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"In this wonderfully wide-ranging, intensely thought-provoking, and superbly edited collection of documents, Ralph Young demonstrates beyond any shadow of a doubt that the history of dissent forms the great backdrop for the development of American democracy."

—David M. Wrobel, Professor of History, University of Nevada—Las Vegas, and President-Elect of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association (AHA/PCB)

# Dissent in America

## Voices That Shaped a Nation

### Concise Edition

RALPH F. YOUNG  
*Temple University*



New York San Francisco Boston  
London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore Madrid  
Mexico City Munich Paris Cape Town Hong Kong Montreal

organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense.

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails. We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariable the same object, evinces a design to reduce them 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.

## Students for a Democratic Society

*Robert Haber, Tom Hayden, Sharon Jeffrey, Robert Ross, and other students at the University of Michigan formed Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1960. Influenced by the civil rights movement and specifically by sit-ins organized by black students in Greensboro, North Carolina, SDS sought to address many diverse issues that the United States was confronting at the end of the complacent 1950s. Basing much of their thinking on the writings of Marx, Lenin, Fanon, Marcuse, and other left-wing philosophers, SDS wanted the United States to live up to its lofty ideals of equality and freedom for all. In 1962, at a convention in Port Huron, Michigan, they released the following statement, written primarily by Tom Hayden, in which they called for a participatory democracy. For the rest of the decade, as the civil rights movement progressed and the Vietnam War eventually took center stage, SDS grew rapidly and had a huge impact on radicals. Unlike the Old Left, this New Left organization was not content merely to change the power structure but urged people to change their values, to change their consciousness. Only in this way could a true revolution come to fruition. SDS provided much of the intellectual foundation for the emerging student movement.*

### THE PORT HURON STATEMENT, 1962

We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.

When we were kids the United States was the wealthiest and strongest country in the world; the only one with the atom bomb, the least scarred by modern war, an initiator of the United Nations that we thought would distribute Western influence throughout the world. Freedom and equality for each individual, government of, by, and for the people—these American values we found good, principles by which we could live as men. Many of us began maturing in complacency.

As we grew, however, our comfort was penetrated by events too troubling to dismiss. First, the permeating and victimizing fact of human degradation, symbolized by the Southern struggle against racial bigotry, compelled most of us from silence to activism. Second, the enclosing fact of the Cold War, symbolized by the presence of the Bomb, brought awareness that we ourselves, and our friends, and millions of abstract "others" we knew more directly because of our common peril, might die at any time. We might deliberately ignore, or avoid, or

SOURCE: James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 329-345.



fail to feel all other human problems, but not these two, for these were too immediate and crushing in their impact, too challenging in the demand that we as individuals take the responsibility for encounter and resolution.

While these and other problems either directly oppressed us or rankled our consciences and became our own subjective concerns, we began to see complicated and disturbing paradoxes in our surrounding America. The declaration "all men are created equal . . ." rang hollow before the facts of Negro life in the South and the big cities of the North. The proclaimed peaceful intentions of the United States contradicted its economic and military investments in the Cold War status quo.

We witnessed, and continue to witness, other paradoxes. With nuclear energy whole cities can easily be powered, yet the dominant nation-states seem more likely to unleash destruction greater than that incurred in all wars of human history. Although our own technology is destroying old and creating new forms of social organization, men still tolerate meaningless work and idleness. While two-thirds of mankind suffers undernourishment, our own upper classes revel amidst superfluous abundance. Although world population is expected to double in forty years, the nations still tolerate anarchy as a major principle of international conduct and uncontrolled exploitation governs the sapping of the earth's physical resources. Although mankind desperately needs revolutionary leadership, America rests in national stalemate, its goals ambiguous and tradition-bound instead of informed and clear, its democratic system apathetic and manipulated rather than "of, by, and for the people."

Not only did tarnish appear on our image of American virtue, not only did disillusion occur when the hypocrisy of American ideals was discovered, but we began to sense that what we had originally seen as the American Golden Age was actually the decline of an era. The worldwide outbreak of revolution against colonialism and imperialism, the entrenchment of totalitarian states, the menace of war, overpopulation, international disorder, supertechnology—these trends were testing the tenacity of our own commitment to democracy and freedom and our abilities to visualize their application to a world in upheaval.

Our work is guided by the sense that we may be the last generation in the experiment with living. But we are a minority—the vast majority of our people regard the temporary equilibriums of our society and world as eternally functional parts. In this is perhaps the outstanding paradox; we ourselves are imbued with urgency, yet the message of our society is that there is no viable alternative to the present. Beneath the reassuring tones of the politicians, beneath the common opinion that America will "muddle through," beneath the stagnation of those who have closed their minds to the future, is the pervading feeling that there simply are no alternatives, that our times have witnessed the exhaustion not only of Utopias, but of any new departures as well.

Feeling the press of complexity upon the emptiness of life, people are fearful of the thought that at any moment things might be thrust out of control. They fear change itself, since change might smash whatever invisible framework seems to hold back chaos for them now.

For most Americans, all crusades are suspect, threatening. The fact that each individual sees apathy in his fellows perpetuates the common reluctance to organize for change. The dominant institutions are complex enough to blunt the minds of their potential critics, and entrenched enough to swiftly dissipate or entirely repel the energies of protest and reform, thus limiting human expectancies. Then, too, we are a materially improved society, and by our own improvements we seem to have weakened the case for further change.

Some would have us believe that Americans feel contentment amidst prosperity—but might it not better be called a glaze above deeply felt anxieties about their role in the new world? And if these anxieties produce a developed indifference to human affairs, do they not as well produce a yearning to believe that there is an alternative to the present, that something can be done to change circumstances in the school, the workplaces, the bureaucracies, the government?

It is to this latter yearning, at once the spark and engine of change, that we direct our present appeal. The search for truly democratic alternatives to the present, and a commitment to social experimentation with them, is a worthy and fulfilling human enterprise, one which moves us and, we hope, others today.

On such a basis do we offer this document of our convictions and analysis: as an effort in understanding and changing the conditions of humanity in the late twentieth century, an effort rooted in the ancient, still unfulfilled conception of man attaining determining influence over his circumstances of life. . . .

We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love. In affirming these principles we are aware of countering perhaps the dominant conceptions of man in the twentieth century: that he is a thing to be manipulated, and that he is inherently incapable of directing his own affairs. We oppose the depersonalization that reduces human being to the status of things—if anything, the brutalities of the twentieth century teach that means and ends are intimately related, that vague appeals to "posterity" cannot justify the mutilations of the present. We oppose, too, the doctrine of human incompetence because it rests essentially on the modern fact that men have been "competently" manipulated into incompetence—we see little reason why men cannot meet with increasing the skill the complexities and responsibilities of their situation, if society is organized not for minority, but for majority, participation in decision-making.

Men have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity. It is this potential that we regard as crucial and to which we appeal, not to the human potentiality for violence, unreason, and submission to authority. The goal of man and society should be human independence: a concern not with image of popularity but with finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic; a quality of mind not compulsively driven by a sense of powerlessness, nor one which unthinkingly adopts status values, nor one which represses all threats to its habits, but one which has full, spontaneous access to present and past experiences, one which easily unites the fragmented



parts of personal history, one which openly faces problems which are troubling and unresolved; one with an intuitive awareness of possibilities, an active sense of curiosity, an ability and willingness to learn.

This kind of independence does not mean egotistic individualism—the object is not to have one's way so much as it is to have a way that is one's own. Nor do we deify man—we merely have faith in his potential.

*Human relationships* should involve fraternity and honesty. Human interdependence is contemporary fact; human brotherhood must be willed, however, as a condition of future survival and as the most appropriate form of social relations. Personal links between man and man are needed, especially to go beyond the partial and fragmentary bonds of function that bind men only as worker to worker, employer to employee, teacher to student, American to Russian.

Loneliness, estrangement, isolation describe the vast distance between man and man today. These dominant tendencies cannot be overcome by better personnel management, nor by improved gadgets, but only when a love of man overcomes the idolatrous worship of things by man. As the individualism we affirm is not egoism, the selflessness we affirm is not self-elimination. On the contrary, we believe in generosity of a kind that imprints one's unique individual qualities in the relation to other men, and to all human activity. Further, to dislike isolation is not to favor the abolition of privacy; the latter differs from isolation in that it occurs or is abolished according to individual will.

Finally, we would replace power rooted in possession, privilege, or circumstance by power and uniqueness rooted in love, reflectiveness, reason, and creativity. As a *social system* we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation.

In a participatory democracy, the political life would be based in several root principles: that decision-making of basic social consequence be carried on by public groupings; that politics be seen positively, as the art of collectively creating an acceptable pattern of social relations; that politics has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community, thus being a necessary, though not sufficient, means of finding meaning in personal life; that the political order should serve to clarify problems in a way instrumental to their solution; it should provide outlets for the expression of personal grievance and aspiration; opposing views should be organized so as to illuminate choices and facilitate the attainment of goals; channels should be commonly available to relate men to knowledge and to power so that private problems—from bad recreation facilities to personal alienation—are formulated as general issues.

The economic sphere would have as its basis the principles: that work should involve incentives worthier than money or survival. It should be educative, not stultifying; creative, not mechanical; self-directed, not manipulated, encouraging independence, a respect for others, a sense of dignity, and a willingness to accept

social responsibility, since it is this experience that has crucial influence on habits, perceptions and individual ethics; that the economic experience is so personally decisive that the individual must share in its full determination; that the economy itself is of such social importance that its major resources and means of production should be open to democratic participation and subject to democratic social regulation.

Like the political and economic ones, major social institutions—cultural, educational, rehabilitative, and others—should be generally organized with the well-being and dignity of man as the essential measure of success.

In social change or interchange, we find violence to be abhorrent because it requires generally the transformation of the target, be it a human being or a community of people, into a depersonalized object of hate. It is imperative that the means of violence be abolished and the institutions—local, national, international—that encourage non-violence as a condition of conflict be developed. These are our central values, in skeletal form. It remains vital to understand their denial or attainment in the context of the modern world. . . .

## Protest Music I

*During the latter half of the 1950s a number of coffee houses and folk clubs opened in New York and San Francisco. This was partly an outgrowth of the popularity of the Weavers folk group as well as the growing Beat Movement. Beat poets (and would-be poets) often gathered in these smoke-filled clubs to exchange ideas, denounce the conformist social atmosphere of the 1950s, read their poetry, and, in some cases, sing their songs. The result was the folk music revival. In 1958, when the Kingston Trio's "Tom Dooley" raced to the top of the charts, folk music became a force in popular culture. By the early 1960s, numerous performers such as Peter, Paul, and Mary, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs, and Bob Dylan were appealing to a rapidly growing audience of baby boomers. At first these musicians recorded and performed traditional songs; the songs of Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, and Pete Seeger; or songs from 1920s blues artists like Mississippi John Hurt or Robert Johnson. Soon, however, many folk artists began writing their own songs. This was especially true of Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs, who had such an influence that by 1965 the times were truly "a-changin'," and it was almost a requirement for any would-be folksingers to be writing their own songs.*

*Folk songs tell a story. A story can be political. Many of the songs performed at the clubs (and later at larger venues like Carnegie Hall) were critical and probing explorations of the problems facing the nation: civil rights, the cold war, the uptight conformity of crew-cut, gray-flannel-suit*



There are people in this country today who are trying to build that movement, who aim at nothing less than a humanist reformation. And the humanist liberals must understand that it is this movement with which their own best hopes are most in tune. We radicals know the same history that you liberals know, and we can understand your occasional cynicism, exasperation, and even distrust. But we ask you to put these aside and help us risk a leap. Help us find enough time for the enormous work that needs doing here. Help us build. Help us shape the future in the name of plain human hope.

## The Weather Underground

*In 1968, after the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, and the events in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention, many activists began to give up hope in the political process. Some protestors became more radicalized; others began to "drop out" and to form communes in an effort to achieve personal growth. The idea was to concentrate on reforming oneself and not society—the inner revolution rather than the outer. Students for a Democratic Society, the leading New Left student organization, disintegrated.*

*A splinter group, the Weathermen (taking their name from a line in Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues"), organized itself in 1969 and advocated violent confrontation with the "police state." The Weathermen, (later the gender-neutral "Weather Underground"), of course, did not have much chance for success in bringing down the U.S. government, and their membership was never more than two or three hundred, but police forces and the FBI targeted them after their "Days of Rage" campaign in Chicago in October 1969 when they rampaged through the streets breaking store windows and damaging automobiles.*

### YOU DON'T NEED A WEATHERMAN TO KNOW WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS, 1969

People ask, what is the nature of the revolution that we talk about? Who will it be made by, and for, and what are its goals and strategy?

The overriding consideration in answering these questions is that the main struggle going on in the world today is between U.S. imperialism and the

SOURCE: From *New Left Notes*, June 18, 1969, in Harold Jacobs, *Weatherman* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1970), 51–53.

national liberation struggles against it. This is essential in defining political matters in the whole world: because it is by far the most powerful, every other empire and petty dictator is in the long run dependent on U.S. imperialism, which has unified, allied with, and defended all of the reactionary forces of the whole world. Thus, in considering every other force or phenomenon, from Soviet imperialism or Israeli imperialism to "workers struggle" in France or Czechoslovakia, we determine who are our friends and who are our enemies according to whether they help U.S. imperialism or fight to defeat it.

So the very first question people in this country must ask in considering the question of revolution is where they stand in relation to the United States as an oppressor nation, and where they stand in relation to the masses of people throughout the world whom U.S. imperialism is oppressing.

The primary task of revolutionary struggle is to solve this principal contradiction on the side of the people of the world. It is the oppressed peoples of the world who have created the wealth of this empire and it is to them that it belongs; the goal of the revolutionary struggle must be the control and use of this wealth in the interests of the oppressed peoples of the world.

It is in this context that we must examine the revolutionary struggles in the United States. We are within the heartland of a world-wide monster, a country so rich from its world-wide plunder that even the crumbs doled out to the enslaved masses within its borders provide for material existence very much above the conditions of the masses of people of the world. The U.S. empire, as a world-wide system, channels wealth, based upon the labor and resources of the rest of the world, into the United States. The relative affluence existing in the United States is directly dependent upon the labor and natural resources of the Vietnamese, the Angolans, the Bolivians, and the rest of the peoples of the Third World. All of the United Airlines Astrojets, all of the Holiday Inns, all of Hertz's automobiles, your television set, car, and wardrobe already belong, to a large degree to the people of the rest of the world.

Therefore, any conception of "socialist revolution" simply in terms of the working people of the United States, failing to recognize the full scope of interests of the most oppressed peoples of the world, is a conception of a fight for a particular privileged interest, and is a very dangerous ideology. While the control and use of the wealth of the Empire for the people of the whole world is also in the interests of the vast majority of the people in this country, if the goal is not clear from the start we will further the preservation of class society, oppression, war, genocide, and the complete emiseration of everyone, including the people of the U.S.

The goal is the destruction of U.S. imperialism and the achievement of a classless world: world communism. Winning state power in the U.S. will occur as a result of the military forces of the U.S. overextending themselves around the world and being defeated piecemeal; struggle within the U.S. will be a vital part of this process, but when the revolution triumphs in the U.S. it will have been made by the people of the whole world. For socialism to be defined in national terms within so extreme and historical an oppressor nation as this is only imperialist national chauvinism on the part of the "movement."



## INHUMANITY TO MAN

I don't want to give the impression, though, that we want to join society exactly as it is. I don't think most women want to pick up briefcases and march off to meaningless, depersonalized jobs. Nor do we want to be drafted—and women certainly should be drafted; even the readers of *Seventeen* magazine were recently polled as being overwhelmingly in favor of women in national service—to serve in a war like the one in Indochina.

We want to liberate men from those inhuman roles as well. We want to share the work and responsibility, and to have men share equal responsibility for the children. Probably the ultimate myth is that children must have fulltime mothers, and that liberated women make bad ones. The truth is that most American children seem to be suffering from too much mother and too little father.

Women now spend more time with their homes and families than in any other past or present society we know about. To get back to the sanity of the agrarian or joint family system, we need free universal day care. With that aid, as in Scandinavian countries, and with laws that permit women equal work and equal pay, man will be relieved of his role as sole breadwinner and stranger to his own children.

No more alimony. Fewer boring wives. Fewer childlike wives. No more so-called "Jewish mothers," who are simply normally ambitious human beings with all their ambitiousness confined to the house. No more wives who fall apart with the first wrinkle because they've been taught that their total identity depends on their outsides. No more responsibility for another adult human being who has never been told she is responsible for her own life, and who sooner or later says some version of, "If I hadn't married you, I could have been a star." Women's Liberation really is Men's Liberation, too.

The family system that will emerge is a great subject of anxiety. Probably there will be a variety of choices. Colleague marriages, such as young people have now, with both partners going to law-school or the Peace Corps together, is one alternative. At least they share more than the kitchen and the bedroom. Communes; marriages that are valid for the child-rearing years only—there are many possibilities.

The point is that Women's Liberation is not destroying the American family. It is trying to build a human compassionate alternative out of its ruins.

## SIMPLY INCORRUPTIBLE

One final myth that women are more moral than men. We are not more moral; we are only uncorrupted by power. But until the old generation of male chauvinists is out of office women in positions of power can increase our chances of peace a great deal.

I personally would rather have had Margaret Mead as President during the past six years of Vietnam than either Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon. At least she wouldn't have had her masculinity to prove. Much of the trouble this country is in has to do with the masculine mystique: The idea that manhood somehow depends on the subjugation of other people. It's a bipartisan problem.

The challenge to all of us is to live a revolution, not to die for one. There has been too much killing, and the weapons are now far too terrible. This revolution has to change consciousness, to upset the injustice of our current hierarchy by refusing to honor it. And it must be a life that enforces a new social justice.

Because the truth is that none of us can be liberated if other groups are not. Women's Liberation is a bridge between black and white women, but also between the construction workers and the suburbanites, between Mr. Nixon's Silent Majority and the young people it fears. Indeed, there's much more injustice and rage among working-class women than among the much publicized white radicals.

Women are sisters; they have many of the same problems, and they can communicate with each other. "You only get radicalized," as black activists always told us, "on your own thing." Then we make the connection to other injustices in society. The women's movement is an important revolutionary bridge, and we are building it.

## Stonewall

*The Movement of the 1960s led to the mobilization of minorities around the country. Chicanos, Native Americans, homosexuals, and many others were inspired to stand up for their rights. In June 1969, the dissenting impulse spawned the gay rights movement. After one of the routine police raids at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village (a bar frequented by gays), a succession of demonstrations broke out. Many gay men decided they were no longer going to take the harassment, and by the end of the summer the Gay Liberation Front was born. The following flyers were distributed during the summer of 1969 to spread the word and encourage more people to join the movement.*

## STONEWALL DOCUMENTS, 1969

## FLYER 1

Get the mafia and the cops out of gay bars.

The nights of Friday, June 27, 1969 and Saturday, June 28, 1969 will go down in history as the first time that thousands of Homosexual men and women went out into the streets to protest the intolerable situation which has existed in New York City for many years—namely, the Mafia (or syndicate) control of this city's Gay bars in collusion with certain elements in the Police Dept. of the City of New York. The demonstrations were triggered by a Police raid on the Stonewall Inn late Friday

SOURCE: Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 24–25, 36, 37.



night, June 27th. The purported reason for the raid was the Stonewall's lack of a liquor license. Who's kidding whom here? Can anybody really believe that an operation as big as the Stonewall could continue for almost three years just a few blocks from the 6th Precinct house without having a liquor license? No! The Police have known about the Stonewall operation all along. What's happened is the presence of new "brass" in 6th Precinct which has vowed to "drive the fags out of the Village."

Many of you have noticed one of the signs which the "management" of the Stonewall has placed outside stating "Legalize Gay bars and lick the problem." Judge Kenneth Keating (a former US Senator) ruled in January 1968 that even close dancing between Homosexuals is legal. Since that date there has been nothing illegal, per se, about a Gay bar. What is illegal about New York City's Gay bars today is the Mafia (or syndicate) stranglehold on them. Legitimate Gay businessmen are afraid to open decent Gay bars with a healthy social atmosphere (as opposed to the hell-hole atmosphere of places typified by the Stonewall) because of fear of pressure from the unholy alliance of the Mafia and elements in the Police Dept. who accept payoffs and protect the Mafia monopoly.

We at the Homophile Youth Movement (HYMN) believe that the only way this monopoly can be broken is through the action of Homosexual men and women themselves. We obviously cannot rely on the various agencies of government who for years have known about this situation but who have refused to do anything about it. Therefore we urge the following:

1. That Gay businessmen step forward and open Gay bars that will be run legally with competitive pricing and a healthy social atmosphere.
2. That Homosexual men and women boycott places like the Stonewall. The only way, it seems, that we can get the criminal elements out of gay bars is simply to make it unprofitable for them.
3. That the Homosexual citizens of New York City, and concerned Heterosexuals, write to mayor Lindsay demanding a thorough investigation and effective action to correct this intolerable situation.

#### FLYER 2

July 24th

Do you think homosexuals are revolting?

You bet your sweet ass we are.

We're going to make a place for ourselves in the revolutionary movement. We challenge the myths that are screwing up this society. MEETING: Thursday, July 24th, 6:30 PM at Alternate U, 69 West 14th Street at Sixth Avenue.

#### FLYER 3

Homosexuals are coming.

Together at last.

To examine how we are oppressed and how we oppress ourselves. To fight for gay control of gay businesses. To publish our own newspaper. To these and other radical ends. . . .

## The American Indian Movement

*In the aftermath of the civil rights movement's call for black power, red power became the rallying cry of American Indians. A new organization, the American Indian Movement (AIM), was founded in 1968. From November 1969 to June 1971, approximately a hundred Indians from several different tribes joined AIM in reclaiming and occupying Alcatraz Island. Wanting to call attention to the plight of Native Americans, they occupied the island in the name of Indians of All Tribes, demanded the deed for the island, and insisted that they be allowed to set up an Indian university, a museum, and a cultural center. After fruitless negotiations between the Indians and the federal government, President Nixon ordered the island retaken. On June 11, 1971, a force of FBI agents and federal marshals forcibly removed them.*

*In 1972, AIM sponsored a march on Washington billed as the Trail of Broken Treaties. AIM members occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) headquarters and issued a 20-point proposal for President Richard Nixon to consider. The following year, elders from the Lakota Sioux nation requested AIM's assistance in dealing with BIA and tribal council corruption in South Dakota. This led to AIM's occupation of Wounded Knee (site of the last armed Indian resistance in 1890) and an infamous 71-day standoff between armed Indians and federal marshals. The Indians demanded that the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty guaranteeing the Black Hills to the Lakota be honored. They also wanted an end to the strip mining at the Pine Ridge Reservation. At the end of the siege, however, the federal government made no concessions, and the Indians were removed. (For AIM's "Trail of Broken Treaties" proposal, see the full edition of Dissent in America: The Voices That Shaped a Nation.)*

### A PROCLAMATION: TO THE GREAT WHITE FATHER AND ALL HIS PEOPLE, 1969

We, the Native Americans, reclaim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery.

We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty:

SOURCE: Retrieved on 5/10/2004 from <http://cwis.org/fwdp/Americas/alcatraz.txt>.

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 Boozer: "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 ID 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 bombing, 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).