Readings from Voices of a People's History of the United States

Created by Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove

A note on the text: Voices is designed for multiple readers. These sixteen readings can be read by sixteen different individuals, eight people reading two a piece, etc. The one reading here designed for two people is Susan B. Anthony and Judge Ward Hunt. You might want to turn one or more other readings into a chorus or medley with each reader taking a line or paragraph. The paragraph in *italic* at the head of each reading should be read by a narrator. You may also want to add projections that include images, if they are in the public domain, of the historical figures and the year or date of the reading. Contact Voices if you'd like to use images or a digital presentation we can make available. Please see the Performance Notes documents for more detailed suggestions on staging the readings.

You may *add* to this script no more than four of the Optional Readings from the Voices site (we have found that shorter presentations are more effective). You may also *replace* two of the readings here with any of the Optional Readings, but please be conscious of historical, ethnical, and gender diversity issues when making any replacements.

Generally chronological order will create the least confusion for the audience, but at times, especially for casting reasons, it will be necessary to slightly shift the reading order.

For any other changes, you must receive written approval from Voices.

We encourage you to print a printed program that includes information on the readings (see the dates and descriptions included below). We also ask you to kindly include our logo, a description of Voices from our About Page, and our web site address in the program.

TITLES AND DATES OF READINGS

1. Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account* (1542)
2. Tecumseh's Speech to the Osages (Winter 1811–12)
3. Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier* (1830)
4. Maria Stewart, "An Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall, Boston" (February 27, 1833)
5. Harriet Hanson Robinson, "Characteristics of the Early Factory Girls" (1898)
6. *North Star* editorial, "The War with Mexico" (January 21, 1848)
7. Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851)
8. Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" (July 5, 1852)
9. Susan B. Anthony Addresses Judge Ward Hunt in *The United States of America v. Susan B. Anthony* (June 19, 1873)
10. Eugene Debs, "Canton, Ohio, Speech" (June 16, 1918)
11. Sylvia Woods, "You Have to Fight for Freedom" (1973)
12. Stella Nowicki ("Vicky Starr"), "Back of the Yards" (1973)
13. Yuri Kochiyama, "Then Came the War" (1991)
14. Malcolm X, "A Message to the Grass Roots" (November 10, 1963)
15. Howard Zinn, "The Problem of Civil Obedience" (November 1970)
16. Camilo Mejia antiwar statement in Chicago (June 2005)
17. Cindy Sheehan, "It's Time the Antiwar Choir Started Singing" (August 2005)

Optional addition for ending:

18. Frederick Douglass, "The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies" (August 3, 1857)

BARTOLOMÉ LAS CASAS

In recent years, historians have begun to challenge the idealized, romanticized picture of Christopher Columbus. One of the first people to speak out against the crimes of Columbus was Bartolomé de Las Casas, who witnessed the consequences of his conquest, which he describes in the following passages, first published in 1542.

The Indies were discovered in the year one thousand four hundred and ninety-two. Forty-nine years have passed since the first settlers penetrated the land, the first being the large and most happy isle called Hispaniola, perhaps the most densely populated place in the world.

There must be close to two hundred leagues of land on this island, and all the land so far discovered is a beehive of people; it is as though God had crowded into these lands the great majority of mankind.

And of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people are the most guileless, the most devoid of wickedness and duplicity, the most obedient and faithful to their native masters and to the Spanish Christians whom they serve. And because they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labor and soon die of no matter what malady.

Yet into this sheepfold, into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravening wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days — killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing, and destroying the native peoples, doing all this with the strangest and most varied new methods of cruelty, never seen or heard of before, and to such a degree that this Island of Hispaniola, once so populous (having a population that I estimated to be more than three millions), has now a population of barely two hundred persons.

Their reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies. And also, those lands are so rich and felicitous, the native peoples so meek and patient, so easy to subject, that our Spaniards have no more consideration for them than beasts — no, for thanks be to God, they have treated beasts with some respect; I should say instead like excrement on the public squares.

The Indians began to seek ways to throw the Christians out of their lands. They took up arms, but their weapons were very weak and of little service in offense and still less in defense. The Christians, with their horses and swords and pikes began to carry out massacres and strange cruelties against them. They attacked the towns and spared neither the children nor the aged nor pregnant women nor women in childbed, not only stabbing

them and dismembering them but cutting them to pieces as if dealing with sheep in the slaughter house.

They made some low wide gallows on which the hanged victim's feet almost touched the ground, stringing up their victims in lots of thirteen, in memory of Our Redeemer and His twelve Apostles, then set burning wood at their feet and thus burned them alive.

When tied to the stake, the cacique Hatuey — a very important noble — was told by a Franciscan friar about the God of the Christians and of the articles of Faith. And he was told what he could do in the brief time that remained to him, in order to be saved and go to heaven.

The cacique — who had never heard any of this before, and was told he would go to Inferno where, if he did not adopt the Christian Faith, he would suffer eternal torment — asked the Franciscan friar if Christians all went to Heaven.

When told that they did, he said he would prefer to go to Hell.

TECUMSEH

One of the great figures of early Native resistance to colonization was Tecumseh, a Shawnee leader. Here he speaks to the Osages about the struggle against the colonists, as they expanded westward.

Brothers,—We all belong to one family; we are all children of the Great Spirit; we walk in the same path; slake our thirst at the same spring.

Brothers,—We are friends; we must assist each other to bear our burdens. The blood of many of our fathers and brothers has run like water on the ground, to satisfy the avarice of the white men. We, ourselves, are threatened with a great evil; nothing will pacify them but the destruction of all the red men.

Brothers,—When the white men first set foot on our grounds, they were hungry; they had no place on which to spread their blankets, or to kindle their fires. They were feeble; they could do nothing for themselves. Our father commiserated their distress, and shared freely with them whatever the Great Spirit had given his red children. They gave them food when hungry, medicine when sick, spread skins for them to sleep on, and gave them grounds, that they might hunt and raise corn.

Brothers,—The white people are like poisonous serpents: when chilled, they are feeble and harmless; but invigorate them with warmth, and they sting their benefactors to death. The white people came among us feeble; and now we have made them strong, they wish to kill us, or drive us back, as they would wolves and panthers.

Brothers,—The white men are not friends to the Indians: at first, they only asked for land sufficient for a wigwam; now, nothing will satisfy them but the whole of our hunting grounds, from the rising to the setting sun.

Brothers,—Who are the white people that we should fear them? They cannot run fast, and are good marks to shoot at: they are only men; our fathers have killed many of them; we will stain the earth red with blood.

Brothers,—We must be united; we must smoke the same pipe; we must fight each other's battles; and more than all, we must love the Great Spirit: he is for us; he will destroy our enemies, and make all his red children happy.

JOSEPH PLUMB MARTIN

Here Joseph Plumb Martin recalls the hardships soldiers experienced on the line and after they were discharged. Plumb Martin enlisted in the Continental Army in 1776, and served in New York and Connecticut during the American Revolution.

When those who engaged to serve during the war enlisted, they were promised a hundred acres of land, each, which was to be in their or the adjoining states. When the country had drained the last drop of service it could screw out of the poor soldiers, they were turned adrift like old worn-out horses, and nothing said about land to pasture them upon. Congress did, indeed, appropriate lands under the denomination of "Soldier's Lands," in Ohio state, or some state, or a future state, but no care was taken that the soldiers should get them. The truth was, none cared for them; the country was served, and faithfully served, and that was all that was deemed necessary. It was, soldiers, look to yourselves; we want no more of you.

We were, also, promised six dollars and two thirds a month, to be paid us monthly, and how did we fare in this particular? Why, as we did in every other. I received the dollars and two thirds, till (if I remember rightly) the month of August, 1777, when paying ceased. And what was six dollars and sixty-seven cents of this "Continental currency," as it was called, worth? It was scarcely enough to procure a man a dinner.

It is provoking to think of it. The country was rigorous in exacting my compliance to my engagements, but equally careless in performing her contracts with me, and why so? Because she had all the power in her own hands and I had none. Such things ought not to be.

Many murmur now at the apparent good fortune of the poor soldiers. Many I have myself seen, vile enough to say that they never deserved such favor from the country. The only wish I would bestow upon such hardhearted wretches is that they might be compelled to go through just such sufferings and privations as that army did, and then if they did not sing a different tune, I should miss my guess.

I hope I shall one day find land enough to lay my bones in. If I chance to die in a civilized country, none will deny me that.

MARIA STEWART

Maria Stewart was a leader in the struggle to end slavery. Stewart's writings, speeches, and activism were directed primarily at Black — rather than white — abolitionists. In 1831, she wrote the first public manifesto of an African-American woman in U.S. history, and in 1833, she delivered this speech at The African Masonic Hall.

Most of our color have been taught to stand in fear of the white man, from their earliest infancy, to work as soon as they could walk, and call "master," before they scarce could lisp the name of mother. Continual fear and laborious servitude have in some degree lessened in us that natural force and energy which belong to man; or else, in defiance of opposition, our men, before this, would have nobly and boldly contended for their rights.

Give the man of color an equal opportunity with the white from the cradle to manhood, and from manhood to the grave, and you would discover the dignified statesman, the man of science, and the philosopher.

But there is no such opportunity for the sons of Africa, and I fear that our powerful one's are fully determined that there never shall be. O ye sons of Africa, when will your voices be heard in our legislative halls, in defiance of your enemies, contending for equal rights and liberty?

Is it possible that for the want of knowledge, we have labored for hundreds of years to support others, and been content to receive what they chose to give us in return?

Cast your eyes about, look as far as you can see; all, *all* is owned by the lordly white, except here and there a lowly dwelling which the man of color, midst deprivations, fraud and opposition, has been scarce able to procure. Like King Solomon, who put neither nail nor hammer to the temple, yet received the praise; so also have the white Americans gained themselves a name, like the names of the great men that are in the earth, while in reality we have been their principal foundation and support.

We have pursued the shadow, they have obtained the substance; we have performed the labor they have received the profits; we have planted the vines, they have eaten the fruits of them.

HARRIET HANSON ROBINSON

When Boston capitalists, making use of the new canal system, began building textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the early nineteenth century, they recruited young women from rural New England as their labor force. They assumed they would be docile and easily managed. Instead, the young women in the Lowell mills formed reading circles and agitated for better workplace conditions. Here, Harriet Hanson Robinson, who started work in the mills when she was only ten, recounts a strike of the Lowell women.

At the time the Lowell cotton-mills were started, the factory girl was the lowest among women. In England, and in France particularly, great injustice had been done to her real character; she was represented as subjected to influences that could not fail to destroy her purity and self-respect. In the eyes of her overseer she was but a brute, slave, to be beaten, pinched, and pushed about.

One of the first strikes of the cotton-factory operatives that ever took place in this country was that in Lowell, in October, 1836. When it was announced that wages were to be cut down, great indignation was felt, and it was decided to strike, en masse. This was done. The mills were shut down, and the girls went in procession from their several corporations to the "grove" on Chapel Hill, and listened to "incendiary" speeches from early labor reformers.

One of the girls stood on a pump, and gave vent to the feelings of her companions in a neat speech, declaring that it was their duty to resist all attempts at cutting down the wages. This was the first time a woman had spoken in public in Lowell, and the event caused surprise and consternation among her audience.

Cutting down the wages was not their only grievance, nor the only cause of this strike. Hitherto the corporations had paid twenty-five cents a week towards the board of each operative, and now it was their purpose to have the girls pay the sum; and this, in addition to the cut in wages, would make a difference of at least one dollar a week. It was estimated that as many as twelve or fifteen hundred girls turned out, and walked in procession through the streets. . . .

My own recollection of this first strike (or "turn out" as it was called) is very vivid. I worked in a lower room, where I had heard the proposed strike fully, if not vehemently, discussed; I had been an ardent listener to what was said against this attempt at "oppression" on the part of the corporation, and naturally I took sides with the strikers.

When the day came on which the girls were to turn out, those in the upper rooms started first, and so many of them left that our mill was at once shut down. Then, when the girls in my room stood irresolute, uncertain what to do, asking each other, "Would you?" or "Shall we turn out?" and not one of them having the courage to lead off, I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead,

saying, with childish bravado, “I don’t care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether any one else does or not;” and I marched out, and was followed by the others.

As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been at any success I may have achieved.

THE NORTH STAR

In this editorial from 1848, the North Star — the abolitionist newspaper edited in Rochester, New York, by Frederick Douglass — argues the case against the war on Mexico.

From aught that appears in the present position and movements of the executive and cabinet—the proceedings of either branch of the national Congress,—the several State Legislatures, North and South—the spirit of the public press—slight hope can rationally be predicated of a very speedy termination of the present disgraceful, cruel, and iniquitous war with our sister republic. Mexico seems a doomed victim to Anglo Saxon cupidity and love of dominion.

The determination of our slaveholding President to prosecute the war, and the probability of his success in wringing from the people men and money to carry it on, is made evident, rather than doubtful, by the puny opposition arrayed against him. No politician of any considerable distinction or eminence, seems willing to hazard his popularity with his party, or stem the fierce current of executive influence, by an open and unqualified disapprobation of the war. None seem willing to take their stand for peace at all risks; and all seem willing that the war should be carried on, in some form or other.

We have no preference for parties, regarding this slaveholding crusade. The one is as bad as the other. The friends of peace have nothing to hope from either. The Democrats claim the credit of commencing, and the Whigs monopolize the glory of voting supplies and carrying on the war; branding the war as dishonorably commenced, yet boldly persisting in pressing it on.

Grasping ambition, tyrannical usurpation, atrocious aggression, cruel and haughty pride, spread, and pervade the land. The curse is upon us. The plague is abroad. A general outcry is heard—"Vigorous prosecution of the war!"—"Mexico must be humbled!"—"Conquer a peace!"—"War forced upon us!"—"National honor!"—"The whole of Mexico!"—"Our destiny!"—"This continent!"—"Anglo Saxon blood!"—"More territory!"—"Free institutions!"—"Our country!"

The taste of human blood and the smell of powder seem to have extinguished the senses, seared the conscience, and subverted the reason of the people to a degree that may well induce the gloomy apprehension that our nation has fully entered on her downward career, and yielded herself up to the revolting idea of battle and blood.

Unavailing as our voice may be, we wish to warn our fellow countrymen, that they may follow the course which they have marked out for themselves; no barrier may be sufficient to obstruct them; they may accomplish all they desire; Mexico may fall before them; she may be conquered and subdued; her government may be annihilated; but, so

sure as there is a God of justice, we shall not go unpunished; the penalty is certain; we cannot escape; a terrible retribution awaits us.

We beseech our countrymen to leave off this horrid conflict, abandon their murderous plans, and forsake the way of blood. Our country may yet be saved. Let the press, the pulpit, the church, the people at large, unite at once; and let petitions flood the halls of Congress by the million, asking for the instant recall of our forces from Mexico. This may not save us, but it is our only hope.

SOJOURNER TRUTH

Here, the black abolitionist Sojourner Truth, who was freed from slavery in 1827, speaks to a gathering of feminists in Akron, Ohio, in 1851.

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about? That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?

Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? ... *Intellect...* That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

July Fourth is held up as a day to celebrate the struggle for freedom and independence. But the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass dared to challenge the exaltation of the holiday. Here is part of his remarkable address to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in July 1852.

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens:

He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of speech.

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful.

But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. — The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the

constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy — a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

In November 1872, Susan B. Anthony was one of fourteen women who defied the law to cast a ballot in the presidential election. Anthony was arrested for "knowingly voting without having a lawful right to vote," and on June 18, 1873, was found guilty. The next day, when her lawyer appealed the verdict, she addressed the court in response to a question from the judge, Ward Hunt.

Judge Hunt—Has the prisoner anything to say why sentence shall not be pronounced?

Miss Anthony—Yes, your honor, I have many things to say; for in your ordered verdict of guilty you have trampled under foot every vital principle of our government. My natural rights, my civil rights, my political rights, my judicial rights, are all alike ignored. Robbed of the fundamental privilege of citizenship, I am degraded from the status of a citizen to that of a subject; and not only myself individually but all of my sex are, by your honor's verdict, doomed to political subjection under this so-called republican form of government.

Judge Hunt—The Court cannot listen to a rehearsal of argument which the prisoner's counsel has already consumed three hours in presenting.

Miss Anthony—May it please your honor, I am not arguing the question, but simply stating the reasons why sentence can not, in justice, be pronounced against me. Your denial of my citizen's right to vote, is the denial of my right of consent as one of the governed, the denial of my right of representation as one of the taxed, the denial of my right to a trial by a jury of my peers as an offender against law; therefore, the denial of my sacred right to life, liberty, property and—

Judge Hunt—The Court can not allow the prisoner to go on.

Miss Anthony—But your honor will not deny me this one and only poor privilege of protest against this high-handed outrage upon my citizen's rights.

Judge Hunt—The Court must insist—the prisoner has been tried according to the established forms of law.

Miss Anthony—Yes, your honor, but by forms of law all made by men, interpreted by men, administered by men, in favor of men and against women; and hence your honor's ordered verdict of guilty, against a United States citizen for the exercise of the "citizen's right to vote," simply because that citizen was a woman and not a man. But yesterday, the same man-made forms of law declared it a crime punishable with $1,000 fine and six months' imprisonment to give a cup of cold water, a crust of bread or a night's shelter to a panting fugitive tracking his way to Canada; and every man or woman in whose veins coursed a drop of human sympathy violated that wicked law, reckless of consequences,

and was justified in doing so. As then the slaves who got their freedom had to take it over or under or through the unjust forms of law, precisely so now must women take it to get right to a voice in this government; and I have taken mine, and mean to take it at every opportunity.

Judge Hunt—The Court must insist — The sentence of the Court is that you pay a fine of $100 and the costs of the prosecution.

Miss Anthony—May it please your honor, I will never pay a dollar of your unjust penalty. All the stock in trade I possess is a debt of $10,000, incurred by publishing my paper—The Revolution—the sole object of which was to educate all women to do precisely as I have done, rebel against your man-made, unjust, unconstitutional forms of law, which tax, fine, imprison and hang women, while denying them the right of representation in the government; and I will work on with might and main to pay every dollar of that honest debt, but not a penny shall go to this unjust claim. And I shall earnestly and persistently continue to urge all women to the practical recognition of the old Revolutionary maxim, “Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.”

EUGENE DEBS

One of the most eloquent voices against war was that of Eugene Debs, the railroad union organizer and leader of the Socialist Party. On June 18, 1918, he addressed a mass rally of workers in Ohio, knowing very well that his words could lead, as they did, to his arrest and imprisonment. His sentence of ten years was upheld by a unanimous Supreme Court. Here is the speech that led to his arrest.

Sam Johnson declared that "patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." He must have had the Wall Street gentry in mind, or at least their prototypes, for in every age it has been the tyrant, the oppressor and the exploiter who has wrapped himself in the cloak of patriotism, or religion, or both to deceive and overawe the people.

Every solitary one of these aristocratic conspirators and would-be murderers claims to be an arch-patriot; every one of them insists that the war is being waged to make the world safe for democracy. What humbug! What rot! What false pretense!

Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. In the Middle Ages when the feudal lords concluded to enlarge their domains, to increase their power, their prestige and their wealth they declared war upon one another. But they themselves did not go to war any more than the modern feudal lords, the barons of Wall Street go to war. The feudal barons of the Middle Ages, the economic predecessors of the capitalists of our day, declared all wars. And their miserable serfs fought all the battles.

The poor, ignorant serfs had been taught to revere their masters; to believe that when their masters declared war upon one another, it was their patriotic duty to fall upon one another and to cut one another's throats for the profit and glory of the lords and barons who held them in contempt.

And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles. The master class has had all to gain and nothing to lose, while the subject class has had nothing to gain and all to lose — especially their lives.

They have always taught and trained you to believe it to be your patriotic duty to go to war and to have yourselves slaughtered at their command. But in all the history of the world you, the people, have never had a voice in declaring war, and strange as it certainly appears, no war by any nation in any age has ever been declared by the people.

The working class who fight all the battles, the working class who make the supreme sacrifices, the working class who freely shed their blood and furnish the corpses, have never yet had a voice in either declaring war or making peace. It is the ruling class that invariably does both. They alone declare war and they alone make peace.

Yours not to reason why;
Yours but to do and die.

That is their motto and we object on the part of the awakening workers of this nation. If war is right let it be declared by the people.

SYLVIA WOODS

Here Sylvia Woods, a pioneer in the struggle of African-American and women trade unionists, describes her first experiences speaking out against racism.

I was born March 15, 1909. My father was a roofer. When I was maybe ten years old, I changed schools. On the way to school, I had to go through a park that was for white people only. We could walk through the park but we couldn't stop at all, just pass through it. There were swings in this park and, oh, I so much wanted sometimes to just stop and swing a little while, but we couldn't because we were black. I would walk through this park to my school where there weren't any swings.

Every morning all the kids would line up according to classrooms and we would have prayers and sing the "Star Spangled Banner" and then we'd march to our respective groups after this business.

I decided I wasn't going to sing the "Star Spangled Banner." I just stood there every morning and I didn't sing it. One morning, one of the teachers noticed that I wasn't doing it. So she very quietly called me over and asked me why didn't I sing the "Star Spangled Banner." I said I just didn't feel like singing it. So she said, "Well then you have to go in to the principal and explain that to him. All of the children in the school take part and you've got to do it too." OK, I went in to the principal and he asked me why I wasn't singing the "Star Spangled Banner."

Finally I told him. "Because it says 'The land of the free and the home of the brave' and this is not the land of the free. I don't know who's brave but I'm not going to sing it any more." Then he said, "Why you've been singing it all the time haven't you? How come you want to stop now?" And I told him about coming through the park and if I could not swing in those swings in the park, and I couldn't sit in the park, and I could only walk in Shakespeare Park, then it couldn't be the land of the free. "Who's free?" He didn't say anything.

Then he said, "Well, you could pledge allegiance to your flag." I said, "It's not my flag. The flag is with freedom. If the land is free and the flag is mine, then how come I can't do like the white kids?"

STELLA NOWICKI

The economic crisis of the 1930s led to a wave of union organizing and strikes all over the country. Stella Nowicki was one of many rank-and-file activists active in the campaign to organize unions in the meatpacking factories of Chicago. Years later, she spoke about the conditions in the plants and the tactics radicals used to organize unions.

I ran away from home at age 17. I had to because there was not enough money to feed the family in 1933 during the Depression. . . .

I was doing housework for $4 a week and I hated it. So Herb suggested that I get a job in the stockyards.

One of the ways to get a job was to go down to the employment office. Every morning you got there by six or six-thirty. There were just so many benches and they would all be filled early. They would only need one, maybe two people. This woman, Mrs. McCann, women's hiring director, would look around for the biggest and brawniest person.

"Have you had experience?" she asked. I said, "Well not in the stock yards but we used to butcher our own hogs at home." I carried this big steel and that impressed her. Mrs. McCann hired me.

In 1933–34 we worked six hour shifts at 37 and a half cents an hour. We would have to work at a high rate of speed. It was summer. It would be so hot that women used to pass out. The ladies' room was on the floor below and I would help carry these women down almost vertical stairs into the washroom.

We started talking union. The thing that precipitated it is that on the floor below they used to make hotdogs and one of the women, in putting the meat into the chopper, got her fingers caught. There were no safety guards. Her fingers got into the hotdogs and they were chopped off. It was just horrible.

Three of us "colonizers" had a meeting during our break and decided this was the time to have a stoppage and we did. . . . All six floors went on strike. We just stopped working right inside the building, protesting the speed and the unsafe conditions.

We got the company to put in safety devices. Soon after the work stoppage the supervisors were looking for the leaders because people were talking up the action. They found out who was involved and we were all fired. I was blacklisted.

I got a job doing housework again and it was just horrible. I just couldn't stand it. I would rather go back and work in a factory, any day or night.

A friend of mine who had been laid off told me that she got called to go back to work. Meanwhile she had a job in an office and she didn't want to go back to the stockyards, so she asked me if I wanted to go in her place. She had used the name Helen Ellis. I went down to the stockyards and it was the same department, exactly the same job on the same floor where I had been fired. But it was the afternoon and Mrs. McCann wasn't there. Her assistant was. And she told me that I would start work the following afternoon.

I got my hair cut really short and hennaed. I thinned my eyebrows and penciled them, wore a lot of lipstick and painted my nails. I came in looking sharp and not like a country girl, so I passed right through and I was hired as Helen Ellis on the same job.

After several days the forelady, Mary, who was also Polish, came around and said, "OK, Helen, I know you're Stella. I won't say anything but just keep quiet." She knew I was pro-union and I guess she was too, so I kept the job as Helen Ellis until I got laid off. (Later on I was blacklisted under the name Ellis.) . . .

If you even talked union you were fired. So we actually had secret meetings. Everybody had to vouch for anyone that they brought to the meeting....

When I look back now, I really think we had a lot of guts. But I didn't even stop to think about it at the time. It was something that had to be done. We had a goal. That's what we felt had to be done and we did it.

YURI KOCHIYAMA

The Japanese-American civil rights activist Yuri Kochiyama was born and raised in San Pedro, California. She and her family were among the 120,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast who were rounded up in a wave of anti-Japanese hysteria that followed the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Here she recalls her experiences in the detention camps.

I was red, white and blue when I was growing up. I taught Sunday school, and was very, very American. But I was also very provincial. We were just kids rooting for our high school.

I was nineteen at the time of the evacuation. I had just finished junior college. I was looking for a job, and didn't realize how different the school world was from the work world. In the school world, I never felt racism. But when you got into the work world, it was very difficult. This was 1941, just before the war. I finally did get a job at a department store. But for us back then, it was a big thing, because I don't think they had ever hired an Asian in a department store before. I tried, because I saw a Mexican friend who got a job there. . . .

Everything changed for me on the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. On that very day—December 7, the FBI came and they took my father. He had just come home from the hospital the day before. For several days we didn't know where they had taken him. Then we found out that he was taken to the federal prison at Terminal Island. Overnight, things changed for us. . . .

Most Japanese Americans had to give up their jobs, whatever they did, and were told they had to leave. The edict for 9066—President Roosevelt's edict for evacuation—was in February 1942. We were moved to a detention center that April. . . .

We were sent to an assembly center in Arcadia, California. It was the largest assembly center on the West Coast having nearly twenty thousand people. There were some smaller centers with about six hundred people. All along the West Coast—Washington, Oregon, California—there were many, many assembly centers, but ours was the largest. Most of the assembly centers were either fairgrounds, or race tracks. So many of us lived in stables and they said you could take what you could carry. . . .

I was so red, white and blue, I couldn't believe this was happening to us. America would never do a thing like this to us. This is the greatest country in the world. So I thought this is only going to be for a short while, maybe a few weeks or something, and they will let us go back. At the beginning no one realized how long this would go on. I didn't feel the anger that much because I thought maybe this was the way we could show our love for our country, and we should not make too much fuss or noise, we should abide by what they asked of us. I'm a totally different person now than I was back then. I was naive

about so many things. The more I think about, the more I realize how little you learn about American history. It's just what they want you to know. . . .

We always called the camps "relocation centers" while we were there. Now we feel it is apropos to call them concentration camps. It is not the same as the concentration camps of Europe; those we feel were death camps. Concentration camps were a concentration of people placed in an area, and disempowered and disenfranchised. So it is apropos to call what I was in a concentration camp . . . .

Historically, Americans have always been putting people behind walls. First there were the American Indians who were put on reservations, Africans in slavery, their lives on the plantations, Chicanos doing migratory work, and the kinds of camps they lived in, and even too, the Chinese when they worked on the railroad camps where they were almost isolated, dispossessed people—disempowered. And I feel those are the things we should fight against so they won't happen again. . . .

This whole period of what the Japanese went through is important. If we can see the connections of how often this happens in history, we can stem the tide of these things happening again by speaking out against them.

MALCOLM X

While some civil rights leaders urged a more cautious approach to winning civil rights, Malcolm X expressed the feelings of many blacks that more uncompromising methods of struggle were needed. Like members of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, Malcolm X advocated the right of armed self-defense for blacks and other oppressed groups who lived in so violently racist a society as the United States. Here is an excerpt of a speech Malcolm X delivered in Detroit, Michigan. Two years after giving this speech, he was assassinated in New York City.

We want to have just an off-the-cuff chat between you and me, us. We want to talk right down to earth in a language that everybody here can easily understand. We all agree tonight, all of the speakers have agreed, that America has a very serious problem. Not only does America have a very serious problem, but our people have a very serious problem. America's problem is us. We're her problem. The only reason she has a problem is she doesn't want us here. And every time you look at yourself, be you black, brown, red or yellow, a so-called Negro, you represent a person who poses such a serious problem for America because you're not wanted. Once you face this as a fact, then you can start plotting a course that will make you appear intelligent, instead of unintelligent.

What you and I need to do is learn to forget our differences. When we come together, we don't come together as Baptists or Methodists. You don't catch hell because you're a Baptist, and you don't catch hell because you're a Methodist, and you sure don't catch hell because you're an American; because if you were an American, you wouldn't catch hell. You catch hell because you're a black man. You catch hell, all of us catch hell, for the same reason.

So we're all black people, so-called Negroes, second-class citizens, ex-slaves. You're nothing but an ex-slave. You don't like to be told that. But what else are you? You are ex-slaves. You didn't come here on the "Mayflower." You came here on a slave ship. In chains. And you were brought here by the people who came here on the "Mayflower," you were brought here by the so-called Pilgrims, or Founding Fathers. They were the ones who brought you here.

We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have a common enemy, then we unite on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy — the white man. He's an enemy to all of us. I know some of you all think that some of them aren't enemies. Time will tell. . . .

Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. The French

Revolution — what was it based on? The landless against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. The Russian Revolution — what was it based on? Land; the landless against the landlord. How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed.

But you're afraid to bleed. As long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people, but when it comes to seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls murdered; you haven't got any blood. You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite; and you bark when the white man says bark.

I hate to say this about us, but it's true. How are you going to be nonviolent in Mississippi, as violent as you were in Korea? How can you justify being nonviolent in Mississippi and Alabama, when your churches are being bombed, and your little girls are being murdered?

If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it is wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it is wrong for America to draft us and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us, and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country.

HOWARD ZINN

In November 1970, after his arrest along with others who had engaged in a Boston protest at an army base to block soldiers from being sent to Vietnam, Howard Zinn flew to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore to take part in a debate with the philosopher Charles Frankel on civil disobedience. He was supposed to appear in court that day in connection with the charges resulting from the army base protest. He had a choice: show up in court and miss this opportunity to explain—and practice—his commitment to civil disobedience, or face the consequences of defying the court order by going to Baltimore. He chose to go. The next day, when he returned to Boston, he went to teach his morning class at Boston University. Two detectives were waiting outside the classroom and hauled him off to court, where he was sentenced to a few days in jail. Here is part of his speech that night at Johns Hopkins.

I start from the supposition that the world is topsy-turvy, that things are all wrong, that the wrong people are in jail and the wrong people are out of jail, that the wrong people are in power and the wrong people are out of power, that the wealth is distributed in this country and the world in such a way as not simply to require small reform but to require a drastic reallocation of wealth. I start from the supposition that we don't have to say too much about this because all we have to do is think about the state of the world today and realize that things are all upside down. Daniel Berrigan is in jail—a Catholic priest, a poet who opposes the war—and J. Edgar Hoover is free, you see. David Dellinger, who has opposed war ever since he was this high and who has used all of his energy and passion against it, is in danger of going to jail. The men who are responsible for the My Lai massacre are not on trial; they are in Washington serving various functions, primary and subordinate, that have to do with the unleashing of massacres, which surprise them when they occur.

If you don't think, if you just listen to TV and read scholarly things, you actually begin to think that things are not so bad, or that just little things are wrong. But you have to get a little detached, and then come back and look at the world, and you are horrified. So we have to start from that supposition—that things are really topsy-turvy.

And our topic is topsy-turvy: civil disobedience. As soon as you say the topic is civil disobedience, you are saying our problem is civil disobedience. That is not our problem.

Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is the numbers of people all over the world who have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience.

We recognize this for Nazi Germany. We know that the problem there was obedience, that the people obeyed Hitler. People obeyed; that was wrong. They should have challenged, and they should have resisted; and if we were only there, we would have

showed them. Even in Stalin's Russia we can understand that; people are obedient, all these herdlike people.

Remember those bad old days when people were exploited by feudalism? Everything was terrible in the Middle Ages—but now we have Western civilization, the rule of law. The rule of law has regularized and maximized the injustice that existed before the rule of law, that is what the rule of law has done.

When in all the nations of the world the rule of law is the darling of the leaders and the plague of the people, we ought to begin to recognize this. We have to transcend these national boundaries in our thinking. Nixon and Brezhnev have much more in common with one another than we have with Nixon. J. Edgar Hoover has far more in common with the head of the Soviet secret police than he has with us. It's the international dedication to law and order that binds the leaders of all countries in a comradely bond. That's why we are always surprised when they get together—they smile, they shake hands, they smoke cigars, they really like one another no matter what they say.

What we are trying to do, I assume, is really to get back to the principles and aims and spirit of the Declaration of Independence. This spirit is resistance to illegitimate authority and to forces that deprive people of their life and liberty and right to pursue happiness, and therefore under these conditions, it urges the right to alter or abolish their current form of government—and the stress had been on abolish. But to establish the principles of the Declaration of Independence, we are going to need to go outside the law, to stop obeying the laws that demand killing or that allocate wealth the way it has been done, or that put people in jail for petty technical offenses and keep other people out of jail for enormous crimes. My hope is that this kind of spirit will take place not just in this country but in other countries because they all need it. People in all countries need the spirit of disobedience to the state, which is not a metaphysical thing but a thing of force and wealth. And we need a kind of declaration of interdependence among people in all countries of the world who are striving for the same thing.

CAMILO MEJIA

Camilo Mejía was the first U.S. soldier who served in Iraq to go public with his refusal to continue fighting George Bush's war. A military court forced Mejía to serve seven months' confinement for his decision. Since his release, Mejía has thrown himself into building the antiwar movement and counter-recruitment efforts. In 2005, he gave this speech in Chicago.

Those of us in the GI antiwar movement, whether we know it or not, face a powerful enemy. When I say antiwar movement, it is assumed that I mean the war in Iraq, but the war in Iraq should be seen as part of something far bigger and far more devastating.

The powerful enemy is the corporations that finance congressional and presidential campaigns, the corporations in control of our privatized government. This is the same enemy that charges the American people a billion dollars per week to send their children to fight a criminal war against the children of Iraq.

Our struggle is the struggle against those who say "support our troops" while turning their backs on returning veterans. Support the troops by waving flags and slapping yellow ribbons on the bumpers of SUVs. Support the troops while they are killing their brothers and sisters in Iraq — meanwhile, hiding the flag-draped coffins some of them are coming home in, and keeping the horror of their wounds out of the public's view.

We struggle against those who create terrorism through the spread of hunger and poverty, so they can spread war and reap the profits. We struggle against those who invade and occupy a land for its resources, and then call its people terrorists for refusing to be conquered.

No longer able to rely on the rhetoric of the Cold War, the corporate warmongers need this global terrorism to justify the spread of its empire. So the war we oppose is the war waged by corporations on the billions of people around the world who live in utter misery.

The so-called American Dream, to many poor people, is tied to the obligation to fight in a war for corporate domination. They call it an all-volunteer army. But to them, I say: Show me a society where everyone has access to health care. Show me a society where everyone has access to an education. Show me a society where everyone has access to decent wages, where everyone lives a dignified life, and then I will show you an all-volunteer army.

Poverty and oppression around the world provide the building blocks for an empire. Poverty and oppression at home provide the building blocks to build an imperial army. In saying no to that imperial army — in refusing to fight an imperial war against our brothers and sisters of Iraq — I pledge my allegiance to the poor and oppressed of the

world. In saying no to an imperial army and in refusing to fight an imperial war against our brothers and sisters of Iraq, I pledge my allegiance to the working class of the world. Their struggle — which is your struggle — is my struggle too.

CINDY SHEEHAN

We end with a speech by Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in action in Iraq on April 4, 2004. This is a speech she delivered in August at the Veterans for Peace convention in Dallas, Texas, just before heading down to camp outside of Bush's vacation home in Crawford, Texas. President Bush refused to meet with her, but Sheehan helped galvanize sentiment against the occupation of Iraq.

I said to my son not to go. I said, "You know it's wrong, you know you're going over there. You know your unit might have to kill innocent people, you know you might die." And he says, "My buddies are going. If I don't go, my buddies will be in danger."

Thirty of our bravest young men have already died this month, and it's only the 5th of August. And the tragedy of the marines in Ohio is awful.

But do you think George Bush will interrupt his vacation and go visit the families of the twenty marines that have died in Ohio this week? No, because he doesn't care, he doesn't have a heart. That's not enough to stop his little "playing cowboy" game in Crawford for five weeks.

So, as you can imagine, every day, the grieving parents that have lost — lost, I don't like to use that word — the parents whose child was *murdered* — it's extremely difficult, you can't even get a small scab on our wound, because every day its ripped open.

So anyway, when that filth-spewer and warmonger, George Bush was speaking after the tragedy of the marines in Ohio, he said a couple things that outraged me — seriously outraged me.

George Bush was talking, and he never mentioned the terrible incident of those marines, but he did say that the families of the ones who have been killed can rest assured that their loved ones died for a "noble cause."

He also said — he says this often, and this really drives me crazy — he said that we have to stay in Iraq and complete the mission, to honor the sacrifices of the ones who have fallen.

And I say, why should I want one more mother to go through what I've gone through, because my son is dead. You know what, the only way he can honor my son's sacrifice is to bring the rest of our troops home. To make my son's death count for peace and love, and not war and hatred like Bush stands for.

I don't want him using my son's death or my family's sacrifice to continue the killing. I don't want him to exploit the honor of my son and others to continue the killing.

And I just had this brainstorm: I'm going to Crawford. I don't know where Crawford is. But I don't care, I'm going. And I'm going to go, and I'm going to tell them, "You get that evil maniac out here, because a Gold Star Mother, somebody whose son's blood is on his hands, has questions for him."

And I'm going to say, "OK, listen here, George. Number one: I demand, every time you get up and spew the filth that you're continuing the killing in Iraq to honor my son's sacrifice, honoring the fallen heroes, by continuing the mission; you say, 'except Casey Sheehan.'"

You don't have my permission to use my son's name.

And I'm going to say, "And you tell me, what the noble cause is that my son died for." And if he even starts to say "freedom and democracy," I'm going to say, "bullshit."

You tell me the truth. You tell me that my son died for oil. You tell me that my son died to make your friends rich. You tell me my son died so you can spread the cancer of Pax Americana, imperialism in the Middle East.

You get America out of Iraq, you get Israel out of Palestine, and you'll stop the terrorism.

And if you think I won't say "bullshit" to the President, then you're wrong, because I'll say what's on my mind.

So anyway, I'm going to go to Crawford tomorrow, and I'm going to say, "Get George here." And if they say, "No, he's not coming out." Then I'm going to say, "OK, I'm going to put up my tent here and I'm staying until he comes and talks to me."

Another thing that I'm doing is — my son was killed in 2004, so I'm not paying my taxes for 2004. And I tell everybody that. If I get a letter from the IRS, I'm going to say, "You killed my son for this. I don't owe you anything."

I live in Vacaville, California. If you can find me there, come and get me and put me on trial.

It's up to us, as moral people, to break immoral laws, and resist. As soon as the leaders of a country lie to you, they have no authority over you. These maniacs have no authority over us. And they might be able to put our bodies in prison, but they can't put our spirits in prison.

When I was growing up, it was "communists." Now it's "terrorists." So you always have to have somebody that's our enemy to be afraid of, so the war machine can build more bombs, and guns, and bullets, and everything.

But I do see hope. I see hope in this country. Fifty-eight percent of the American public are with us. We're preaching to the choir, but not everybody in the choir is singing. If all of the 58 percent started singing, this war would end.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (OPTIONAL ADDITION FOR ENDING)

No introduction. Can be read by person who performed Douglass or as a medley, with actors taking a sentence or paragraph each in turn.

Let me give you a word on the philosophy of reform.

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle.

If there is no struggle there is no progress.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle.

Find out just what any people will quietly submit to — and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them.

The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.