to Love Your Country: How to Find Your Political Voice and Become a Catalyst for Change* (Inner Ocean Publishing: Makawao, Maui, 2004). "Read More, Watch TV News Less" was retrieved on 4/6/2006 from <http://civic.moveon.org/book//media.html>.



Limit your television viewing. Before tuning in, thoughtfully consider which programs will be most valuable to you in your personal search for information.

## Michael Berg (1945–)

Nicholas Berg was a 26-year-old telecommunications contractor working in Iraq in April 2004 when he was kidnapped by Muntada al-Ansar, an Al Qaeda-linked terrorist group led by Jordanian Abu Musa'b al-Zarqawi. To the horror of millions of people worldwide, Nick's gruesome beheading on May 7th was videotaped and shown over the Internet. In the aftermath of the murder, the young man's father, Michael Berg, a retired schoolteacher and peace activist who had earlier opposed both the Vietnam War and the first Gulf War, began a nationwide campaign denouncing the Bush administration. Berg traveled the country leading protests, marches, and peace vigils calling for an end to the war in Iraq. In 2006, he campaigned as the Green Party candidate for the United States Congressional seat for the state of Delaware.

Shortly after his son's execution in May 2004, Michael Berg wrote the following article for the British newspaper *The Guardian* in which he expresses his feelings about the war in Iraq and the policies of the Bush administration in no uncertain terms. (For another piece by Michael Berg, see the full edition of *Dissent* in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)

### "GEORGE BUSH NEVER LOOKED INTO NICK'S EYES," MAY 21, 2004

My son, Nick, was my teacher and my hero. He was the kindest, gentlest man I know; no, the kindest, gentlest human being I have ever known. He quit the Boy Scouts of America because they wanted to teach him to fire a handgun. Nick, too, poured into me the strength I needed, and still need, to tell the world about him.

People ask me why I focus on putting the blame for my son's tragic and atrocious end on the Bush administration. They ask: "Don't you blame the five men who killed him?" I have answered that I blame them no more or less than the Bush administration, but I am wrong: I am sure, knowing my son, that somewhere during their association with him these men became aware of what an extraordinary man my son was. I take comfort that when they did the awful

thing they did, they weren't quite as into it as they might have been. I am sure that they came to admire him.

I am sure that the one who wielded the knife felt Nick's breath on his hand and knew that he had a real human being there. I am sure that the others looked into my son's eyes and got at least a glimmer of what the rest of the world sees. And I am sure that these murderers, for just a brief moment, did not like what they were doing.

George Bush never looked into my son's eyes. George Bush doesn't know my son, and he is the worse for it. George Bush, though a father himself, cannot feel my pain, or that of my family, or of the world that grieves for Nick, because he is a policymaker, and he doesn't have to bear the consequences of his acts. George Bush can see neither the heart of Nick nor that of the American people, let alone that of the Iraqi people his policies are killing daily.

Donald Rumsfeld said that he took responsibility for the sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners. How could he take that responsibility when there was no consequence? Nick took the consequences.

Even more than those murderers who took my son's life, I can't stand those who sit and make policies to end lives and break the lives of the still living.

Nick was not in the military, but he had the discipline and dedication of a soldier. Nick Berg was in Iraq to help the people without any expectation of personal gain. He was only one man, but through his death he has become many. The truly unselfish spirit of giving your all to do what you know in your own heart is right even when you know it may be dangerous; this spirit has spread among the people who knew Nick, and that group has spread and is spreading all over the world.

So what were we to do when we in America were attacked on September 11, that infamous day? I say we should have done then what we never did before: stop speaking to the people we labelled our enemies and start listening to them. Stop giving preconditions to our peaceful coexistence on this small planet, and start honouring and respecting every human's need to live free and autonomously, to truly respect the sovereignty of every state. To stop making up rules by which others must live and then separate rules for ourselves.

George Bush's ineffective leadership is a weapon of mass destruction, and it has allowed a chain reaction of events that led to the unlawful detention of my son which immersed him in a world of escalated violence. Were it not for Nick's detention, I would have had him in my arms again. That detention held him in Iraq not only until the atrocities that led to the siege of Fallujah, but also the revelation of the atrocities committed in the jails in Iraq, in retaliation for which my son's wonderful life was put to an end.

My son's work still goes on. Where there was one peacemaker before, I now see and have heard from thousands of peacemakers. Nick was a man who acted on his beliefs. We, the people of this world, now need to act on our beliefs. We need to let the evildoers on both sides of the Atlantic know that we are fed up with war. We are fed up with the killing and bombing and maiming of innocent people. We are fed up with the lies. Yes, we are fed up with the suicide bombers, and with the failure of the Israelis and Palestinians to find a way to stop killing each other. We are fed up with negotiations and peace conferences that are



entered into on both sides with preset conditions that preclude the outcome of peace. We want world peace now.

Many have offered to pray for Nick and my family. I appreciate their thoughts, but I ask them to include in their prayers a prayer for peace. And I ask them to do more than pray. I ask them to demand peace now.

## Cindy Sheehan (1957—)

On April 4, 2004, U.S. Army Specialist Casey Austin Sheehan was killed by small arms fire and a rocket-propelled grenade in Iraq. Two months later, President George W. Bush met with parents of soldiers killed in Iraq and expressed his condolences to Casey's mother, Cindy Sheehan, saying, "Mom, I don't think I can understand your pain." Ms. Sheehan felt outraged at what she considered the President's blasé indifference and pledged that she would do everything she could to protest the war in Iraq. She cofounded Gold Star Families for Peace, an organization of families who lost a son or daughter in Iraq, dedicated to ending the war, and in August 2005, Sheehan led a vigil near President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas. Accompanied by a handful of antiwar activists, she vowed to camp out there until the President met with her to explain why her son was killed and why U.S. troops were still in Iraq even after the administration acknowledged that the rationale for the invasion, the weapons of mass destruction, was a pretense. When the President refused to meet with her, hundreds of antiwar demonstrators went to Texas to join and Sheehan's vigil. As the days went by, more and more supporters showed up, and Cindy Sheehan became an international cause célèbre and the focus of media attention. "People are dying every day for lies," Sheehan told one reporter. "The only way we can support our troops at this point is to bring them home."

Sheehan wrote *A Lie of Historic Proportions* during her vigil in Texas, and the second piece, *Carly's Poem*, is a commentary on a poem her daughter composed a few days after Casey's death. (For her essay "Not Worth My Son's Sacrifice" see the full edition of *Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation*.)

### A LIE OF HISTORIC PROPORTIONS, AUGUST 8, 2005

Iraq has been the tragic Lie of Historic Proportions of Washington, DC, since before the first gulf war. For years, Saddam was one of our government's propped up and militarily supported puppets. Many people have seen the famous footage

of Donald Rumsfeld shaking hands with Saddam. I suppose the two are smiling so big for the cameras because they are kindred spirits. After all of the hand-shaking and weapon brokering, when did Saddam become such a bad guy to Bush, Cheney, Halliburton and Co.? (Insert your favorite reason here).

During the Clinton regime, the US-UN led sanctions against Iraq and the weekly bombing raids killed tens of thousands of innocent people in Iraq. Many of them were children, but since one of her children didn't have to be sacrificed to the homicidal war machine, Madeline Albright thinks the slaughter during the "halcyon" Clinton years was "worth it." More lies.

Anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of current events understands that this invasion/occupation of Iraq was not about Saddam being a "bad guy." If that logic is used, then how many innocent Iraqi people have to die before the citizens of America wake up and know that our government is a "bad guy"? We also know that Iraq was not about WMDs. They weren't there and they weren't going to be there for at least a decade, by all reports. Another reason, so wispy and more difficult to disprove, is that America invaded Iraq to bring freedom and democracy to the Iraqi people. When one tries to dispute this particular deception, one is accused of being unpatriotic or hating freedom. Even though correct, the statement "Freedom isn't Free" is very insulting to me. False freedom is very expensive. Fake freedom costs over one billion of our tax dollars a week; phony freedom has cost the Iraqi people tens of thousands of innocent lives; fanciful freedom has meant the destruction of a country and its infrastructure. Tragically, this fabricated notion of freedom and democracy cost me far more than I was willing to pay: the life of my son, Casey. The Lie of Historic Proportions also cost me my peace of mind, I do not feel free and I do not feel like I live in a democracy.

One of the other great deceptions that is being perpetuated on the American public and the world is that this occupation is to fight terrorism. If we don't fight terrorism in Iraq, then we will have to fight it "on our streets." In fact, terrorist attacks have skyrocketed in Iraq and all over the world. So much so that the State Department has stopped compiling the statistics and quit issuing the yearly terrorism report. I guess if one doesn't write a report, then terrorism doesn't exist? All of Casey's commendations say that he was killed in the "GWOT," the Global War on Terrorism. I agree with most of GWOT, except that Casey was killed in the Global War Of Terrorism waged on the world and its own citizens by the biggest terrorist outfit in the world: George and his destructive Neo-Con cabal.

The evidence is overwhelming, compelling, and alarming that George and his indecent bandits traitorously had intelligence fabricated to fit their goal of invading Iraq. The criminals foisted a Lie of Historic Proportions on the world. It was clear to many of us more aware people that George, Condi, Rummy, the two Dicks: Cheney and Perte, Wolfe, and most effectively and treacherously, Colin Powell, lied their brains out before the invasion. The world was even shown where the WMDs were on the map. We were told that the "smoking gun" could come at any time in the form of a "mushroom cloud" or a cloud of toxic biological or chemical weapons. Does anyone remember duct tape and plastic sheeting?



Finally, the side of peace, truth, and justice has our own smoking gun and it is burning our hands. It is the so-called Downing Street Memo dated 23, July 2002 (almost 8 months before the invasion) that states that military action (against Iraq) is now seen as "inevitable." The memo further states that: "Bush wanted to remove Saddam through military action," justified by the conjunction of "terrorism and WMDs." The most damning thing to George in the memo is where the British intelligence officer who wrote the memo claims that the intelligence to base Great Britain and the U.S. staging a devastating invasion on Iraq was being "fixed around the policy." Now, after over three years of relentless propaganda, it is difficult to distinguish the proven lies from the new "truth": that this occupation is bringing freedom and democracy to the people of Iraq.

Casey took an oath to protect the U.S. from all enemies "foreign and domestic." He was sent to occupy and die in a foreign country that was no threat to the USA. However, the biggest threat to our safety, humanity, and our way of life in America [is] George and his cronies. Congress made a Mistake of Historic Proportions and waived its Constitutional responsibility to declare war. It is time for the House to make up for that mistake and introduce Articles of Impeachment against the murderous thugs who have caused so much mindless mayhem. It is time for Congress to re-validate itself by holding a hearing about the Downing Street Memo....

It is time to put partisan politics behind us to do what is correct for once and reclaim America's humanity. It is time for Congress and the American people to work together in peace and justice to rid our country of the stench of greed, hypocrisy, and unnecessary suffering that permeates our White House and our halls of Congress. It is time to hold someone accountable for the carnage and devastation that has been caused. As a matter of fact, it is past time, but it is not too late.

Cindy Sheehan

Mother of needlessly slain soldier, Casey Sheehan

## CARLY'S POEM—A NATION ROCKED TO SLEEP, AUGUST 15, 2005

### "A NATION ROCKED TO SLEEP"

by Carly Sheehan

*Have you ever heard the sound of a mother screaming for her son?  
The torrential rains of a mother's weeping will never be done  
They call him a hero, you should be glad that he's one, but  
Have you ever heard the sound of a mother screaming for her son?*

*Have you ever heard the sound of a father holding back his cries?  
He must be brave because his boy died for another man's lies  
The only grief he allows himself are long, deep sighs  
Have you ever heard the sound of a father holding back his cries?*

*Have you ever heard the sound of taps played at your brother's grave?  
They say that he died so that the flag will continue to wave  
But I believe he died because they had oil to save  
Have you ever heard the sound of taps played at your brother's grave?*

*Have you ever heard the sound of a nation being rocked to sleep?  
The leaders want to keep you numb so the pain won't be so deep  
But if we the people let them continue another mother will weep  
Have you ever heard the sound of a nation being rocked to sleep?*

The sounds my daughter wrote about in her inspired poem, so poignantly and amazingly a few weeks after her brother, my son, was killed in Iraq, have been repeated over and over again too many times since the criminal invasion/occupation of Iraq began in March of 2003.

These sounds are imprinted in my DNA. I will never, ever forget the night of April 4, 2004, when I found out that Casey had been killed. After what seemed an eternity, I finally began to wonder who or what was making those horrible screaming noises. Then I realized it was me. It couldn't have been Casey's father, because he was paralyzed in stunned silence holding the pair of pants he had been folding when the deliverers of death news arrived.

I will also never forget the day when we buried my sweet boy, my oldest son. I'll never forget the playing of taps, or the violent, and in hindsight, thoughtless, volley of the 21-gun salute. If I live to be a very old lady and forget everything else, I will never forget when the general handed me the folded flag that had lain on Casey's coffin, as his brother and sisters, standing behind me, sobbed.

The saddest thing about the obscene sounds of violence is that they never should have been heard in the first place. From Maine to California, and from Baghdad to Falluja, these dirges were unnecessary. In my travels, and from hundreds of emails, phone calls, and cards and letters, I am discovering that people who formerly supported the invasion of Iraq are withdrawing their support. I even believe that many of our fellow citizens who still support the ignominy of Iraq are doing so because they are clinging to the deceptions so desperately, because they want the deceptions to so be the truth. It will be painful to come to terms with supporting the lies of this administration. It will be painful to know that wholesale killing of innocent people occurred because you and so many others believed the betrayals, but acknowledging the mistake is the first step to correcting it. And believe me, acknowledging the mistake is not as painful as hearing those devastating sounds.

Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) has realized that he had been duped into supporting the invasion. I have spoken to him about his change of heart, and he



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.*

—Henry David Thoreau

*... I'd like to make a promise and I'd like to make a vow  
That when I've got something to say, sir, I'm gonna say it now.*

—Phil Ochs

is so sad that his wholehearted support of the administration helped cause so many good people to hear those gut-wrenching sounds of grief. But he is going forward to do what he can to end this occupation as soon as possible. He has co-sponsored a bipartisan bill (HRJ 55) with other Congressional leaders like Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and Ron Paul (R-TX) to force our administration into a troop withdrawal beginning October 1, 2006. The bill is a good first step to ensuring that families here in America and all over the world do not have to suffer needless death in war. However, I would like the withdrawal to begin tomorrow, because I don't even want to try and imagine the sounds Casey heard before he died. I don't want to imagine the sound of the bullet strong enough to pierce the Kevlar coating on his helmet to rip through his skull. I don't want to know the sounds of a mother in Iraq waiting for her entire family. These sounds need to stop immediately. It is time to bring our troops home.

The sound I do want to hear is the sound of a Nation Waking Up. I will rejoice to hear the sounds of the collective Mea Culpa and the beating of breasts. I want to hear the deafening clicks as the steady stream of news-o-tainment is turned off, propaganda that is turning us into zombies who are numb to the truth. I want to hear the sound of our children getting off planes and boats from Iraq to the joyful squealing of their children and the deep sighs of relief from their spouses, parents, and other loved ones. I want to hear our citizenry lifting up their voices in chorus and singing, "We will never let this happen again."

Between 1955 and 1975, the United States underwent a profound change: from a nation that (somewhat naively and arrogantly) believed in its own myths to a nation that (somewhat naively and angrily) began to question those very myths. For some citizens the 1960s and the five years on either side of the decade were profoundly disturbing. For others they were a breath of fresh air. For everyone, no matter what their perspective, it seemed that protest and dissent had reached a high-water mark. But the years that brought the Montgomery bus boycott, the lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the March on the Pentagon, Woodstock, Altamont, and Kent State; the years that brought Allen Ginsberg, Malvina Reynolds, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Timothy Leary, Abbie Hoffman, Ella Baker, Malcolm X, Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, Betty Friedan, and Elizabeth Martinez; the years that brought SDS, AIM, NOW, and the GLF—those years were in no way an aberration; in no way were they contrary to American ideals and American principles. In fact, the political, cultural, and social upheavals of the 1960s were simply a culmination of the very spirit upon which this country was founded—the spirit of dissent.

All of a sudden, or so it seemed, Civil Rights activists, antiwar liberals, and songwriters took seriously the injunctions of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson that all men were endowed with unalienable natural rights. They took seriously the lesson taught to every primary school pupil that the United States was the greatest country in the world because it stood for the inherent equality of *all* people. And yet when these same pupils, growing into adolescence and young adulthood, saw televised images of soldiers of the 101st Airborne (one of the first divisions to parachute into Normandy on June 6, 1944) protecting black teenagers as they entered Little Rock Central High School in 1957, it suddenly dawned on many of them that the grand American values that they had been taught were simply not realized. It was this blatant discrepancy between ideal and reality that had a huge impact on the escalation of dissent in the sixties.



Between 1965 and 1967, while studying Puritanism as a graduate student at Michigan State University, I attended speeches by Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, Timothy Leary, and (of all people) the Führer of the American Nazi Party, George Lincoln Rockwell, during their whirlwind visits to the campus. All four of these men, in their own way, dissented against the norms of American society and, to varying extents, the values of the "American way of life." Yet each man's convictions had historical antecedents. Martin Luther King adopted the words and ideas of Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi, Reinhold Niebuhr and Walter Rauschenbusch, as well as the Bible and the Declaration of Independence, and applied them to America in the 1950s and 1960s. Stokely Carmichael took Marcus Garvey's expressions of "black power" and "black is beautiful" and applied them to the African American experience as the Civil Rights movement was entering a more cynical phase in the late 1960s. Timothy Leary harked back to the visionaries and mystics of India and Tibet, to European Romanticism, and to the psychedelic experiences of North American Indian shamanism. George Lincoln Rockwell repeated the anti-Semitic, xenophobic sentiments that have persisted in America ever since the founding of the Grand Order of the Star Spangled Banner and the Know-Nothing Party in the nineteenth century.

What I heard in those speeches at Michigan State University was nothing new. Those who espouse radical (or reactionary) revolutionary (or counterrevolutionary) ideas are carrying on a tradition that began during the earliest days of settlement in the New World. In fact, theirs is a tradition that originated even before the foundation of the permanent English colonies that would eventually become the United States. For four centuries, dissent has played a central role in the American experience.

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Finally there is Patricia Rosemary Flavin, who is my inspiration, my muse, my love. From the moment we met, *she knew*. Her love and faith in me have given me more than I can ever express. This book is dedicated to her.



In tracing the theme of dissent as it weaves its way through the fabric of American history, the foremost difficulty is picking and choosing satisfactory samples that construct an accurate picture of American dissent. Many of the documents are influential groundbreaking sources of dissent. Paine's pamphlet, Garrison's editorial, Stanton's declaration, Thoreau's essay, and Martin Luther King's letter are all major documents that influenced the course of American history, and their authors were chief spokespersons for their cause. Also included in this book are lesser-known documents that have had an impact on our country, such as the Native American speeches and petitions, Woolman's essay, Pringle's diary, the African American soldiers' letters to the editor, Schurz's speech, Bourné's essay, Yasui's letters, Smith's declaration, Reynolds' song, Weyrich's lament, and DiFranco's poem. Many of these people are unfamiliar to most contemporary Americans—indeed many of them were unknown to their own contemporaries—yet they spoke out eloquently about the issues and events of their day and are exemplars for all of us that even ordinary people have had an impact on history. Keep in mind that for every one of these documents, scores of others are accessible for anyone wishing to learn more about dissent and protest.

Some of the documents here are speeches, petitions, broadsides, posters, and songs that deal with various injustices. Others are interviews, articles, recollections, and memoirs of events by the people involved, in which they retell their experiences in jail or on a protest march, or simply their personal agonizing over how far to take their protest. Some of the documents were published at the time of the event; others were published years later. It is important with the early Native American documents to remember that many of the documents are speeches that were translated and transcribed by an English-speaking white Christian European who was not a neutral observer and therefore might not accurately reflect the sentiments of the speaker. Some of these transcriptions and memoirs were written years and even decades after the event and were therefore clouded by the passage of time.

It is my modest hope that this book serves to illustrate that dissent, in all its forms, has been a powerful and defining force throughout American history. Religious, political, cultural, and social dissenters have helped shaped the United States. There is little doubt that dissent will continue to have an impact on the direction this nation takes in the twenty-first century.

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