

# A Reading for the Anniversary: Our “Day of Sharing”



**400 Years of Inequality Class, Spring, 2019  
The New School, New York City**

## Introduction

2019 marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival in Jamestown of the first Africans sold into bondage in North America. Our class, 400 Years of Inequality, studied inequality in the United States through the lens of individual experience. In the end, our goal was to hold a “Day of Sharing,” in which we would read excerpts from people’s writings.

In order to choose what we would read that day, we each made selections from our textbook, *Voices of a People’s History*, edited by Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove. We read these aloud to our classmates. We made preliminary choices, and looked at the range of what we had picked. We made some adjustments to ensure that the diversity of the United States was reflected in our readings. We included writings created by and about African Americans, women, working people, gay men and lesbians, Native people, and immigrants.

Once we made our selections, we practiced to ensure the best possible readings on the Day of Sharing. We invited Thelma Armstrong to open the event by reading Phillis Wheatley. Then we performed our selections in an auditorium. Our friends and family were very moved by learning more about American history and the long struggle for equality.

We believe that any group could do what we did -- sit with the book *Voices of a People’s History*, choose some readings, and share them with others. To help you get started, we’ve included our work here. You’ll find the 60 pieces we excerpted, as well as the list we read for the Day of Sharing.

Observing the 400th anniversary of the first arrival of Africans in Jamestown is a special time. We hope you will join us and experience these readings as a form of collective recovery, as we did.

We worked diligently to be as accurate as possible. Please forgive any errors you find.

Best,

The Class

Last edited August 24, 2019

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# Diario de Christopher Columbus (1492)

*Transcribed by Bartholome de Las Casas. Columbus often refers to himself in third person or as the Admiral.*

Thursday 11 October [1492]

A sailor named Rodrigo de Triana saw land first, although the Admiral saw light so faint that he did not wish to affirm it as land. The Admiral brought out the royal banner and the captains two flags with the green cross, with an F and a Y [for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella]. The Admiral called the two captains and the others who had jumped ashore; and he said that they should be witnesses that, in the presence of all, he would take possession of the said island for the king and for the queen his lords.

Soon many people of the island gathered there. He says: In order that they would be friendly to us I gave many things of small value, in which they became so much our friends that it was a marvel. They took everything and gave of what they had willingly. But it seemed to me that they were very poor in everything. All of them go around naked. I showed them swords and they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves. They should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them. I will take six of them to Your Highness.

Saturday 13 October [1492]

I was attentive and labored to find out if there was any gold. Some wore a little piece in their noses. I was able to understand that there was a king who had very much gold. I will go to the southwest to seek gold and precious stones. These people are very gentle. Everything they have they give for anything given to them.

Sunday 14 October [1492]

I soon saw people who came to the beach calling to us and giving thanks to God. Some brought us water; others, things to eat; others threw themselves into the sea and came to us, and we understood that they were asking us if we had come from the heavens. These people are very naive about weapons, as Your Highness will see from seven that I caused to be taken in order to carry them away to you. All of them can be taken to Castile or held captive in this same island; because with 50 men all of them could be held in subjection and can be made to do whatever one might wish.

## Bartolomé de Las Casas, The Devastation of the Indies, a Brief Account (1542)

*This excerpt was written by Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish colonialist, explorer, and contemporary of Columbus. Las Casas was critical of the genocide created by the Spaniards against the people of Hispaniola which he witnessed and describes below.*

The Indies were discovered in the year 1492. In the following year a great many Spaniards went there with the intention of settling the land. Thus, 49 years have passed since the first settlers penetrated the land, the first being the large and most happy isle called Hispaniola. Around it in all directions are many other islands, some very big, others very small, and all of them were, as we saw with our own eyes, densely populated with native peoples called Indians. This large island was perhaps the most densely populated place in the world.

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. They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor

quarrelsome. These people are the most devoid of rancors, hatreds, or desire for vengeance of any people in the world. And because they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labor and soon die of no matter what malady. They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods. For this reason they are not arrogant embittered, or greedy. Their repasts are such that the food of the holy fathers in the desert can scarcely be more parsimonious, scanty, and poor. As to their dress, they are generally naked, with only their pudenda covered somewhat. They are very clean in their persons, with alert intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and taking the sacraments of the Church. The missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness. Some of the secular Spaniards who have been here for many years say that the goodness of the Indians is undeniable and that if this gifted people could be brought to know the one true God they would be the most fortunate people in the world.

Yet into this sheepfold, there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravening wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. And Spaniards have behaved in no other way during the past 40 years, down to the present time, for they are still acting like ravening beasts, 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 estimated to be more than three million), has now a population of barely two hundred persons.

All the people were slain or died after being taken into captivity on the Island of Hispaniola to be sold as slaves. When the Spaniards saw that some of these had escaped, they sent a ship to find them, and it voyaged for three years among the islands searching for those who had escaped being slaughtered, for a good Christian had helped them escape, taking



pity on them and had won them over to Christ; of these there were 11 persons and these I saw.

On these islands I estimated there are 2,100 leagues of land that have been ruined and depopulated, empty of people.

## Bartolome de las Casas Two Readings on the Legacy of Columbus (1542 and 1550)

*This excerpt was written by a contemporary of Columbus, Bartolome de las Casas, who was deeply critical of the violence and genocide perpetrated by the Spaniards in the New World. Here las Casas describes the resistance of an indigenous leader from Hispaniola against the Spaniards.*

In the year 1511, the Spaniards passed over the island of Cuba, which was a well-populated province. They began and ended in Cuba as they had done elsewhere, but with much greater acts of cruelty. Among the noteworthy outrages they committed was the one they perpetrated against a very important noble by the name Hatuey, who had come to Cuba from Hispaniola with many of his people to flee the calamities and inhuman acts of the Christians.

Hatuey was constantly fleeing before the Christians from the time they arrived on the island of Cuba, since he knew of them and of what they were capable. Now and then they encountered him and he defended himself, but they finally killed him. They did this for the sole reason that he had fled from those cruel and wicked Christians and had defended himself against them. And when they had captured him and as many of his followers as they could, they burned them all at the stake.

When tied to the stake, Hatuey was told by a Friar who was present, an artless rascal, something 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. Having never

heard any of this before, and told he would go to Inferno where, if he did not adopt the Christian faith, he would suffer eternal torment, he asked the friar if Christians all went to heaven. When told that they did he said he would prefer to go to Hell. Such is the fame and honor that God and our Faith have earned through the Christians who have gone out of the Indies.

## Bartolome de Las Casas, In Defense of the Indians (1550)

*This excerpt is taken from Bartolome de Las Casas, a Spanish colonialist and explorer who witnessed much of the Spanish conquest of the West Indies. He later spoke out against the atrocities committed against the indigenous peoples of the New World. In 1550, a debate was held before the Royal Council of Spain between Las Casas and priest Gines de Sepulveda. Here, Las Casas advocates against the enslavement of the indigenous peoples.*

I have thought it advisable to bring to the attention of Your Highness that there has come into my hands a certain brief synopsis in Spanish of a work that Gines de Sepulveda is reported to have written in Latin. In it he gives four reasons, each of which, in his opinion, proves beyond refutation that war against the Indians is justified, provided that it be waged properly and the laws of war be observed, just as, up to the present, the kings of Spain have commanded that it be waged and carried out. I have read and reread this work carefully. I certainly have detected in it poisons disguised with honey. Great prince, unless this deadly poison is stopped...it will infect the minds of readers, deceive the unwary, and arm and incite tyrants to injustice.

Whom will they spare? What blood will they not shed? What cruelty will they not commit, these brutal men who are hardened to seeing fields bathed in human blood, who make no distinction of sex or age, who do not spare infants at their mothers' breasts, pregnant women, the great, the lowly, or even men of feeble and gray old age for whom the weight of years usually awakens reverence or mercy?

Therefore when Sepulveda, by word or in his published works, teaches that campaigns against the Indians are lawful, what does he do except encourage oppressors and provide an opportunity for as many crimes and lamentable evils as these [men] commit, more than anyone would find it possible to believe?

Therefore, if Sepulveda's opinion (that campaigns against the Indians are lawful) is approved, the most holy faith of Christ, to the reproach of the name Christian, will be hateful and detestable to all the peoples of the world to whom the word will come of the inhuman crimes that the Spaniards inflict on that unhappy race, so that neither in our lifetime nor in the future will they want to accept our faith under any condition, for they see that its first heralds are not pastors but plunderers, not fathers but tyrants, and that those who profess it are ungodly, cruel and without pity in their merciless savagery.

## Richard Frethorne on Indentured Servitude (1623)

*In early 1623, indentured servant Richard Frethorne came to the colony of Jamestown. He wrote to his parents soon after about the suffering he observed.*

Loving and Kind Mother & Father, This is to let you understand that I your child am in the most heavy case, such that causeth much sickness, as the scurvy, and the bloody flux and diverse other diseases, which maketh the body very poor and weak. Since I came out of the ship I never ate anything but peas and water gruel.

A mouthful of bread for a penny loaf must serve four men which is most pitiful. If you did know as much as I, when people cry out - Oh! That they were in England without their limbs - and would not care to lose any limb to be in England again, yea though they beg from door to door. We live in fear of the enemy every hour, yet we have had a combat with them... and we took two alive and made slaves of them. But it was by policy, for we

are in great danger; our plantation is very weak by reason of death and sickness of our company. For we came but twenty and they are half dead just; and we look every hour when two more should go. We are but 32 to fight against 3000 if they should come.

I have nothing to comfort me, nor is there nothing to be gotten here but sickness and death. I have nothing at all - not a shirt to my back but two rags. I have not a penny, nor a penny worth. I am not half a quarter so strong as I was in England, and all is for want of victuals. You have given more than my day's allowance to a beggar at the door. Good father, have mercy. If you did but see me, you would weep. For God's sake, pity me. The answer of this letter will be life or death.

## Phillis Wheatley - A Hymn to the Morning (1773)

*Phillis Wheatley was the first published African American poet. Born in Gambia, she was enslaved at age 7, and purchased in Boston by the Wheatley family. Her owners taught her to read and write, and encouraged her to create her poetry. Her book, Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, was published in London in 1773. Many people doubted that the writing was hers, so she was "examined" by several scholars of the day and determined to have been the original author of her work. She was emancipated in October of 1773, and married a free black man. She continued to write, but publishers were no longer interested in her work. Her husband abandoned her after the death of their two infant children, while she was yet again pregnant. Wheatley, now in abject poverty, died of complications from childbirth at the age of 31, and her child died hours later.*

ATTEND my lays, ye ever honour'd nine,  
Assist my labours, and my strains refine;  
In smoothest numbers pour the notes along,  
For bright Aurora now demands my song.  
Aurora hail, and all the thousand dies,  
Which deck thy progress through the vaulted skies:  
The morn awakes, and wide extends her rays,

On ev'ry leaf the gentle zephyr plays;  
Harmonious lays the feather'd race resume,  
Dart the bright eye, and shake the painted plume.  
Ye shady groves, your verdant gloom display  
To shield your poet from the burning day:  
Calliope awake the sacred lyre,  
While thy fair sisters fan the pleasing fire:  
The bow'rs, the gales, the variegated skies  
In all their pleasures in my bosom rise.  
See in the east th' illustrious king of day!  
His rising radiance drives the shades away--  
But Oh! I feel his fervid beams too strong,  
And scarce begun, concludes th' abortive song.

## Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)

*This is an excerpt from Common Sense, written in 1776 by American revolutionary, Thomas Paine. Paine is well known as an iconoclast of religion and a radical with anti-slavery views. In this excerpt, he argues for America's independence from Great Britain.*

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, that the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. But even this is admitting more than is true, for I answer roundly that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her.

But she has protected us, say some. But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families. This new World hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious

liberty from every part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still....

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation, to show, a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived.

But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connection, are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance: Because, any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this Continent in European wars and quarrels, and set us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom we have neither anger nor complaint. Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART.

Reconciliation is now a fallacious dream. Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake, let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats, under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems: England to Europe, America to itself."

## Account of the New York Tenant Riot (July 14, 1766)

*In New York, land claimed by Van Rensselaer were occupied by poor farmers who said they had bought the land from the Indians. The result was a series of clashes between Van Rensselaer's small army and the local farmers, as described here in newspaper accounts of July 1766.*

The inhabitants of a place called Nobletown and a place called Spencer-Town, who had purchased of the Stockbridge Indians the lands they now possess; by virtue of an order of the General Court of this province, settled about two hundred families; John Van Renselear pretending a right to said lands, had treated the inhabitants very cruelly, because they would not submit to him as tenants, he claiming a right to said lands by the Government of New York; Van Renselear some years ago raised a number of men and came upon the poor people, pulled down houses killed people, imprisoned others, and has been constantly vexing and injuring the people.

On the 26th of last month Renselear came down with between two and three hundred men, all armed with guns, pistols and swords; 500 men armed were coming against them, forty or fifty inhabitants went out unarmed, except with sticks, and proceeded to a fence between them and the assailants, in order to compromise the matter between them.

The assailants came up to the fence, the Sheriff of the County of Albany, fired his pistol down ... Inhabitants desired to talk with them, they would not harken; the Sheriff, ordered the men to fire, and killed their own men, The chief of the inhabitants, retreated most of them into the woods, twelve betook themselves to the house and there defended themselves with six small arms.

The two parties here fired upon each other. The assailants killed one man in the house, and the inhabitants wounded several of them, the rest carried off and retreated, number of seven, accounts were dead. The Sheriff shewed no paper, nor attempted to execute any warrant, the inhabitants never offered any provocation at the fence. At the action at the fence one of the inhabitants had a leg broke. He begged they would consider the misery he was in, declaring he had rather die than be carried off, the assailants said "you shall die then" discharging his pistol upon him as he lay on the ground, the wounded man was alive when he left. It is feared the Dutch will pursue these poor people for defending themselves, as murderers; and keep them in great consternation.

# Petition of a Great Number of Negroes to the Massachusetts House of Representatives (January 13, 1777)

*In this remarkable document, the Petitioners construct a sound and cogent legal argument for their freedom by comparing their fervent request for same to the United States' own struggle for independence from Great Britain. The month of this Petition, January 1777, marked half a year after the signing of Declaration of Independence, yet this tragically held no precedential value or relevant irony in the eyes of the Massachusetts House.*

To the Honorable Counsel and House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts-Bay in General Court assembled January 13th[,] 1777. The Petition of a great number of Negroes who are detained in a state of Slavery in the Bowels of a free Christian Country Humbly Shewing:

That your Petitioners apprehend that they have, in common with all other Men, a natural and unalienable right to that freedom, which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever - Among a People possessing the mild Religion of Jesus - A People not insensible of the sweets of the rational freedom.

Your Honors need not to be informed that a Life of Slavery, like that of your petitioners, deprived of every social privilege, of every thing requisite to render Life even tolerable, is far worse than Non-Existence.

They can not but express their astonishment, that it has never been considered, that every principle from which America has acted in the course of her unhappy difficulties with Great-Britain pleads stronger than a thousand arguments in favor of your Petitioners.

They therefore humbly beseech your Honors, to give them this Petition its due weight and consideration, and cause an Act of the



Legislature to be passed, whereby they may be restored to the enjoyment of that freedom.

And your Petitioners, as in Duty Bound shall ever pray.

## Benjamin Banneker, Letter to Thomas Jefferson (August 19, 1791)

*This letter was written by Benjamin Banneker a free African-American almanac author, surveyor, naturalist, and farmer. Born in Baltimore County, Maryland, to a free African-American woman and a former slave, Banneker had little formal education and was largely self-taught.*

Sir,

I am fully sensible of the greatness of that freedom, which I take with you on the present occasion; a liberty which seemed to me scarcely allowable, where I reflected on that distinguished and dignified station in which you stand; and the almost general prejudice and prepossession which is so prevalent in the world against those of my complexion.

I suppose it is a truth too well attested to you, to need a proof here, that we are a race of Beings who have long labored under the abuse and censure of the world, that we have long been looked upon with an eye of contempt and that we have long been considered rather as brutish than human, and scarcely capable of mental endowments.

Now Sir, if this is founded in truth, I apprehend you will readily embrace every opportunity, to eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinion which so generally prevails with respect to us, and that your sentiments are concurrent with mine, which are that one universal Father hath given being to us all.

It is now Sir that your abhorrence thereof was so excited, that you publicly held forth this true and invaluable doctrine, which is worthy to be recorded and remembered in all succeeding ages. "We hold these truths to

be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Sir “Put your souls in their souls stead.” Thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and benevolence toward them, and thus shall you need neither the direction of myself or others in what manner to proceed herein.

And now Sir, I shall conclude and subscribe myself with the most profound respect your most obedient humble servant. Benjamin Banneker

## Tecumseh’s Speech to the Osages (Winter 1811-12)

We, ourselves, are threatened with a great evil: nothing will pacify [the white men] 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, - The white men want more than our hunting grounds, they wish to kill our warriors; they would even kill our old men, women and little ones.

Brothers, - My people wish for peace; the red men all wish for peace; but where the white people are, there is no peace for them, except it be on the bosom of our mother.

Brothers, - The white men despise and cheat the Indians; they abuse and insult them; they do not think the red men sufficiently good to live.

The red men have borne many and great injuries; they ought to suffer them no longer. My people will not; they are determined on vengeance; they have taken up the tomahawk; they will make it fat with blood; they will drink the blood of the white people.

Brothers, - Who are the white people that we should fear them? They are only men.

## David Walker's Appeal (1830)

*David Walker, a son of slave, but was born free in North Carolina. In 1830 published, Walker Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, which became widely read and infuriated southern slaveholders. The state of Georgia offered a reward of \$10,000 to anyone who would deliver him alive, and \$1,000 to anyone who would kill him.*

I ask the candid and unprejudiced of the whole world, to search the pages of history diligently and see if [any group] has ever treated a set of human beings, as the white Christians of America do us the blacks.

“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 of nature’s God entitle them. 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.”

Do you understand your own language? Hear your language, proclaimed to the world, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776.

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!!

Compare your own language above, extracted from your Declaration of independence, with your cruelties and murders inflicted by your cruel and unmerciful fathers and yourselves on our father and on us – men who have never given your fathers or you the least provocation!!!!!! Hear your language further!

But when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably 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.

Now, Americans! I ask you candidly, was your suffering under Great Britain, one hundredth part as cruel and tyrannical as you have rendered ours under you? I ask them, ought they not to be humble as I? or do they think that they can measure arms with Jehovah? Will not the Lord yet humble them? Some of the whites are ignorant enough to tell us, that we ought to be submissive to them, that they may keep their feet on our throats. And if we do not submit to be beaten to death by them.

The Americans may be as vigilant as they please, but they cannot be vigilant enough for the lord, neither can they hide themselves, where he will not find and bring them out.

# Chief Black Hawk's Surrender Speech (1832)

*Chief Black Hawk's speech exemplified the dignity of the native people of North American land. As he was toured around as a prisoner trophy by Andrew Jackson, Chief Black Hawk's words inspired sympathy from the people, the opposite of Jackson's intent.*

You have taken me prisoner with all my warriors. I am much grieved, for I expected, if I did not defeat you, to hold out much longer, and give you more trouble before I surrendered. When I saw that I could not beat you by Indian fighting, I determined to rush on you, and fight you face to face. I fought hard. But your guns were well aimed. The bullets flew like birds in the air, and whizzed by our ears like the wind through the trees in the winter. My warriors fell around me; it began to look dismal. I saw my evil day at hand. The sun rose dim on us in the morning, and at night it sunk in a dark cloud, and looked like a ball of fire. That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. His heart is dead, and no longer beats quick in his bosom. He is now a prisoner to the white men; they will do with him as they wish. But he can stand torture, and is not afraid of death. He is no coward. Black Hawk is an Indian.

He has done nothing for which an Indian ought to be ashamed. He has fought for his countrymen, the squaws and papooses, against white men, who came, year after year, to cheat them and take away their lands. You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it. The white men speak bad of the Indian, and took at him spitefully. But the Indian does not tell lies; Indians do not steal.

An Indian who is as bad as the white men, could not live in our nation; he would be put to death, and eat [sic] up by the wolves. The white men are bad school-masters; they carry false looks, and deal in false actions; they smile in the face of the poor Indian to cheat him; they shake

them by the hand to gain their confidence, to make them drunk, to deceive them, and ruin our wives. We told them to let us alone; but they followed on and beset our paths, and they coiled themselves among us like the snake. They poisoned us by their touch. We lived in danger. We were becoming like them, hypocrites and liars, adulterers, lazy drones, all talkers, and no workers.

We looked up to the Great Spirit. We went to our great father. We were encouraged. His great council gave us fair words and big promises, but we got no satisfaction. There were no deer in the forest. The opossum and beaver were fled; the springs were drying up, and our squaws and papooses without victuals to keep them from starving; we called a great council and built a large fire. The spirit of our fathers arose and spoke to us to avenge our wrongs or die.... We set up the war-whoop, and dug up the tomahawk; our knives were ready, and the heart of Black Hawk swelled high in his bosom when he led his warriors to battle. He will go to the world of spirits contented. He has done his duty. His father will meet him there, and commend him.

Black Hawk is a true Indian, and disdains to cry like a woman. He cares for his nation and the Indians. He laments their fate. The white men do not scalp the head; but they do worse-they poison the heart, it is not pure with them. His countrymen will not be scalped, but they will, in a few years, become like the white men, so that you can't trust them, and there must be, as in the white settlements, nearly as many officers as men, to take care of them and keep them in order.

Farewell, my nation. Black Hawk tried to save you, and avenge your wrongs. He drank the blood of some of the whites. He has been taken prisoner, and his plans are stopped. He can do no more. He is near his end. His sun is setting, and he will rise no more. Farewell to Black Hawk.

## Maria Stewart, “An Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall, Boston,” (February 27, 1833)

*Stewart, a Black abolitionist, essayist, and lecturer delivered this and three other speeches in the 1830s. She was one of the first female lecturers to use her platform for activism. This is an excerpt from a speech titled “African Rights and Liberty.”*

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. But 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. For bid, ye Powers on high, that it should any longer be said that our men possess no force. 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? How can you, when you reflect from what you have fallen, refrain from crying mightily unto God, to turn away from us the fierceness of his anger, and remember our transgressions against us no more forever. But a God of infinite purity will not regard the prayers of those who hold religion in one hand, and prejudice, sin and pollution in the other; he will not regard the prayers of self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Is it possible, I exclaim, 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.

## Miguel Barragan, Dispatch on Texas Colonists (October 31, 1835)

*In an 1819 treaty with Spain, the United States had given up any claim to Texas. But this did not stop politicians in Washington from trying to bribe Mexican officials to sell Texas to colonize the state and annex it. Mexico tried to stop the flow of U.S. immigration into Texas, but colonists continued to come to the state, setting the stage for a conflict over the state's status and for the eventual war against Mexico.*

Ungrateful Texas colonists have made fun of the national laws of Mexico; disregarding the fact that Mexico gave them a generous welcome; dispensing to them the same—and even more— benefits than to our own sons.

Every time we have had internal agitation they have thought the Republic weak and impotent to control their excesses. They hypocritically pretended a bond they did not feel to the institutions of their Stepmother. Given the slightest opportunity, they returned to their aggressions, throwing insults and fighting the small detachments which protected them.

To the Texas colonists, the word MEXICAN is, and has been, an execrable word. There has been no insult or violation that our countrymen have not suffered, including being jailed as "foreigners" in their own country.



Texas colonies have been considered, for a long time, as general quarters for the enemies of the Nation; where all gathered to revolt against the generous nation which has tolerated their insolence. The flag of rebellion has been raised; Texans aspiring shamelessly to take over precious parts of our land. The civilized world will not delay in pronouncing the judgment they deserve for this infamous and detestable conduct. The Supreme Government knows its duties and knows how to execute them. Our brave soldiers, are marching to maintain in Texas our flag and honor, to punish the traitors and reward those who remain faithful. In this national war, so unjustly provoked, justice and power are on our side. They will produce brilliant testaments of their invincibility in this foreign war as they were in Tepeaca, Cordoba, Azcapozalco, in the Huerta, in Veracruz and Tampico de Tamaulipas.

Not one Mexican worthy of his country will favor the treason of foreign rebels, but that if such a misfortunate exists, the power and duty of punishing him lies in your hands.

God and Liberty!

## Angelina E. Grimke Weld's Speech at Pennsylvania Hall (May 17, 1838)

*Angelina and Sarah Grimke were leaders in the early women's rights movement, in addition to being strong abolitionists. Hailing from South Carolina, the sisters were some of the few Southern women involved in these movements. In this selection, Angelina Grimke speaks on these issues in an address to Pennsylvania Hall. As she spoke, protesters attacked the hall, throwing stones and breaking windows, and burning down the hall that night.*

Men, brethren and fathers - mothers, daughters and sisters, what came ye out for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? Is it curiosity merely, or a deep sympathy with the perishing slave, that has brought this large audience together? (A yell from the mob without the building.) Those voices

without ought to awaken and call out our warmest sympathies. Deluded beings! "They know not what they do." They know not that they are undermining their own rights and their own happiness, temporal and eternal. Do you ask, "what has the North to do with slavery?" Hear it - hear it. Those voices without tell us that the spirit of slavery is here.... This opposition shows that slavery has done its deadliest work in the hearts of our citizens. Do you ask, then, "what has the North to do?" I answer, cast out first the spirit of slavery from your own hearts, and then lend your aid to convert the south. Each one present has a work to do, be his or her situation what it may, however limited their means, or insignificant their supposed influence. The great men of this country will not do this work; the church will never do it.

As a southerner I feel that it is my duty to stand up here tonight and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it - I have seen it. I know it has horrors that can never be described. I was brought up under its wing: I witnessed for years its demoralizing influences, and its destructiveness to human happiness. It is admitted by some that the slave is not happy under the worst forms of slavery. But I have never seen a happy slave. I have seen him dance in his chains, it is true; but he was not happy. (Just then stones were thrown at the windows, - a great noise without, and commotion within.) What is a mob? What would the breaking of every window be? What would the leveling of this Hall be? Any evidence that we are wrong, or that slavery is a good and wholesome institution? What if the mob should now burst in upon us, break up our meeting and commit violence upon our persons - would this be any thing compared with what the slaves endure?

We often hear the question asked, "What shall we do?" Here is an opportunity for doing something new. Every man and every woman present may do something by showing that we fear not a mob, and, in the midst of threatenings and revelings, by opening our mouths for the dumb and pleading the cause of those who are ready to perish.

Women of Philadelphia! Allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let me urge you to petition. Men may settle this and other

questions at the ballot-box, but you have no such right; it is only through petitions that you can reach the Legislature. Do you say, "It does no good?" The South already turns pale at the number sent.

It was remarked in England that women did much to abolish Slavery in her colonies. When the women of these States send up to Congress such a petition, our legislators will arise as did those of England, and say, "When all the maids and matrons of the land are knocking at our doors we must legislate." Let the zeal and love, the faith and works of our English sisters quicken ours - that while the slaves continue to suffer, and when they shout deliverance, we may feel the satisfaction of having done what we could.

## Juan Soto, Desertion Handbill (June 6, 1847)

*During the Mexican War a group of Irish soldiers serving in the U.S. military switched sides to join the Mexican army and take up arms against the U.S. expansion into Mexican soil.*

Catholic Irish, Frenchmen and German of the invading army!

The American nation makes a most unjust war to the Mexicans and has taken all of you as an instrument of their iniquity. You must not fight against a religious people, nor should you been seen in the ranks of those who proclaim slavery of mankind as a constitutive principle.

Liberty is not on the part of those who desire to be the lords of the world, robbing properties and territories which do not belong to them and shedding so much blood in order to accomplish their views.

The Mexican people raises every where in order to wage an insurrectionary war, and that American army however large it may become, shall find here a grave. The Mexican people wishes not to shed the blood of those who profess their own religion, and I, in the name of inhabitants of the state of Vera Cruz invite you to abandon those ranks to which you must not belong.

Many of your former companion fight now content in our ranks. After the war is over, the magnanimous and generous Mexican nation will duly appreciate the services rendered, and you shall remain with us, cultivating our fertile lands.

Catholics, Irish, French and German!! Long live Liberty!!

## North Star Editorial, The War with Mexico (January 21, 1848)

*This excerpt was pulled from The North Star, an abolitionist newspaper first published in 1847. The piece was written by Frederick Douglass in an attempt to unveil the the United States war on Mexico as a result of slavery and and savagery of America's underlying roots.*

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—the conduct of leading men, and the general views and feelings of the people of the United States at large, 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 whole nation seems to "wonder after these (bloody) beasts." Grasping ambition, tyrannic usurpation, atrocious aggression, cruel and haughty pride, spread, and pervade the land. The curse is upon us. The plague is abroad. No part of the country can claim entire exemption from its evils. They may be seen as well in the State of New York, as in South Carolina; on the Penobscot, as on the Sabine.

The people appear to be completely in the hands of office seekers, demagogues, and political gamblers. Within the bewildering meshes of their political nets, they are worried, confused, and confounded, so that a general outcry is heard—"Vigorous prosecution of the war!"—"Mexico must

be humbled!"—"Conquer a peace!"—"Indemnity!"—"War forced upon us!"—"National honor!"—"The whole of Mexico!"—"Our destiny!"—"This continent!"—"Anglo Saxon blood!"—"More territory!"—"Free institutions!"—"Our country!" till it seems indeed "that justice has fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason." 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... We sometimes fear, that now our case as a nation is hopeless. May God grant otherwise! Our nation seems resolved to rush on in her wicked career, though the road be ditched with human blood, and paved with human skulls. Well, be it so.

But, humble as we are, and 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... 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.

## Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Seneca Falls Convention (July 19, 1848)

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect

to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, to insist upon the institution of 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. All experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. It is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men- both natives and foreigners.

Deprived her first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her' on all sides. He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead. He has taken from all her right in property, even to the wages she earns. The law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

The law, in all cases, giving upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man and giving all the power into his hands. After deriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property,

he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it. He has monopolized all the profitable employments, and from those, she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her. He has created a different code of morals for men and women., which moral delinquencies excludes women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man. He has endeavored, in every way that he could , to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, amd to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life. Aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.We anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object.We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

## Frederick Douglas

### The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro

(July 5, 1852)

*This is an address given by the illustrious abolitionist and former slave, Frederick Douglass to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. His profound and strikingly unapologetic speech emphasizes the hypocrisy of the July 4th holiday from the slaves' viewpoint. Those unequivocal atrocities committed by America toward Blacks have never been righted and unfortunately are perpetrated in different ways in present day. Therefore the truths of his speech are still quite relevant over 150 years later.*

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

national justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to 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. The Fourth of July is yours not mine.

Fellow citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! Whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them.

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's 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; 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.

Hinton Rowan Helper  
*The Impending Crisis of the South*  
(1857)

*This excerpt describes the class conflict in the South between whites. Poor whites were uneducated and illiterate. Many were drafted into a war that they did not necessarily support. Hundreds of thousands of Confederate soldiers died, mostly poor men, for the*



*cause of protecting the slave system. As this excerpt points out, poor whites did not benefit from the political-economic system of the South. Though not chattel slaves, they were oppressed and impoverished under the rule of the planter class.*

We have not breathed away seven and twenty years in the South, without becoming acquainted with the demagogical maneuverings of the oligarchy. Their intrigues and tricks are as familiar to us as household words. To the illiterate poor whites - made poor and ignorant by the system of slavery - they hold out the idea that slavery is the very bulwark of our liberties, and the foundation of American independence! They attribute all the glory and prosperity of the country to the "invaluable institutions of the South!" We have frequently listened to the incoherent and truth murdering declamations of these champions of slavery, and, in the absence of a method of giving vent to our disgust and indignation, have involuntarily bit our lips into blisters.

The lords of the lash are not only absolute masters of the blacks, who are bought and sold, and driven about like so many cattle, but they are also the oracles and arbiters of all non-slaveholding whites, whose freedom is merely nominal, and whose unparalleled illiteracy and degradation is perpetuated. How little the "poor white trash," the great majority of the Southern people, know of the real condition of the country is sadly astonishing. The truth is, they know nothing of public measures, except what the slave-drivers condescend to tell, for the haughty cavaliers of shackles and handcuffs will not degrade themselves by holding private converse with those who have neither dimes nor hereditary rights in human flesh.

Whenever it pleases a slaveholder to become communicative, poor whites may hear with fear and trembling, but not speak, or be crushed with stern rebukes, cruel oppressions, or downright violence. The expression of any sentiment at all conflicting with the gospel of slavery, dooms them at once in the community in which they live. They may thirst for knowledge, but there is no Moses among them to smite it out of the rocks. Non-slaveholders are not only kept in ignorance of what is transpiring at the

North, but they are continually misinformed of what is going on in the South.

Thus it is that they are cajoled into the notion that they are the freest, happiest, and most intelligent people in the world, and are taught to look with prejudice upon every new principle or progressive movement. Thus it is that the South, woefully inert and inventionless, has lagged behind the North, and is now weltering in a cesspool of ignorance and degradation. The opinion is prevalent throughout the South that the free States are quite unproductive, and that they are mainly dependent on us for provisions. So far as the cereals, fruits, garden vegetables, and edible roots are concerned, we have shown the utter falsity of this opinion. We can prove that the hay crop of the free States is worth considerably more in dollars and cents than all the cotton, tobacco, rice, hay and hemp produced in the fifteen slave States.

And yet, the slave-driving oligarchy would whip us into the belief that agriculture is not one of the leading and lucrative pursuits of the free States; that the soil there is an uninterrupted barren waste, and that our Northern brethren, having the advantage in nothing except wealth, population, commerce, manufactures, mechanism, inventions, literature, and the arts and sciences, are dependent on us for the necessaries of life.

## John Brown, Last Speech (1859)

*John Brown was an abolitionist who sought out to initiate a raid led by armed slaves on Harpers Ferry which we now know to be West Virginia. Before being lynched, this is the last speech he gave to the jury.*

I have, may it please the Court, few words to say. I deny everything but what I have all along admitted - the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clear thing of that matter. I went into Missouri, and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I

designed to have done the same thing again, on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

...Had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right, and every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This Court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the Law of God... It teaches me, further, to “remember them that are in bonds as bound with them.” I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done, in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children, and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit: so let it be done!

Let me say one word further... I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.”

## Osborne P. Anderson A Voice from Harper's Ferry (1861)

*Seventeen whites and five blacks participated in abolitionist John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Osborne Anderson was the only black person who survived to write about the experience. Here is an excerpt from his narrative of the raid.*

On the Sunday evening of the outbreak, when we visited the plantations and acquainted the slaves with our purpose to effect their liberation, the greatest enthusiasm was manifested by them - joy and hilarity beamed from every countenance. One old mother, white-haired from age, borne down with the labors of many years in bonds, when told of the work in hand, replied: "God bless you! God bless you!" She then kissed the party at her house, and requested all to kneel which we did, and she offered prayer to God for His blessing on the enterprise, and our success. At the slaves' quarters, there was apparently a general jubilee, and they stepped forward manfully, without impressing or coaxing. In one case, only was there any hesitation. A dark-complexioned free-born man refused to take up arms. He showed the only want of confidence in the movement, and far less courage than any slave consulted about the plan. In fact, so far as I could learn, the free blacks [of the] South are much less reliable than the slaves, and infinitely more fearful. In Washington City, a party of free colored persons offered their services to the Mayor, to aid in suppressing our movement.

As in the war of the American Revolution, the first blood shed was a black man's, Crispus Attucks's, so at Harper's Ferry, the first blood shed by our party, after the arrival of the United States troops, was that of a slave.

Captain Brown remarked to me that he was agreeably disappointed in the behavior of the slaves; for he did not expect one out of ten to be willing to fight. The truth of the Harper's Ferry "raid," as it has been called, in regard to the part taken by the slaves, and the aid given by colored men generally, demonstrates clearly: the conduct of the slaves is a strong guarantee of the weakness of the institution, and secondly, that the colored people, as a body, were well represented by numbers, both in the fight and in the number who suffered martyrdom afterward.

## Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

*Harriet Jacobs first published Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl in 1861 under the pseudonym Linda Brent. In this selection, Jacobs explores the relationship between the church and slavery, observing the role that religion was used to discourage slave rebellion, while at the same time, providing a momentary relief in the lives of slaves.*

After the alarm caused by Nat Turner's insurrection had subsided, the slaveholders came to the conclusion that it would be well to give slaves enough of religious instruction to keep them from murdering their masters. Rev. Mr. Pike gave out portions he wished all present who could read to repeat or respond to. His text was "Servants be obedient to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Hearken, ye servants! Give strict heed unto my words. You are rebellious sinners. Your hearts are filed with all manner of evil. God is angry with you and will surely punish you. Your master may not find you out but God sees you. I went home feeling that I had heard the Reverend for the last time. Slaves left and went to enjoy a Methodist shout. They never seem so happy as when shouting and singing in religious meetings.

I well remember one occasion when I attended a Methodist class meeting, I went with a burdened spirit, and happened to sit next to a poor, bereaved mother, whose heart was still heavier than mine. The class leader was the town constable - a man who bought and sold slaves. This white-faced, black-hearted brother came near us and said to the stricken mother, "Sister, can't you tell us how the Lord deals with your soul? Do you love him as you did formerly? She rose to her feet, and said, in piteous tones, "My Lord and Master, help me! My load is more than I can bear. God has hid himself from me, and I am left in darkness and misery. I can't tell you what is in here! They've got all my children. Last week they took the last one. God only knows where they've sold her. They let me have her sixteen years and then -O! O! Pray for her brothers and sisters!"

She sat down, quivering in every limb. I saw that the constable class leader become crimson in the face with suppressed laughter, while he held up his handkerchief, that those who were weeping for the poor woman's calamity might not see his merriment.

The congregation struck up a hymn, and sung as though they were as free as the birds that warbled round us, -

Ole Satan's church is here below.  
Up to God's free church I hope to go.  
Cry Amen, cry Amen, cry Amen to God!

## Martin Delany's Advice to Former Slaves (July 1865)

*Martin Delany, the son of free Blacks, was an officer in the army. He gave a revolutionary, "Black power" speech to hundreds of free slaves after Emancipation at St. Helena Island, South Carolina. It was delivered with fire and a strength of conviction; duly noted that "the excitement with the congregation was immense."*

It was only a War policy of the Government, to declare the slaves of the South free, knowing that the whole power of the South, laid in the possession of the Slaves. But I want you to understand, that we would not have become free, had we not armed ourselves and fought for our independence....

If I had been a slave, I would have been most troublesome and not to be conquered by any threat or punishment. I would not have worked, and no one would have dared to come near me, I would have struggled for life or death, and would have thrown fire and sword between them. I know you have been good, only too good.

People say that you are too lazy to work, that you have no intelligence to get on for yourselves, without being guided and driven to the

work by overseers. I say it is a lie, and a blasphemous lie, and I will prove it to be so. I am going to tell you now, what you are worth.

The work was so profitable which those poor blacks did, that in the year 1502 Charles the V gave permission to import into America yearly 4,000 blacks. And so you always have been the means of riches.

You men and women, every one of you around me, made thousands and thousands of dollars for your master. Only you were the means for your masters to lead the ideal and inglorious life and to give his children the education, which he denied to you, for fear you may awake to conscience. Believe not in these School teachers, Emissaries, Ministers and agents, because they never tell you the truth, and I particularly warn you against those Cotton Agents, who come honey mouthed unto you, their only intent being to make profit by your inexperience.

So I will come to the main purpose for which I have come to see you. As before the whole South depended on you, now the whole country will depend upon you. I give you advice on how to get along. Get up a community and get all the lands you can- if you cannot get any singly. If you cannot get all the land yourself - the community can and so you can divide the profit. You will see that by adhering to our views, you will become a wealthy and powerful population. I tell you slavery is over, and shall never return again.

## Henry McNeal Turner, On the Eligibility of Colored Members to Seats in the Georgia Legislature (September 3, 1868)

*After helping to organize the First U.S. Colored Troops, which he later joined as chaplain, Henry McNeal Turner became a delegate to the state constitutional convention in Atlanta and was elected a representative to the Georgia state legislature in 1868. But soon after, he was among two dozen legislators expelled for the "crime" of being black. Here is an excerpt of his address to his fellow legislatures denouncing the expulsions.*

The scene presented in this House, today, is one unparalleled in the history of the world. From this day, back to the day when God breathed the breath of life into Adam, no analogy for it can be found. Never, in the history of the world, has a man been arraigned before a body clothed with legislative, judicial or executive functions, charged with the offence of being of a darker hue than his fellow men.

Never in all the history of the great nations of this world—never before—has a man been arraigned, charged with an offence committed by the God of Heaven Himself. Cases may be found where men have been deprived of their rights for crimes and misdemeanors; but it has remained for the State of Georgia, in the very heart of the nineteenth century, to call a man before the bar, and there charge him with an act for which he is no more responsible than for the head which he carries upon his shoulders. The Anglo-Saxon race, sir, is a most surprising one. No man has ever been more deceived in that race than I have been for the last three weeks. I was not aware that there was in the character of that race so much cowardice, or so much pusillanimity. The treachery which has been exhibited in it by gentlemen belonging to that race has shaken my confidence in it more than anything that has come under my observation from the day of my birth. Whose Legislature is this? Is it a white man's Legislature, or is it a black man's Legislature? Who voted for a Constitutional Convention, in obedience to the mandate of the Congress of the United States? Who first rallied around the standard of Reconstruction? Who set the ball of loyalty rolling in the State of Georgia? And whose voice was heard on the hills and in the valleys of this State? It was the voice of the brawny-armed Negro, with the few humanitarian-hearted white men who came to our assistance. I claim the honor, sir, of having been the instrument of convincing hundreds—yea, thousands—of white men, that to reconstruct under the measures of the United States Congress was the safest and the best course for the interest of the State.

I stand very much in the position of a criminal before your bar, because I dare to be the exponent of the views of those who sent me here.



Or, in other words, we are told that if black men want to speak, they must speak through white trumpets; if black men want their sentiments expressed, they must be adulterated and sent through white messengers, who will quibble, and equivocate, and evade, as rapidly as the pendulum of a clock. If this be not done, then the black men have committed an outrage, and their Representatives must be denied the right to represent their constituents.

The great question, sir, is this: Am I a man? If I am such, I claim the rights of a man. Am I not a man because I happen to be of a darker hue than honorable gentleman around me?

You have all the elements of superiority upon your side; you have our money and your own; you have our education and your own; and you have your land and our own, too. We, who number hundreds of thousands in Georgia, including our wives and families, with not a foot of land to call our own—strangers in the land of our birth; without money, without education, without aid, without a roof to cover us while we live, nor sufficient clay to cover us when we die! It is extraordinary that a race such as yours, professing gallantry, and chivalry, and education, and superiority, living in a land where ringing chimes call child and sire to the Church of God—a land where Bibles are read and Gospel truths are spoken, and where courts of justice are presumed to exist; it is extraordinary, I say, that, with all these advantages on your side, you can make war upon the poor defenseless black man.

## Henry George, The Crime of Poverty (April 1, 1885)

*Henry George was a prominent journalist and economic thinker of the nineteenth century. He is most well known for his book, Progress and Poverty and as an advocate for the single-tax movement. This address, delivered at an opera house in Burlington, Iowa in 1885, examines the social roots of poverty in the United States and challenges the myth of individual blame.*

I propose to talk to you tonight of the Crime of Poverty. I cannot, in a short time, hope to convince you of much; but the thing of things I should like to show you is that poverty is a crime. I do not mean that it is a crime to be poor. Murder is a crime; but it is not a crime to be murdered; and a man who is in poverty, I look upon as not a criminal himself, so much as the victim of a crime for which others, as well perhaps as himself, are responsible. That poverty is a curse, we all know.

The curse born of poverty is not confined to the poor alone; it runs through all classes, even to the very rich. They, too, suffer; they must suffer, for there cannot be suffering in a community from which any class can totally escape. The vice, the crime, the ignorance, the meanness born of poverty, poison, so to speak, the very air which rich and poor alike must breathe...and it seems to me clear that the great majority of those who suffer from poverty are poor...because of the conditions imposed by society at large. Therefore, I hold that poverty is...not an individual crime, but a social crime, a crime for which we all, poor as well as rich, are responsible.

I say that all this poverty and the ignorance that flows from it is unnecessary, I say that there is no natural reason why we should not all be rich, in the sense, not of having more than each other, but in the sense of all having enough to completely satisfy all physical wants. There is a cause for this poverty... and you will find its root in a primary injustice. There is one sufficient cause that is common to all nations; and that is the appropriation as the property of some natural element on which and from which we all must live.

Did you ever think of the utter absurdity and strangeness of the fact that, all over the civilized world, the working classes are the poor classes? Think for a moment how it would strike a rational being who had never been on earth before... would he not think that the working people would be the people who lived in the finest houses and had the most of everything that work produces? Yet, he would find that those called the working people were the people who live in the poorest houses.

## Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888)

*One reaction to the poverty and violence of capitalism in the nineteenth century was to dream of a different kind of world. Edward Bellamy's novel Looking Backward imagined a man waking up in 2000 in a society based on equality and justice. His book sold millions of copies in a few years, and over a hundred groups were organized around the country to work towards Bellamy's vision.*

“And, in heaven’s name, who are the public enemies?” exclaimed Dr. Leete. “Are they France, England, Germany, or hunger, cold, and nakedness?” Governments were accustomed, on the slightest international misunderstanding, to seize upon the bodies of citizens and deliver them over by hundreds of thousands to death and mutilation, all this often for no imaginable profit to the victims. We have no war now, our governments no war powers, but to protect every citizen against hunger, cold, and nakedness, and provide for physical and mental needs, the function is assumed of directing his industry for a term of years. No, Mr. West, I am sure you will perceive that it was in your age, the extension of the functions of governments was extraordinary. Not even for the best ends would men now allow their governments such powers as were then used.”

I said, “The demagoguery and corruption of our public men would have considered, insuperable objections to any assumption by government of the change of the national industries. We should have thought that no arrangement could be worse than to entrust the politicians with control of the wealth-producing machinery of the country.”

Rejoined Dr. Leete, “all that is changed now. We have no parties or politicians, and as for demagoguery and corruption, they are words having only an historical significance. The conditions of human life have changed, and the motives of human action. The organization of society were under a constant temptation to misuse their power for the private profit. Nowadays,

society is so constituted that there is no way an official could possibly make any profit for himself or anyone else by a misuse of his power. Let him be as bad an official, he cannot be a corrupt one. The social system no longer offers a premium on dishonesty. “

“You have not yet told me how you have settled the labor problem. The problem of capital which we have been discussing,” I said. “After the nation had assumed conduct of the capital in general of the country, the labor question still remained.”

“ The moment the nation assumed the responsibilities of capital those difficulties vanished,” replied Dr. Leete. “ National organization of labor under one direction was the complete solution of what was, justly regarded as the insoluble labor problem. When the nation became the sole employer, all the citizens, by virtue of their citizenship, became employees, to be distributed according to the needs of industry.”

I suggested, “You simply applied the principle of universal military service, to the labor question.”

Said Dr. Leete. “The people were already accustomed to the idea that the obligation of every citizen, not physically disabled, to contribute his military services to the defense of the nation was equal and absolute. That it was equally the duty of every citizen to contribute his quota of industrial or intellectual services to the maintenance of the nation, it was not until the nation became the employer of labor that citizens were able to render service with any pretense either of universality or equity. No organization of labor was possible when the employing power was divided among hundreds or thousands of individuals and corporations. Vast numbers who desired to labor could find no opportunity, and, those who desired to evade a part or all of their debt could easily do so.”

“We hold the period of youth sacred to education, and the period of maturity, when the physical forces begin to flag , equally sacred to ease and agreeable relaxation, The period of industrial service is twenty-four years, beginning at the close of the course of education at twenty-one and terminating at forty-five. After forty-five, the citizen still remains liable to special calls, in case of emergencies causing a sudden great increase in

the demand for labor, till he reaches the age of fifty-five, but such calls are rarely, in fact almost never, made.”

## Reverend Ernest Lyon and Others: Open Letter From the New Orleans Mass Meeting (August 22, 1888)

*This is an open letter addressed to the United States regarding the heinous acts of the Ku Klux Klan on African Americans in Louisiana one year after the massacre of blacks in Thibodaux.*

We, citizens of New Orleans, as well as of neighboring parishes, from which we have been driven away without warrant or law, assembled in mass meeting at New Orleans, La., on Wednesday, August 22 [1888], at Geddes Hall, declare and assert: That a reign of terror exists in many parts of the state; that the laws are suspended and the officers of the government, from the governor down, afford no protection to the lives and property of the people against armed bodies of whites, who shed innocent blood and commit deeds of savagery unsurpassed in the dark ages of mankind.

For the past twelve years we have been most effectively disenfranchised and robbed of our political rights. While denied the privilege in many places of voting for the party and candidates of our choice, acts of violence have been committed to compel us to vote against the dictates of our conscience for the Democratic party, and the Republican ballots cast by us have been counted for the Democratic candidates.

With that pretense as a cloak these lawless bands make night hideous with their unblushing outrages and murders of inoffensive colored citizens. They go out on nightly raids, order peaceable citizens away never to return, whip some, fire into houses of others—endangering the defenseless lives of women and children—and no attempt is being made to indict them.

In the instances where the Negroes have attempted to defend themselves, as at Pattersonville and Thibodeaux, they have been traduced in a spirit of savage malignity, the governor of the State, with scarce an observance of the forms of the law has hastened his mercenaries or militia to the scene with cannon and rifles ostensibly to preserve the peace, but actually to re-enforce the already too well fortified Negro murderers falsely assuming to be lawful posses.

They are flagrantly deprived of every right guaranteed them by the Constitution; in many parts of the State they are free only in name; they cannot assemble in place to indicate and discuss an equitable rate of wages for their labor; they do not feel safe as property holders and tax-payers, and are permitted to enjoy but very few public conveniences....

We have exhausted all means in our power to have our wrongs redressed by those whose sworn duty it is to impartially execute the laws, but all in vain, until now, because of our murdered fellow-citizens, and apprehensive for our own safety, we appeal to the awakened conscience, the sense of justice and sympathy of the civilized world, and of the American people in particular, to assist us with such moral and material support, as to secure the removal of our people, penniless as many of them are under the feudal system under which they live, to the public lands and other places of the northwest where they can enjoy some security for their persons and property.

To this end we have organized a bureau of immigration.... To our people we advise calmness and a strict regard for law and order. If your homes are invaded expect no mercy, for none will be shown, and if doomed to die, then die defending your life and home to the best of your ability. Invoking the guiding favor of Almighty God and the sympathy of mankind, we are your brethren in affliction and the common bond of humanity.

# Black Elk, The End of the Dream (1890)

*Black Elk was an Ojibwa Sioux Leader, and this is his account of the Massacre of Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890.*

We were going back to Pine Ridge, because we thought there was peace back home; but it was not so. While we were gone, there was a fight around the Agency, and our people had all gone away. The people had fled down Clay Creek, and we followed their trail. We rode in among them and I heard my mother's voice. She was singing a death song for me, because she felt sure I had died over there. She was so glad to see me that she cried and cried. I think nobody but the little children slept any that night. The snow blew and we had no tepees. When it was getting light, a war party went out and I went along; but this time I took a gun with me. After what I had seen over there, I wanted revenge; I wanted to kill.

They were fighting right there, and a Lakota cried to me: "Black Elk, this is the kind of a day in which to do something great!" I answered: "How!" Then I got off my horse and rubbed earth on myself, to show the Powers that I was nothing without their help. But I remembered my great vision, the part where the geese of the north appeared. I depended upon their power. Stretching out my arms with my gun in the right hand, like a goose soaring when it flies low to turn in a change of weather, I made the sound the geese make—br-r-r-p, br-r-r-p, br-r-r-p; and, doing this, I charged.

But just as I had reached the very top of the hill, suddenly it was like waking up, and I was afraid. I dropped my arms and quit making the goose cry. I nearly fell out of my saddle, but I managed to hold on, and rode over the hill. An old man by the name of Protector was there, and he ran up and held me, for now I was falling off my horse. By now I was crazy to kill, and I said to Protector: "Help me on my horse! Let me go over there. It is a good day to die, so I will go over there!" But Protector said: "No, young nephew!

You must not die today. That would be foolish. Your people need you. There may be a better day to die”.

There was a man by the name of Little Soldier who took charge of me and brought me to where our people were camped. Old Hollow Horn was there. He was a very powerful bear medicine man, and he came over to heal my wound. In three days I could walk, but I kept a piece of blanket tied around my belly. My mother tried to keep me at home, because, although I could walk and ride a horse, my wound was not all healed yet. But I would not stay; for, after what I had seen at Wounded Knee, I wanted a chance to kill soldiers.

But this was hard, because the people were not all of the same mind, and they were hungry and cold. Our party wanted to go out and fight anyway, but Red Cloud made a speech to us something like this: “Brothers, this is a very hard winter. The women and children are starving and freezing. If this were summer, I would say to keep on fighting to the end. But we cannot do this. We must think of the women and children and that it is very bad for them. So we must make peace, and I will see that nobody is hurt by the soldiers.” The people agreed to this, for it was true.

I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream. And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth,—you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.



## The Omaha Platform of the People's Party of America (July 4 1892)

*This is an excerpt from the first convention of the Populist Party held in Omaha, Nebraska.*

The conditions which surround us best justify our cooperation: we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation or bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, our homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of the capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self protection. Imported pauperized labor beats down their wages; a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few unprecedented in the history of mankind, and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.

A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism. We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have

been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them.

Assembled on the anniversary of the birthday of the nation and filled with the spirit of the grand general chief, who established our independence, we seek to restore the government of the republic to the hands of "the plain people" with whose class it originated.

We declare that this republic can only endure as a free government while built upon the love of the whole people for each other and for the nation; that it cannot be pinned together by bayonets; that the civil war is over and that every passion and resentment which grew out of it must die with it, and that we must be in fact, as we are in name, one united brotherhood of freedmen.

## The Omaha Platform of the People's Party of American, 2nd Excerpt (July 4, 1892)

The conditions which surround us best justify our cooperation: we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominated the ballot-box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine (this is a stoat - small mammal) of the bench. The people are demoralized; most the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at polling places to prevent universal intimidation or bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, our homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverishment, and the land concentrating in the hands of the capitalist. The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self-protection. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few unprecedented in the history of mankind, and

the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice, we breed the two great classes - tramp (a person who travels place to place looking for work) and millionaires.

A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once it forebodes (keeps) terrible convulsions (sudden, violent movements), the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism. We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them.

Neither do they promise us any substantial reform. They have agreed together to ignore, in the coming campaign, every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar battle over tariffs, so the capitalist, cooperations, national banks, rings, trusts, watered stock and the oppression of the usurers(money lender) may all be lost sight of. They propose to sacrifice our homes, lives, and children to destroy the multitude in order to secure corruption funds from the millionaires. On the anniversary of the birthday of the nation, filled with the spirit of the grand general chief, who established our independence, we seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of "plain people" with whose class it originated. We assert our purposes to be identical with the purposes of the national constitution, to form a more perfect union and establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

We declare that this Republic can only endure as a free government while built upon the love of the whole people for each other and for the nation; and that every passion and resentment which grew out of it must

die with it, and that we must be in fact, as we are in name, one united brotherhood of freedmen.

## Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Lynch Law (1893)

*Ida B. Wells, was an African-American investigative journalist, educator, and an early leader in the Civil Rights Movement. Born a slave in Mississippi, she went on to produce a wealth of writings covering the severity of the treatment of black men, women, and children in the United States.*

Lynch Law flourishes mostly in the states which foster the convict lease system, and is brought to bear mainly, against the Negro. The first fifteen years of his freedom he was murdered by masked mobs for trying to vote... a new reason is given to justify the murders of the past 15 years. The negro was first charged with attempting to rule white people, and hundreds were murdered on that pretended supposition. He is now charged with assaulting or attempting to assault white women. This charge, as false as it is foul, robs us of the sympathy of the world and is blasting the race's good name.

The men who make these charges encourage or lead the mobs which do the lynching. They belong to the race which owns the telegraph wires, newspapers, and all other communication with the outside world. They write the reports which justify lynching... and those reports are accepted by the press associations and the world without question or investigation. Over a thousand black men, women and children have been thus sacrificed [over] the past ten years. The sheriffs, police, and state officials stand by and see the work done well. The coroner's jury is often formed among those who took part in the lynching and a verdict, "Death at the hands of parties unknown to the jury" is rendered. Three human beings [were] burned alive in civilized America during the first six months of this year. Over one hundred have been lynched in this half year. They were hanged, then cut, shot, and burned.

[In] 1889, 95 Negroes [were] murdered ny mobs. [In] 1890, 100 Negroes [were] murdered ny mobs. [In] 1891, 169 Negroes [were] murdered ny mobs. Of this number, 27 [were charged with] race prejudice, 5 [were charged with] miscegenation, [and] 32 [were charged with] no reason given at all. This shows that accusation is never proven.

The world affects to believe that white womanhood and childhood are not safe in the neighborhood of black men who protected and cared for them during the four years of the civil war. The simple word of any white person against a Negro is sufficient to get a crowd of white men to lynch a Negro. Investigation as to the guilt or innocence of the accused is never made. Under these conditions, white men have only to blacken their faces, commit crimes against the peace of the community accuse some Negro, nor rest till he is killed by a mob.”

## Lewis H. Douglass on Black Opposition to McKinley (November 17, 1899)

*African Americans had significant opposition to the expansion of the U.S. empire. Here is an example of antiwar sentiment among blacks at that time of the United States' course towards weaker and darker peoples in the West Indies, Hawaii, and the Philippines.*

President McKinley, in the course of his speech at Minneapolis, said of the Filipinos under American sovereignty: “They will not be governed as vassals, or serfs, or slaves. They will be given a government of liberty, regulated by law, honestly administered, without oppressing exaction, taxation without tyranny, justice without bribe, education without distinction of social conditions, freedom of religious of worship, and protection of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.”

I do not believe that President McKinley has any confidence in the statement above. It cannot be successfully asserted that the great tariff statesman is blind to the fact of the race and color prejudice that dominates

the greater percentage of the soldiers who are killing Filipinos in the name of freedom and civilization.

President McKinley knows that brave, loyal, black American soldiers, who fight and die for their country, are hated, despised, and cruelly treated in that section of the country from which this administration accepts dictations and to the tastes of which the President, undoubtedly, caters. The administration lacks the courage to deal with American citizens without regard to race or color, as is clearly demonstrated in the weak and contemptibly mean act of yielding to the demands of those who hold that this is a white man's government and that dark races have no rights which white men are bound to respect.

It is a sorry, though true, fact that whatever this government controls, injustice to dark races prevails. The people of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, and Manila know it well as do the wronged Indian and outraged black man in the United States...

The question will Be asked: How is it that such promises are made to Filipinos thousands of miles away while the action of the administration in protecting dark citizens at home does not even extend to a promise of any attempt to rebuke the outlawry which kills American citizens of African descent for the purpose of gratifying blood-thirstiness and race hatred?...

It is hypocrisy of the most sickening kind to try to make us believe that the killing of Filipinos is for the purpose of good government and to give protection to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness...

When the United States learns that justice should be blind as to race and color, then may it undertake to, with some show of propriety, expand. Now its expansion means extension of race hate and cruelty, barbarous lynchings and gross injustice to dark people.

# Missionary Department of Atlanta, GA, AME Church

## The Negro Should Not Enter the Army

(May 1, 1899)

*This excerpt is from a piece in response to the United States' imperialist wars overseas. The authors of this piece, from the African Methodist Episcopal Church, object to the U.S. military using Black soldiers while the U.S. does not protect its own Black citizens.*

It is about time for the ministers of the A.M.E. Church to begin to tell the young men of our race to stay out of the United States army. If it is a white man's government, and we grant it is, let him take care of it. The Negro has no flag to defend. There is not a star in the flag of this nation, out of the forty odd, that the colored race can claim, nor is there any symbol signalized in the colors of the flag that he can presume to call his, unless it would be the stripes, and the stripes are now too good for him. He has no civil, social, political, judicial or existing rights any longer.

Those who did enlist some months ago were abused, misrepresented and vilified when they passed through the country. If they came out of the cars, they were charged with trying to kill men, women and children, and fire the cities and villages. If they sat in the cars and failed to get out, the newspapers branded them with cowardice. We now ask, in the face of these facts, what does the Negro want to enlist, lay his life upon the altar of the nation, and die for?

A Cuban from Havana who was compelled to ride with us in the jim-crow car a week ago was as mad as vengeance at this restriction of his manhood. He said "This valuing a man by his color was unknown in Cuba until the scoundrels and villains of this country went there."

While we have once been proud of the flag of this nation, as a Negro we regard it as a useless rag. It is the symbol of liberty, of manhood sovereignty and of national independence to the white man, we grant, and he should justly be proud of it, but to the colored man that has any sense, any honor, and is not a scullionized fool, it is a miserable rag.

Again we say to the colored men, stay out of the United States army. Take no oath to protect any flag that offers no protection to its sable defenders. If we had the voice of seven thunders, we would sound a protest against Negro enlistment till the very ground shook below our feet.

## “Agitation--The Greatest Factor for Progress,” Mother Jones (March 24th, 1903)

*Mary Harris, known as “Mother Jones,” was one of the most extraordinary organizers of the labor movement in the twentieth century. She became an organizer for the United Mine Workers, and, in her eighties, organized miners in West Virginia and Colorado. Here is a selection from an address she gave in 1903.*

Some months ago the president of the United Mine Workers asked me to take a look into the condition of the men in the mines of West Virginia. I did my best to drive into the downtrodden men a little spirit, but it was a task. They had been driven so long that they were afraid. The men in the anthracite district finally asked for more wages. They were refused. A strike was called. We were arrested but we were freed in the morning. When I was called up before the judge I called him a czar and he let me go. The other fellows were afraid and they went to jail. I violated injunction after injunction but I wasn't re-arrested. Why? The courts themselves force you to have no respect for that court.

These federal judges, who continue granting injunctions, are appointed by men who have their political standing through the votes of you labor union fellows! You get down on your knees like a lot of Yahoos when you want something. At the same time you haven't sense enough to take peaceably what belongs to you through the ballot. The bullets which should be sent into your own measly, miserable, dirty carcasses, shoot down innocent men. Women are not responsible because they have no vote. You'd all better put on petticoats. If you like those bullets, vote to put them



into your own bodies. Don't you think it's about time you began to shoot ballots instead of voting for capitalistic bullets.

I hate your political parties, you Republicans and Democrats. You want an office and must necessarily get into the ring. You must do what that ring says and if you don't you won't be elected. Each time you do that you are voting for a capitalistic bullet and you get it. But, a contented workman is no good. All progress stops in the contented man. I'm for agitation. It's the greater factor for progress.

I see a lot of society women in this audience, attracted here out of a mere curiosity to see that old Mother Jones. I know you better than you do yourselves. And you society dudes—poor creatures. You wear high collars to support your jaw and keep your befuddled brains from oozing out of your mouths. While this commercial cannibalism is reaching into the cradle; pulling girls into the factory to be ruined; pulling children into the factory to be destroyed; you, who are doing all in the name of Christianity, you are at home nursing your poodle dogs. It's high time you got out and worked for humanity. Christianity will take care of itself. I started in a factory. I have traveled through miles and miles of factories and there is not an inch of ground under that flag that is not stained with the blood of children.

## Emma Goldman, Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty (1908)

*A Lithuanian immigrant, Emma Goldman was an anarchist and feminist orator, agitator, and organizer. She was jailed many times for her speeches. An outspoken critic of war, Goldman, after the outbreak of World War I in Europe, worked to launch the No-Conscription League. She gave this speech in San Francisco, in the period leading up to the outbreak of the first world war.*

What is patriotism? Is it love of one's birthplace, the place of childhood's recollections and hopes, dreams and aspirations? Is it the place where we would listen to the music of the birds, and long to have

wings to fly, even as they, to distant lands? Or the place where we would sit at mother's knee, enraptured by wonderful tales of great deeds and conquests?

If that were patriotism, few American men of today could be called upon to be patriotic, What, then, is patriotism? "Patriotism, sir, is the last resort of scoundrels," said Dr. [Samuel] Johnson.

from early infancy, the mind of the child is poisoned with blood-curdling stories about the Germans, the French, the Italians, Russians, etc. When the child has reached manhood, he is thoroughly saturated with the belief that he is chosen by the Lord himself to defend his country against the attack or invasion of any foreigner. An army and navy represents the people's toys.

To make them more attractive and acceptable, hundreds and thousands of dollars are being spent for the display of these toys. That was the purpose of the American government in equipping a fleet and sending it along the Pacific coast, that every American citizen should be made to feel the pride and glory of the United States.

We Americans claim to be a peace-loving people. We hate bloodshed; we are opposed to violence. Yet we go into spasms of joy over the possibility of projecting dynamite bombs from flying machines upon helpless citizens. Yet our hearts swell with pride at the thought that America is becoming the most powerful nation on earth, and that it will eventually plant her iron foot on the necks of all other nations. Such is the logic of patriotism....

Thinking men and women the world over are beginning to realize that patriotism is too narrow and limited a conception to meet the necessities of our time, because it is bringing all the workers to the point when they will say to their masters, "Go and do your own killing. We have done it long enough for you." This solidarity is awakening the consciousness of even the soldiers, they, too, being flesh of the great human family. It will eventually bring about the uprising of all the oppressed and downtrodden against their international exploiters.... When we have undermined the

patriotic lie, we shall have cleared the path for that great structure, —a truly FREE SOCIETY.

## Julia May Courtney, “Remember Ludlow!” (May 1914)

*In September 1913, 11,000 Colorado coal miners went on strike in protest of poor and dangerous working conditions that they faced. The miners gathered with their wives and children in a tent colony set up by the United Mine Workers union near Ludlow, Colorado. In response, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation, owned by the Rockefellers, hired the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency to attack the tent colony with rifles and Gatling guns. The governor called in the National Guard after tensions increased. On April 20, 1914, two companies of the National Guard opened machine gun fire into the tent city, before setting fire to the tents. The Colorado anarchist Julia May Courtney penned this account of the Ludlow massacre for Emma Goldman’s magazine Mother Earth.*

“REMEMBER LUDLOW” the battle cry of the crushed, downtrodden, despised miners stifled at Calumet, in West Virginia, in Cripple Creek, has echoed from coal camp to coal camp in southern Colorado, and has served again to notify the world that Labor will not down.

Peaceful Colorado, slumbering in her eternal sunshine, has been rudely awakened. And her comfortable citizens, tremendously busy with their infinitely important little affairs, have been shocked into a mental state wavering between terror and hysteria. And the terrified and hysterical community, like the individual, has grabbed for safety at the nearest straw. The federal troops are called to the strike zone in the vain hope that their presence would intimidate the striking miners into submission. But the end is not yet.

On the 20th of April the cry was heard “Remember Ludlow!” - the battle cry that every workingman in Colorado and America will not forget. For on that day the men of the tent colony were shot in the back by

soft-nosed bullets, and their women and children were offered in burning sacrifice on the field of Ludlow.

At a ball game on Sunday between two teams of strikers the militia interfered, preventing the game; the miners resented, and the militia - with a sneer and a laugh - *fired the machine guns directly into the tents*, knowing at the time that the strikers' wives and children were in them. Charging the camp, they fired the two largest buildings - the strikers' stores - and going from tent to tent, poured oil on the flimsy structures, setting fire to them.

As the smoking ruins disclosed the charred and suffocated bodies of the victims of the holocaust, thugs in State uniform hacked at the lifeless forms, in some instances nearly cutting off heads and limbs to show their contempt of the strikers. Fifty-five women and children perished in the fire of the Ludlow tent colony. Relief parties carrying the Red Cross flag were driven back by the gunmen, and for twenty-four hours the bodies lay crisping in the ashes, while rescuers vainly tried to cross the firing line.

[F]or the first time in the history of the labor war in America the people are with the strikers - they glory in their success. The federal troops are here - the women who forced the governor to ask for them believe they have secured Peace - but it is a dead hope. For Peace can never be built on the foundation of Greed and Oppression. And the federal troops cannot change the system - only the strikers can do that. And though they may lay down their arms for a time - they will "Remember Ludlow!"

# Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Speech to the Court (1927)

*In 1921, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, along with Nicola Sacco, both Italian immigrants and anarchists, were charged with murder. Their jury was hostile to foreigners and a judge called them "anarchist bastards." Though their controversial case was known worldwide for tainted evidence and judicial bias, they were found guilty and sentenced to death. In this speech, Vanzetti addresses the court before his execution in 1927.*

What I say is that I am innocent. Not only am I innocent, not only in all my life I have never stolen, never killed, never spilled blood, but I have struggled all my life since I began to reason, to eliminate crime from the earth.

The jury were hating us because we were against the war, and the jury don't know that it makes any difference between a man that is against the war because he believes the war is unjust, and a man that is against the war because he is in favor of the other country. We were against the war because we did not believe in the purpose for which they say that the war was fought.

I am glad to be on the doomed scaffold if I can say to mankind, "Look out. All that they say to you, all that they have promised to you - it was a lie, it was an illusion, it was a cheat, it was a fraud, it was a crime. They promised you liberty. Where is liberty? They promised you prosperity. Where is prosperity? Where is the moral good that the war has given to the world? Where are the security of life, the security of the things that we possess for our necessity?"

I would not wish to a dog or to a snake, to the most low and misfortunate creature of the earth what I have had to suffer for things that I am not guilty of. I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical. I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed I am an Italian. I have suffered more for my family and for my beloved than for myself. But I am so convinced to be right that you can kill me once but if

you could execute me two times, and if I could be reborn two other times, I would live again to do what I have done already.

## Mary Licht, I Remember the Scottsboro Defense (1931)

*On March 25, 1931, an armed mob stopped a freight train at Paint Rock, Alabama and rounded up nine African American youth, the youngest of whom was 13. Two young white women and one white man were also taken off the train. Sheriff's deputies arrested the nine young men, and took them to the Jackson County jail in Scottsboro. There they were charged with a second offense: "having raped the white girls in a freight car passing through Alabama". When a crowd gathered at the jail, the sheriff called the governor who, in turn called out the National Guard and the mob dispersed. Twelve days later, all were put on trial and in four days, four separate all-white, all male juries convicted eight and sentenced them to death.*

I lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at the time, as did four of the nine. I first heard of the case while I was in jail awaiting trial for sedition. I considered the arrest of the Scottsboro boys and my arrest as two sides of the same coin: They were riding the rails in search of work and I was working to organize the unemployed who has been thrown out of work. For me, the arrest, trial, and conviction of these unemployed Black youth was a symbol of inequality of the then 12 million African Americans in America, I believed their trial was a legal lynching - that they had been framed and sentenced to death under the pretext of "rape".

When I read about the conviction of the Scottsboro youth, I told my coworker that when we were released I would secure the International Labor Defense (ILD) for this case.

Yes, we did embarrass the Klan, white supremacists and Alabama authorities. And, yes, we plucked a few tail feathers from Jim Crow. But our first and only goal was to save the lives of nine innocent young African American youth. I visited the mothers of three of the Scottsboro

defendants. We explained that the case could not win in a southern courtroom. We said that a mass protest movement capable of rallying millions of people from around the world was required if there was to be a stay of execution scheduled for July 10th. The parents agreed to the representation of the International Labor Defense (ILD). Our lawyers didn't just depend on arguing the fine points of the law or on the "impartiality" of the courts. They said to pack the courtroom with our supporters and appeal to the public for support. And they were right. Immediately after the trial and sentencing, the ILD went to court demanding a stay of execution and a new trial, since the defendants had not had counsel of their choice during their trial. Demonstrators were organized in major cities across the country and American embassies became the target of angry demonstrators abroad as millions supported the ILD demand. The militant defense of the Scottsboro nine became a catalyst that helped bring union organization to thousands of Southern workers. The rest is history.

## Paul Y. Anderson, Tear-Gas, Bayonets, and Votes (August 17, 1932)

*Many veterans were battling poverty and unemployment. They had been promised government bonds that would be paid to them in 1945. However, in light of the Depression, veterans demanded immediate payment of those bonds in 1932. What resulted was an organized occupation of 20,000 veterans from all over the United States, setting up encampments in Washington, D.C., to demand action from Congress. They called themselves "The Bonus Army." In this excerpt, Paul Y. Anderson recounts what they witnessed on the day President Herbert Hoover ordered the army to evict the veterans.*

Hoover's campaign for reelection was launched Thursday, July 28, at Pennsylvania Avenue and Third Street, with four troops of cavalry, four companies of infantry, a mounted machine-gun squadron, six whippet tanks, 300 city policemen and a squad of Secret Service men and Treasury agents. Among the results immediately achieved were the following:

Two veterans of the World War shot to death; one eleven-weeks-old baby in a grave condition from gas, shock, and exposure; one eight-year-old boy partially blinded by gas; two policemen's skulls fractured; one bystander shot through the shoulder; one veteran's ear severed with a cavalry saber; one veteran stabbed in the hip with a bayonet; more than a dozen veterans, policemen, and soldiers injured by bricks and clubs; upward of 1,000 men, women, and children gassed, including policemen, reporters, ambulance drivers, and residents of Washington; and approximately \$10,000 worth of property destroyed by fire, including clothing, food, and temporary shelters of the veterans and a large amount of building material owned by a government contractor.

The circumstances surrounding the use of troops and modern implements of war to evict these people from then-miserable hovels and to drive them from the capital force me to the reluctant conclusion that the whole affair was deliberately conceived and carried out for a political purpose—namely, to persuade the American people that their government was threatened with actual overthrow, and that the courage and decisiveness of Herbert Hoover had averted revolution. It is no secret that Mr. Hoover and his advisers hope to make “Hoover versus radicalism” the leading issue of the campaign.

For several weeks the men and their families had been encamped in Washington, some occupying abandoned and partially wrecked buildings and shacks on downtown plots owned by the government, but a large majority existing in crude shelters erected by themselves on a large government-owned field on the opposite bank of the Anacostia River. The attitude of the great majority was one of good-humored and patient fortitude under incredibly primitive conditions of existence. The so-called “bonus army” in actuality was an army of unemployed men who believed they had a special claim on the government and came here asking the government to give them relief unless it was ready to provide work.

As soon as Congress adjourned there was a steady exodus of the campers, as attested by the daily statements of the Veterans' Bureau, dutifully reported by the Associated Press and Administration newspapers.



But suddenly someone high in authority decided the government must have immediate possession of the partially razed block bounded by Third and Fourth Streets and Pennsylvania and Missouri Avenues, where about 1,500 were existing in abandoned buildings and makeshift huts. Instructions went from the Treasury to the District commissioners to have the police evict the squatters.

Two District commissioners reported to President Hoover that the civil authorities were “unable to maintain order,” and within a few minutes infantry, cavalry, machine-gunners, and tanks were on their way from Fort Myer and Fort Washington....

When the troops arrived they actually were cheered by the veterans on the south sidewalk of Pennsylvania Avenue. A cavalry officer spurred up to the curb and shouted: “Get the hell out of here.” Infantrymen with fixed bayonets and trench helmets deployed along the south curb, forcing the veterans back into the contested block. Cavalry deployed along the north side, riding their horses up on the sidewalk and compelling policemen, reporters, and photographers to climb on automobiles to escape being trampled. A crowd of three or four thousand spectators had congregated in the vacant lot on the north side of the avenue. A command was given and the cavalry charged the crowd with drawn sabers. Men, women, and children fled shrieking across the broken ground, falling into excavations as they strove to avoid the rearing hoofs and saber points. Meantime, the infantry on the south side had adjusted gas masks and were hurling tear bombs into the block into which they had just driven the veterans.

I know that I saw dozens of women grab their children and stagger out of the area with streaming, blinded eyes while the bombs fizzed and popped all around them. I saw a woman stand on the Missouri Avenue side and plead with a non-commissioned officer to let her rescue a suitcase which, she told him, contained all the spare clothing of herself and her child, and I heard him reply: “Get out of here, lady, before you get hurt,” as he calmly set fire to her shanty.

As a matter of fact, there was hardly a minute when an ambulance did not dash in and dash off with a victim. I was in that hapless mass of

policemen, reporters, and spectators at Third and C Streets a few minutes later when an order was given from a staff officer's car, and a company of infantry came up on the double quick, tossing gas bombs right and left. Some exploded on the sidewalk. Some fell in front yards jammed with Negro women and children. One appeared to land on the front porch of a residence. Two small girls fell to the sidewalk, choking and screaming....

About fifteen minutes after their arrival in the camp the troops set fire to two improvised barracks. Sabers and bayonets gleamed in the red light cast by the flames.

For many blocks along the embankment similar scenes were being enacted. With "unparalleled humanity and kindness," the troops tossed scores of gas bombs into the vast crowds lining the hillside, driving them back to the main thoroughfare of Anacostia.

The politicians had decided it was necessary. It was necessary to dramatize the issue of "Hoover versus radicalism." The President has asserted that less than half of the campers were men who had actually served under the flag, and Hurley assures us that the disorders were led by "reds" and "agitators." How unfortunate, then, that those killed were bona fide veterans of The World War, entitled to honorable burial in Arlington! But how much more tragic it is that, in a crisis like this, the United States Government should be under the control of such a trio of adventurers as Hoover, Hurley, and Mills!

## Richard Wright, 12 Million Black Voices (1927)

*Richard Wright was a black novelist who migrated from Mississippi to Chicago in 1927 during the Great Migration. In his writings, he describes the crisis blacks confronted when they arrived in the cities of the North during this period.*

The train and the auto move north, ever north, and from 1916 to 1928, 1,200,000 of us were moving from the South to the North and we kept leaving. Night and day, in rain and in sun, in winter and in summer, we

leave the land. It is the beginning of living on a new and terrifying plane of consciousness.

We see white men and women get on the train, dressed in expensive new clothes. We look at them guardedly and wonder will they bother us. Will they ask us to stand up while they sit down? Will they tell us to go to the back of the coach? Even though we have been told that we need not be afraid, we have lived so long in fear of all white faces that we cannot help but sit and wait. We look around the train and we do not see the old familiar signs: For Colored and For White. The train speeds north and we cannot sleep. Our heads sink in a doze, and then we sit bolt-upright, prodded by the thought that we must watch these strange surroundings.

But nothing happens; these white men seem impersonal and their very neutrality reassures us— for a while. Almost against our deeper judgment, we try to force ourselves to relax, for these brisk men give no sign of what they feel. They are indifferent. O sweet and welcome indifference!

The miles click behind us. Into Chicago, Indianapolis, New York, Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit, Toledo, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee we go, looking for work. We feel freer than we have ever felt before, but we are still a little scared. It is like a dream. Will we wake up suddenly

and find that none of this is really true, that we are merely daydreaming behind the barn, snoozing in the sun, waiting to hear the hoarse voice of the riding boss saying: "Nigger, where do you think you are? Get the hell up from there and move on!"

Timidly, we get off the train. We hug our suitcases, fearful of pickpockets, looking with unrestrained curiosity at the great big brick buildings. We are very reserved, for we have been warned not to act "green," that the city people can spot a "sucker" a mile away. Then we board our first Yankee street car to go to a cousin's home, a brother's home, a sister's home, a friend's home, an uncle's home, or an aunt's home. We pay the conductor our fare and look about apprehensively for a seat. We have been told that we can sit where we please, but we are still scared. We cannot shake off three hundred years of fear in three hours.

We ease into a seat and look out of the window at the crowded streets. A white man or a white woman comes and sits beside us, not even looking at us, as though this were a normal thing to do. The muscles of our bodies tighten. Indefinable sensations crawl over our skins and our blood tingles. Out of the corners of our eyes we try to get a glimpse of the strange white face that floats but a few inches from ours. The impulses to laugh and to cry clash in us; we bite our lips and stare out of the window.

There are so many people. For the first time in our lives we feel human bodies, strangers whose lives and thoughts are unknown to us, pressing always close about us. We cannot see or know a man because of the thousands upon thousands of men. The apartments in which we sleep are crowded and noisy, and soon enough we learn that the brisk, clipped men of the North, the Bosses of the Buildings, are not at all indifferent. They are deeply concerned about us, but in a new way. It seems as though we are now living inside of a machine; days and events move with a hard reasoning of their own. We live amid swarms of people, yet there is a vast distance between people, a distance that words cannot bridge. No longer do our lives depend upon the soil, the sun, the rain, or the wind; we live by the grace of jobs and the brutal logic of jobs. We do not know this world, or what makes it move. In the South life was different; men spoke to you, cursed you, yelled at you, or killed you. The world moved by signs we knew. But here in the North cold forces hit you and push you. It is a world of things.

We black folk are not the only ones who move into this so-called transition area; it is the first port of call for that incoming horde of men who float continuously into cities. The tenements we live in are old; they are rarely repaired or replaced. On most of our buildings are signs: This Property is for Sale. Any day we can be told to move, that our home is to be torn down to make way for a new factory or a new mill.

So, under the black mourning pall of smoke from the stacks of American industry, our observing Negro eyes watch a thousand rivulets of blood melt, fuse, blend, and flow in a common stream of human unity as it

merges with the great American tide. But we never mix with that stream; we are not allowed to.

## Smedley D. Butler, *War is A Racket* (1935)

*Smedley Butler was a prominent U.S Marine Corps major general who joined the army in 1898 to fight in the Spanish-American War, twice winning the Congressional Medal of Honor. However, Butler came to see his actions in a new light. In 1935, Butler published a powerful condemnation of the business interests he served in those imperialist ventures, War is a Racket. This is an excerpt from the chapter "Who Makes the Profits."*

WAR is a racket. It always has been.

It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.

A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small "inside" group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes. In the World War a mere handful garnered the profits of the conflict. At least 21,000 new millionaires and billionaires were made in the United States during the World War.

How many of these war millionaires shouldered a rifle? How many of them dug a trench? How many of them knew what it meant to go hungry in a rat-infested dug-out? How many of them spent sleepless, frightened nights, ducking shells and shrapnel and machine gun bullets? How many of them parried a bayonet thrust of an enemy? How many of them were wounded or killed in battle?

Out of war nations acquire additional territory, if they are victorious. They just take it. This newly acquired territory promptly is exploited by the few -- the selfsame few who wrung dollars out of blood in the war. The general public shoulders the bill. And what is this bill?

This bill renders a horrible accounting. Newly placed gravestones. Mangled bodies. Shattered minds. Broken hearts and homes. Economic instability. Depression and all its attendant miseries. Back-breaking taxation for generations and generations.

For a great many years, as a soldier, I had a suspicion that war was a racket; not until I retired to civil life did I fully realize it. Now that I see the international war clouds gathering, as they are today, I must face it and speak out.

There are 40,000,000 men under arms in the world today, and our statesmen and diplomats have the temerity to say that war is not in the making.

Yes, all over, nations are camping in their arms -- a war that might well cost us tens of billions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of lives of Americans, and many more hundreds of thousands of physically maimed and mentally unbalanced men.

Of course, for this loss, there would be a compensating profit -- fortunes would be made. Millions and billions of dollars would be piled up. By a few. Munitions makers. Bankers. Ship builders. Manufacturers. Meat packers. Speculators. They would fare well.

But what does it profit the men who are killed? What does it profit their mothers and sisters, their wives and their sweethearts? What does it profit their children?

What does it profit anyone except the very few to whom war means huge profits?

Yes, and what does it profit the nation?

It would have been far cheaper (not to say safer) for the average American who pays the bills to stay out of foreign entanglements. For a very few this racket, like bootlegging and other underworld rackets, brings fancy profits, but the cost of operations is always transferred to the people -- who do not profit.

## Billie Holiday, Strange Fruit (1937)

*In 1937, a white Jewish Bronx native, then a school teacher, saw a photo of two black children who were lynched in Indiana. So haunting was the image, that teacher, Abel Meeropol, wrote a poem about it, titled "Bitter Fruit". An amateur composer, he then set the poem to music, and performed it. The song was published in local newsletters, and then given to the artist who popularized it: Billie Holliday. Her record company refused to record the song, so she recorded it independently, and released it under the title "Strange Fruit". It has since been covered by dozens of artists. In 1999, Time magazine named "Strange Fruit" the "song of the century", and the Library of Congress put it in the National Recording Registry.*

Southern trees bear strange fruit  
(Blood on the leaves and blood at the root)  
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees

Pastoral scene of the gallant south  
(The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth)  
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh  
(Then the sudden smell of burning flesh)

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck  
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck  
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop  
Here is a strange and bitter crop

## Yuri Kochiyama, Then Came the War (1942)

I never felt racism. I was nineteen at the time of the evacuation. Everything changed for me on the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. On that every day December 7th, the FBI came and they took my father. For several days we didn't know where they had taken him. Then we found out that he was taken the federal prison at Terminal Island. We saw him once on December 13th. On December 20th, they had he could come home. By that time he couldn't talk, he made guttural sounds and we didn't know if he could hear. He was home for 12 hours, he was dying. The next morning they told us he was gone. My mother kept begging the authorities to let him go to the hospital until he was well, then put him back in prison. He was the only Japanese in the hospital, they hung a sheet around him that said, Prisoner of War. There was a sense that war would come to American shores. Everyone kept yelling "Get the Japs Out". There was a 6am to 6pm curfew and a 5-mile limit on where we could go from our homes. President Roosevelt edict for an evacuation, the idea was to evacuate all Japanese from the coast. All the money was frozen, so even if they knew where they wanted to know it wasn't that simple. By then, people knew they would be going into camps, so they were selling anything they could, even though they got nothing for it. That April we were moved to a detention camp. They said you can only take what you can carry. For those who had small children or babies it was rough, they could only take their babies in their arms and maybe the little children could carry something. We stayed in a horse stable. In some cases families had to split up or join others. We slept in cots and for mattresses they gave us muslin bags filled with straw. Carton boxes would served as chairs and a little table.



As time went by, the sense of frustration grew. Many families were already divided, fathers and head of households were taken to other camps. There was no way to get in touch with their families. We left for detention camps, we didn't know where we were going. None of the groups knew. There was forest all around us. There were army type barracks surrounded by barbed wire and armed soldiers. Seven people were killed in total and 30 shot because they were too close to the fence. We wanted to know what was happening with the war. We weren't allowed to bring radios and there were no televisions. We ask the workers to bring us back some papers, so for the first time we would find out news from the outside.

I was so red, white and blue, I couldn't believe this was happening to us. This is the greatest country in the world. The more I think, the more I realize how little you learn about American history. It's just what they wanted you to know.

American have always been putting people behind walls. There were American Indians on reservations, Africans in slavery and Chinese who worked on railroad camps where they were almost isolated, dispossessed and disempowered. And I feel those are things we should fight against so they won't happen again. If we can see the connections of how this happens in history, we can stem the tide of these things happening again by speaking out against them.

## Muhammad Ali Speaks Out Against the Vietnam War (1966)

*World heavyweight boxing champion, Cassius Marcellus Clay took the name Muhammad Ali, renouncing what he called his slave name. The outspoken fighter petitioned for exemption from military service in Vietnam, was denied and refused to be drafted. Ali's title was revoked and he was sentenced to a five-year prison term. In this speech Muhammad Ali explains why he refused to fight.*

Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights?

No, I am not going ten thousand miles from home to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slave masters of the darker people the world over. This is the day when such evils must come to an end. I have been warned that to take such a stand would put my prestige in jeopardy and could cause me to lose millions of dollars which should accrue to me as the champion. The real enemy of my people is right here.

If I thought the war was going to bring freedom and equality to twenty-two million of my people, they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow. So I'll go to jail. We've been in jail for four hundred years.

## Abbey Lincoln, Who Will Revere the Black Woman? (September 1966)

*Abbey Lincoln was a legendary jazz vocalist, songwriter, actress and civil rights activist. Her singing voice was known to evoke great emotion as she credits the greats Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughn and Dinah Washington with teaching her how to "sing with conviction." This essay is ripe with pain, anguish, frustration and truths about how many Black women feel in this (American) society where our overall value is minimized. Although our physical attributes and cultural expressions are regularly appropriated and celebrated on white women, Black women are usually made to feel less than and treated as such, often by our own men who grapple with their own overwhelming feelings of insecurity and hopelessness.*

The general white community has told us in a million different ways and in no uncertain terms that "God" and "nature" made a mistake when it came to fashioning us and ours...

At best we are made to feel that we are poor imitations and excuses for white women. The black woman is hurt, confused, frustrated, angry, resentful, frightened, and evil! Who in the hell dare suggest that she should be otherwise?

We are the women who were raped, are still being raped, and our bastard children snatched from our breasts and scattered to the winds to be lynched, castrated, de-egoed, robbed, burned and deceived.

We are the women whose strong and beautiful Black bodies were -and are- still being used as a cheap labor force for Miss Anne's kitchen and Mr. Charlie's bed, whose rich, black and warm milk nurtured - and still nurtures- the heir to the racist and evil slavemaster.

We are the women who dwell in the hell-hole ghettos all over the land. We are the women whose bodies are sacrificed, as living cadavers, to experimental surgery in the white man's hospitals for the sake of white medicine. We are the women who are invisible on the television and movie screens, on the Broadway stage. We are the women who are lusted after, sneered at, leered at, hissed at, yelled at, grabbed at, tracked down by white degenerates in our own pitiable, poverty-stricken and prideless neighborhoods.

We are the women whose hair is compulsively fried, whose skin is bleached, whose nose is "too big", whose mouth is "too big and loud", whose behind is "too big and broad", whose feet are "too big and flat", whose face is "too black and shiny", and whose suffering and patience is too long and enduring to be believed.

Who are just too damned much for everybody.....

We are the women whose husbands and fathers and brothers and sons have been plagiarized, imitated, denied, and robbed of the fruits of their genius, and who consequently we see as emasculated, jailed, lynched, driven mad, deprived, enraged, and made suicidal. We are the women who nobody, seemingly, cares about, made to feel inadequate, stupid and backwards, and who inevitably have the most colossal inferiority complexes to be found.

Who will revere the black woman? Who will keep our neighborhoods safe for black innocent womanhood? Black womanhood is outraged and humiliated. Black womanhood cries for dignity and restitution and salvation. Black womanhood wants and needs protection, and keeping, and holding. Who will assuage her indignation? Who will keep her precious and pure? Who will glorify and proclaim her beautiful image? To whom will *she* cry rape?

## Angela Davis

### Political Prisoners, Prisons and Black Liberation (1970)

*Angela Davis, at one point was dubbed “one of the 10 most wanted criminals” by the FBI. She was a powerful force in the Black Panthers and stands today as a leader in the movement for Black liberation and power. This is part of an essay she wrote about the prison system. Unfortunately, 40 years later, her words still stand as truth.*

In the heat of our pursuit of fundamental rights, Black people have been continually cautioned to be patient. We are advised that as long as we remain faithful to the existing democratic order, the glorious moment will eventually arrive when we will come into our own as full-fledged human beings.

Needless to say, the history of the United States has been marred from its inception by an enormous quantity of unjust laws, far too many expressly bolstering the oppression of Black people.

In resisting we have been compelled to openly violate those laws which directly or indirectly buttress our oppression. But even containing our resistance within the orbit of legality, we have been labeled criminals and have been methodically persecuted by a racist legal apparatus....

The occurrence of crime is inevitable in a society in which wealth is unequally distributed, as one of the constant reminders that society's productive forces are being channeled in the wrong direction.

Moreover, in assessing the revolutionary potential of prisoners in America as a group, it should be borne in mind that not all prisoners have actually committed crimes. The built-in racism of the judicial system expresses itself, as W.E.B. DuBois has suggested, in the railroading of countless innocent Blacks and other national minorities into the country's coercive institutions.

Racist oppression invades the lives of Black people on an infinite variety of levels. The vicious circle linking poverty, police courts, and prison is an integral element of ghetto existence. Unlike the mass of whites, the path which leads to jails and prisons is deeply rooted in the imposed patterns of Black existence.

## Wamsutta (Frank B. James), Suppressed Speech on the 350th Anniversary of the Pilgrim's Landing at Plymouth Rock (September 10, 1970)

*On the 350th Anniversary of the Pilgrim's Landing at Plymouth Rock, Wamsutta (Frank B.) James was asked to deliver a speech. Officials who checked the speech refused to let him speak the truth about the history of the colonization of the Wampanoag Islands. Here is the speech James planned to deliver.*

It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to share my thoughts. This is a time of celebration for you - celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the white man in America. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors and stolen their corn and beans. We, the Wampanoag,

welcomed you, the white man, with open arms, little knowing that it was the beginning of the end.

The Indian, having been stripped of his power, could only stand by and watch while the white man took his land and used it for his personal gain. This the Indian could not understand; for to him, land was survival, to farm, to hunt, to be enjoyed. It was not to be abused. We see incident after incident, where the white man sought to tame the "savage" and convert him to the Christian ways of life. The early Pilgrim settlers led the Indian to believe that if he did not behave, they would dig up the ground and unleash the great epidemic again.

History wants us to believe that the Indian was a savage, illiterate, uncivilized animal. A history that was written by an organized, disciplined people, to expose us as an unorganized and undisciplined entity. Two distinctly different cultures met. One thought they must control life; the other believed life was to be enjoyed, because nature decreed it.

Although time has drained our culture, and our language is almost extinct, we the Wampanoags still walk the lands of Massachusetts.

Our spirit refuses to die. Yesterday we walked the woodland paths and sandy trails. Today we must walk the macadam highways and roads. We are uniting. We're standing not in our wigwams but in your concrete tent. What has happened cannot be changed, but today we must work towards a more humane America, a more Indian America, where men and nature once again are important; where the Indian values of honor, truth, and brotherhood prevail. You the white man are celebrating an anniversary. We the Wampanoags will help you celebrate in the concept of a beginning. It was the beginning of a new life for the Pilgrims. Now, 350 years later it is a beginning of a new determination for the original American: the American Indian.

## Sylvia Woods, You Have to Fight for Freedom (1973)

*Sylvia Woods was a pioneer in the struggle for African Americans and women trade unionist. In this excerpt she explains how she confronted racism and sexism and organized under the conditions of the depression.*

I was born March 15, 1909. My father was a roofer. It was a very skilled job. You had to nail the slate.

And he was a union man. There was a dual union—one for whites and one for blacks. He said we should have one big union but a white and a black is better than none. He was making big money—eight dollars a day. I used to brag that “My father makes eight dollars a day.” But he taught me that “You got to belong to the union, even if it’s a black union. If I wasn’t in the union I wouldn’t make eight dollars a day.”

... [Later on] I [moved to Chicago and] got this job in a laundry. One day [a friend] ... called me up at home. “Hurry up and come on over here. There’s a man here says he’ll hire you.” We always thought that this guy had some connection with the Communist Party. He hired everything black that came in. So he hired me. I worked on the carburetors. Right across from me was a young Polish woman named Eva. She was going to show me how to do it. Eva and I became real good friends because when she got stuck I would reach over and help her.

One night she said, “There’s a union meeting tonight. Will you go with me to the union meeting?” So we went to this tavern and then we started talking union. “OK, we’ll go to the union meeting.”

This was United Automobile Workers. I was the only black there. All the stewards were coming in and saying how they couldn’t organize the workers: “I can’t get anybody to join”; “So-and-So said the union is no good....”

I said, “You know why you can’t get anybody to join? Because you don’t have anything to sell them. You aren’t selling them union. You’re

letting them sell you non-union from what I hear you saying here. You'll never get the workers to join the union if you let them tell you the union isn't any good. I wouldn't join a union that's no good either." A steward must sell the union, telling the workers how much strength they have when they are organized.

I looked at this guy who was the organizer and his face was just lighting up. The next day I was elected steward of my department. Two nights later everybody in that department was signed up.

I only joined the union for what it could do for black people. I didn't care anything about whites. I didn't care if they lined them all up and shot them down—I wished they would! I had no knowledge of the unity of white and black. I had no knowledge that you can't go any place alone. The only thing that I was interested in was what happened to black people....

We had good union meetings too. We would have speakers. Either I would speak or Mamie [Harris] would speak or we would invite a speaker to come in. Two years after the plant closed up, we still had union meetings. We would have full crowds. We were fighting for [unemployment] compensation. You would go to get your compensation and they'd offer you a job. You weren't supposed to take a job that was less than the rate you had been getting. We would fight these cases and win them. We could call a union meeting and bring in maybe 75 percent of our plant two years after it closed down. The main thing that I would say is that you have to have faith in people. You know, I had very little faith in white people. I think that I had faith in black people. But you have to have faith in people, period.

You have to tell people things that they can see. Then they'll say, "Oh, I never thought of that," or "I have never seen it like that." I have seen it done. I have seen people change. This is the faith you've got to have in people.

The big job is teaching them. And I was not patient. That is another thing, you must be patient. I just didn't have any patience. If a worker did something, "To hell with you. You didn't come to the last union meeting, so don't tell me when you have a grievance. You just handle it the best way you can by yourself." But you can't do that. This I learned was wrong. You



have to be patient with people. People have to learn and they can't learn unless we give them a chance.

## Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (1977)

*Adrienne Rich is a poet, an outspoken feminist and lesbian. She dedicated her book, Of Woman Born, to her grandmothers and "to the activists working to free women's bodies from archaic and unnecessary bonds."*

To seek visions, to dream dreams, is essential, and it is also essential to try new ways of living, to make room for serious experimentation, to respect the effort even where it fails.

Child care as enforced servitude, or performed out of guilt, has been all too bitter a strain in our history. If women boycott the laboratories and libraries of scientific institutions (to which we have barely begun to gain access) we will not even know what research and technology is vital to the control of our bodies.

Above all, such measures fail to recognize the full complexity and political significance of the woman's body, the full spectrum of power and powerlessness it represents, of which motherhood is simply one—though a crucial—part.

I am convinced that "there are ways of thinking that we don't yet know about." I take those words to mean that many women are even now thinking in ways which traditional intellect denies, decries, or is unable to grasp.

I know of no woman—virgin, mother, lesbian, married, celibate—whether she earns her keep as a housewife, a cocktail waitress, or a scanner of brain waves—for whom the body is not a fundamental problem: its clouded meanings, its fertility, its desire, its so-called frigidity, its bloody speech, its silences, its changes and mutilations, its rapes and ripenings. There is for the first time today a possibility of converting our

physicality into both knowledge and power. Physical motherhood is merely one dimension of our being....

We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body.

Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community, intimacy, will develop new meanings; thinking itself will be transformed.

This is where we have to begin.

## Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) Women in Prison: How We Are (April 1978)

*This is an excerpt written written by Assata Shakur, formerly of the Black Panther Party, about her experience during her incarceration at Riker's Island. In observation of Black History Month, and in light of reports of inhuman conditions at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, this excerpt is a good reflection piece on the institution of prison, the social and economic factors that lead to incarceration, and its impact on Black and Brown people.*

We sit in the bull pen. We are all black. All restless. And we are all freezing. When we ask, the matron tells us that the heating system cannot be adjusted.

Lucille comes to my tier to ask me how much time a "C" felony conviction carries. I know that she has just been convicted of manslaughter in the second degree. And I was the one who had to tell her that she was facing fifteen years in prison while we both silently wondered what would happen to the four teenage children that she had raised almost single handedly.

Spikey has short time, and it is evident, the day before she is to be released, that she does not want to go home. I tell her good bye and wish her luck. Six days later, through the prison grapevine, i hear she is back.

There are no criminals here at Riker's Island Correctional Institution for Women, (New York), only victims. Many were abused children. Most have been abused by men and all have been abused by "the system." The major crimes that women here are charged with are prostitution, pick-pocketing, shop lifting, robbery, and drugs. The women see stealing or hustling as necessary for the survival of themselves or their children because jobs are scarce and welfare is impossible to live on.

The guards have successfully convinced most of the women that Riker's Island is a country club. The image is further reinforced by the pseudo-motherly attitude of many of the guards; a deception which all too often successfully reverts women to children. Most of the guards are black, usually from working class, upward bound, civil service oriented backgrounds. Many guards hate and feel trapped by their jobs.

The major topic of conversation here is drugs. Eighty percent of inmates have used drugs when they were in the street. At least 50 percent of the prison population takes some form of psychotropic drug.

For many, prison is not that much different from the street. For many the cells are not much different from the tenements, the shooting galleries and the welfare hotels they live in on the street. The police are the same. The poverty is the same. The alienation is the same. The racism is the same. The sexism is the same. Riker's Island is just another institution. My sisters in the streets, like my sisters at Riker's Island, see no way out."

## Haywood T. "The Kid" Kirkland, from *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (1984)

*In Vietnam between 1961 and 1964, black soldiers accounted for more than twenty percent of fatalities, even though they represented roughly twelve percent of Army personnel. Black Vietnam vets who were not killed returned to encounter persistent*

*racism and widespread unemployment. Here Haywood Kirkland describes the Vietnam War and its aftermath from the Standpoint of a Black GI.*

I got drafted on November 22, 1966. I had been working for a book distributor and as a stock boy in some stores coming out of high school. A lot of dudes were trying to do things to get deferments. One of my brothers put some kind of fluid in his eye and said he had an eye problem at the physical. He never went.

I didn't try anything. I knew when I got drafted I was going to Vietnam, no matter what I did. I knew because of a vision I had when I was twelve.

As soon as I hit bootcamp in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, they tried to change your total personality. Transform you out of that civilian mentality to a military mind.

Right away they told us not to call them Vietnamese. Call everybody gooks, dinks.

Then they told us when you go over in Vietnam, you gonna be face to face with Charlie, the Viet Cong. They were like animals, or something other than human. They ain't have no regard for life. They'd blow up little babies just to kill one GI. They wouldn't allow you to talk to them as if they were people. They told us they're not to be treated with any mercy or apprehension. That's what they engraved into you. That killer instinct. Just go away and do destruction.

Even the chaplains would turn the thing around in the Ten Commandments. They'd say, "Thou shall not murder," instead of "Thou shall not kill." Basically, you had the right to kill, to take and seize territory, or to protect the lives of each other. Our conscience was not to bother us once we engaged in that kind of killing. As long as we didn't murder, it was like the chaplain would give you his blessings. But you knew all of that was murder anyway.

At the time, I basically had a gung ho attitude about being a soldier. But could I get in the best situation and not get hurt was a legitimate concern of mine... The politics of war had not set in when I got there. They told us not to fire unless fired upon. But once we enter into a village, we

literally did anything we wanted to do. There was no rules at all. I began to see a lot of the politics...

You would see racialism in the base-camp area. Like rednecks flying rebel flags from their jeeps. I would feel insulted, intimidated. The brothers they were calling quote unquote troublemakers they would send to the fields. A lot of brothers...ended up in the fields.

So we began to talk to each other, close our ranks and be more organized amongst ourselves to deal with some of this stuff. Because I was a veteran with medals and an honorable discharge, Washington City had a job offer for me [when I returned]. The police force or the post office. The police force had too much military connected to it. My whole thing was to get the military out of my system. I chose the post office. The supervisors were just like the first sergeants. Six months later, I resigned. I just got tired of it.

Well, I was getting more of a revolutionary militant attitude. It had begun when I started talking with friends before leaving 'Nam about being part of the struggle of black people. About contributing in the world since Vietnam was doing nothing for black people. They killed Dr. King just before I came home. I felt used.

## Vito Russo, Why We Fight (1988)

*In 1979 doctors in Los Angeles and New York started to report unusual and hard to diagnose forms of pneumonia and cancer. In 1982, the CDC officially named the condition Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. But the history of AIDS has been one of denial and suppression, because those most immediately affected by disease in its early years were gays and lesbians, people of color, and drug users. President Reagan did not make public mention of the epidemic until October 1987. Here, activist Vito Russo, speaks of how people with AIDS were dying not of a disease, but of homophobia, of racism, and of indifference. Russo himself died as a result of AIDS in 1990, at the age of 44.*

You know, for the last three years, since I was diagnosed, my family thinks two things about my situation. One, they think I'm going to die, and

two, they think that my government is doing absolutely everything in their power to stop that. And they're wrong, on both counts.

So if I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from homophobia. If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from racism. If I'm dying from anything - I'm dying from the fact that not enough rich, white, heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anybody to give a shit. Living with aids is like living through a war which is happening only for those people who happen to be in the trenches. Every time a shell explodes, you look around and you discover that you've lost more of your friends, but nobody else notices. It isn't happening to them.

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

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

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. They don't give a shit, it isn't happening to them - meaning that it isn't happening to people like them - the real people, the world-famous general public we all keep hearing about.

If it is true that gay men and IV drug users are the populations at risk for this disease, then we have a right to demand that education and prevention be targeted specifically to these people. And it is not happening. We are being allowed to die, while low-risk populations are being panicked - not educated, panicked - into believing that we deserve to die.

Why are we here together today? We're here because it is happening to us, and we do give a shit.

## Public Enemy, Fight The Power (1990)

*When the group Public Enemy released its first album, Yo! Bum Rush the Show, in 1987, its lyrics stood out starkly against the backdrop of Reagan-era conservatism and the still overwhelmingly white Music Television (MTV) programming. Here is a track from their third album, Fear of a Black Planet, that offered an uncompromising message of protest.*

Listen if you're missin' y'all  
Swingin' while I'm singin'  
Givin' whatcha gettin'  
Knowin' what I know  
While the Black bands sweatin'  
And the rhythm rhymes rollin'  
Got to give us what we want  
Gotta give us what we need  
Our freedom of speech is freedom or death  
We got to fight the powers that be  
Lemme hear you say  
Fight the power

As the rhythm designed to bounce  
What counts is that the rhymes  
Designed to fill your mind  
Now that you've realized the prides arrived  
We got to pump the stuff to make us tough  
From the heart  
It's a start, a work of art  
To revolutionize make a change nothin's strange  
People, people we are the same

No we're not the same  
Cause we don't know the game  
What we need is awareness, we can't get careless  
You say what is this?  
My beloved lets get down to business  
Mental self defensive fitness  
(Yo) bum rush the show  
You gotta go for what you know  
Make everybody see, in order to fight the powers that be  
Lemme hear you say...  
Fight the power

Elvis was a hero to most  
But he never meant shit to me you see  
Straight up racist that sucker was  
Simple and plain  
Motherfuck him and John Wayne  
Cause I'm Black and I'm proud  
I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped  
Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps  
Sample a look back you look and find  
Nothing but rednecks for 400 years if you check  
Don't worry be happy  
Was a number one jam  
Damn if I say it you can slap me right here  
(Get it) lets get this party started right  
Right on, c'mon  
What we got to say  
Power to the people no delay  
To make everybody see  
In order to fight the powers that be

(Fight The Power)



## Martin Duberman, Stonewall (1993)

*The Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in the West Village, was raided by the police on the morning of June 28, 1969. The patrons of the bar, and the crowd outside fought back against the police, shifting this from a routine raid into a days long riot. This marked a major shift in the fight for gay and lesbian rights in the United States. Martin Duberman later went on to narrate the stories of 6 individuals whose lives were changed by the Stonewall Riots in his documentary novel, Stonewall.*

The police, amid a growing crowd and mounting anger, melee broke out in several directions and swiftly mounted in intensity. The crowd, now in full cry, started screaming epithets at the police. Sylvia [Rivera] and Craig [Rodwell] enthusiastically joined in, Sylvia shouting her lungs out, Craig letting go with a full-throated "Gay power!"

By now, the crowd had swelled to a mob, and people were picking up and throwing whatever loose objects came to hand. Stunned and frightened by the crowd's unexpected fury, the police, retreated inside the bar. Pine had been accustomed to two or three cops being able to handle with ease any number of cowering gays, but here the crowd wasn't cowering. As Pine later said, "I had been in combat situations, [but] there was never any time that I felt more scared than then." With the cops holed up inside Stonewall, the crowd was now in control of the street, and it bellowed in triumph and pent-up rage.

Craig, ever conscious of the need for publicity and realizing that a critical moment had arrived, called all three daily papers. Jim Fouratt also dashed to the phones—to call his straight radical-left friends, to tell them "people were fighting the cops!" He urged them to rush down and lend their support (just as he had long done for their causes). But none of them would.

The danger was very real, and the police were badly frightened. The one cop in uniform was hit near the eye with a shard, and blood spurted

out. With that, the fear turned abruptly to fury. Three of the cops ran out the front door and started screaming threats at the crowd, thinking to cow it. But instead a rain of coins and bottles came down.

A reporter from *The Village Voice* had retreated inside the bar when the police did; he later wrote that by that point in the evening "the sound filtering in [didn't] suggest dancing faggots any more; it sound[ed] like a powerful rage bent on vendetta." It seemed only a matter of minutes before the howling mob would break in and wreak its vengeance.

An arm reached in through the shattered window, squirted lighter fluid into the room, and then threw in another lit match. The match caught, and there was a whoosh of flame. Pine was preparing to shoot when he heard the sound of sirens. Relief was now rounding the corner.

The TPF was a highly trained, crack riot-control unit. In their path, the rioters slowly retreated, but did not break and run. The protesters would not be cowed. The TPF would disperse the jeering mob only to have it re-form behind them, yelling taunts, tossing bottles and bricks, setting fires in trash cans. At one point, they found themselves face to face with a chorus line of mocking queens, their arms clasped around each other, kicking their heels in the air Rockettes-style and singing:

We are the Stonewall girls  
We wear our hair in curls  
We wear no underwear  
We show our pubic hair...  
We wear our dungarees  
Above our nelly knees!

## Susan Brownmiller, *Abortion Is a Woman's Right* (1999)

*Here the feminist journalist and activist Susan Brownmiller, author of *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, recalls her own experience of having an abortion in the era before Roe, and describes how the women's movement successfully campaigned to overturn the federal ban on a woman's right to choose. In the era before the Roe v.*

*Wade decision by the Supreme Court (January 22, 1973), abortions were illegal in the United States. Women were forced to carry unwanted pregnancies to term or to seek illegal abortions under dangerous and degrading circumstances, at great risk to themselves.*

Women's Liberation found its first unifying issue in abortion, and abortion became the first feminist cause to sweep the nation. From 1969 to 1972 an imaginative campaign—rash, impudent, decentralized, yet interconnected by ideas and passion—successfully altered public perception to such an extent that a “crime,” as the law defined it, became a “woman's constitutional right.” Its capstone was *Roe v. Wade*, the monumental Supreme Court decision of January 22, 1973.

Nineteen sixty-nine was a precisely defined moment, the year when women of childbearing age transformed a quiet back-burner issue promoted by a handful of stray radicals and moderate reformers into a popular struggle for reproductive freedom.

Unlike the isolated women of their parents' generation who sought individual solutions in furtive silence, they would bring a direct personal voice to the abortion debate. They would reveal their own stories, first to one another and then to the public. They would break the law, and they would raise a ruckus to change the law, devising original strategies to fight for abortion through the courts. Before the new militance erupted, abortion was a criminal act in every state unless a committee of hospital physicians concurred that the pregnancy endangered the woman's life.

To the general public, abortion was the stuff of lurid tabloid headlines that underscored its peril: A young woman's body found in a motel room; she'd bled to death from a botched operation. A practitioner and a hapless patient entrapped in a midnight raid on what the police dubbed “an abortion mill.” There were shining exceptions like the legendary Robert Spencer of Ashland, Pennsylvania, who ran a spotless clinic and charged no more than one hundred dollars, but venality ran high in an unlawful business in which practitioners were raided and jailed and patients were pressured to be informers.

One million women braved the unknown every year, relying on a grapevine of whispers and misinformation to terminate their pregnancies by illegal means. Those lucky enough to secure the address of a good practitioner, and to scrounge up the requisite cash, packed a small bag and headed for San Juan, Havana, London, or Tokyo, or perhaps across town. The less fortunate risked septic infection and a punctured uterus from back-alley amateurs willing to poke their insides with a catheter, a knitting needle, or the unfurled end of a wire hanger.

The writer Jane O'Reilly's story gives the lie to the too simple myth that "rich" women could always find a connection. In the summer of 1957, she was looking forward to her senior year at Radcliffe when she discovered she was pregnant. A classmate finally came up with an address in New York and lent her the six hundred dollars. O'Reilly recalls that a man with a mustache placed her on a kitchen table, prodded her with a knitting needle, and gave her some pills. Whatever had been done to her in New York, Jane O'Reilly was still pregnant. She gave birth at a Salvation Army hospital and signed away her baby daughter. For the next thirty-four years on every May 10, her daughter's birthday, O'Reilly plunged into a sobbing depression. In 1991 the pain partially lifted when her daughter found her through an adoption search.

Women of my generation still need to bear witness; we still carry the traumas. For my first abortion in 1960 I took the Cuba option that had scared O'Reilly. Here's what I remember: Banging on a door during the midday siesta in a strange neighborhood in Havana. Wriggling my toes a few hours later, astonished to be alive. Boarding a small plane to Key West and hitchhiking back to New York bleeding all the way. Bleeding? I must have been hemorrhaging. In which state did I leave the motel bed drenched with my blood?

# Gustavo Madrigal-Piña, Undocumented and Unafraid (August 22, 2011)

*On August 11th, 2011, The Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance organized the “Graduation of Resistance” in response to a harsh anti-immigrant law passed by Georgia’s Governor, Nathan Deal. Gustavo Madrigal-Piña gave this speech on the steps of the University of Georgia Arch, where Hamilton Holmes and Charylane Hunter, fifty years earlier, defied anti-integration protests and became the first black students at the university.*

Hello everyone. My name is Gustavo. I am undocumented and I am unafraid. I was brought here to this country at the age of nine by my parents. Ever since, many people have asked me what brought my family to this country. The answer has always been simple and always been the same: poverty.

Poverty meaning an uncertain one to two meals a day, if there were ever any second meals. Poverty meaning walking forty-five minutes downhill to go to school and an hour and half back uphill to go back home because we were too poor to afford the bus fare. Poverty meaning that my parents had to make a choice. A life-or-death choice between living in the same conditions that you’d been living in—in poverty—or [to] go out and search for a better life. And I’m eternally grateful to my parents for the choice they made.

I don’t blame my parents for the situation that I’m in. I am grateful to them. I realize that they made the responsible and courageous choices that they had to make, that any parent in that situation, in those shoes, would have made for their kids.

For my mom and dad, muchas gracias y los quiero mucho por todo lo que han hecho por mí.

Why am I sharing this with you today? It’s not to gain your sympathy but to obtain your support. To show you, but not only you—to show sympathetic and opposing politicians, and everyone—that I am not an

“illegal alien,” that I am indeed a human being, a human being with rights.”

In these troubled economic times, the State of Georgia has decided to make me and my fellow undocumented brothers and sisters an enemy and a scapegoat. How did they do this? First they banned us from the top five universities here in the State of Georgia, no matter how qualified we are to attend those institutions. And then they criminalized our very own existence and livelihood through HB 87.

Well, I’m here to tell the State of Georgia that I’m not going down without a fight, that I’m here to fight for my brothers and sisters. I’m here to tell the State of Georgia that I refuse to become a second-class citizen or anything below that. I want to tell the State of Georgia that I refuse to let anyone—anyone—become a second-class citizen or anything below that. I will put up resistance as long as there is blood pumping through my veins. And I’m also here to ask you to join me and my undocumented brothers and sisters in the fight of our lives.

I would like to wrap this up with a quote from one of my favorite people—you guys might know him—Malcolm X. To the State of Georgia, and I quote, “We declare our right on this earth to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary.”

My name is Gustavo Madrigal. I am undocumented, unafraid, and unashamed.