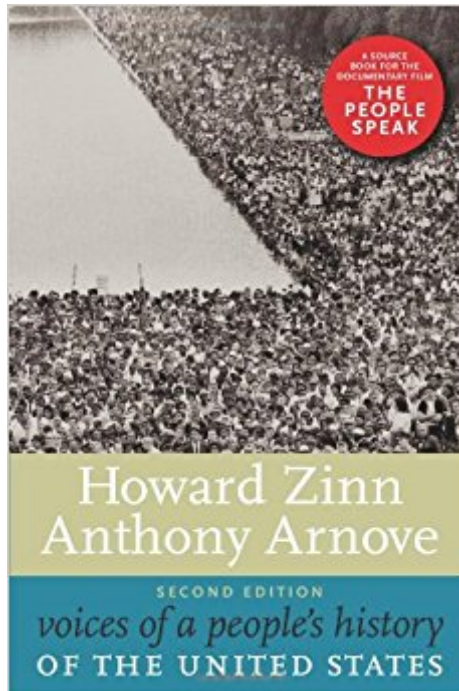




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# Voices Of A People's History Of The United States



## Synopsis

Here in their own words are Frederick Douglass, George Jackson, Chief Joseph, Martin Luther King Jr., Plough Jogger, Sacco and Vanzetti, Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, Mark Twain, and Malcolm X, to name just a few of the hundreds of voices that appear in *Voices of a People's History of the United States*, edited by Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove. Paralleling the twenty-four chapters of Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, *Voices of a People's History* is the long-awaited companion volume to the national bestseller. For *Voices*, Zinn and Arnove have selected testimonies to living history—speeches, letters, poems, songs—left by the people who make history happen but who usually are left out of history books—women, workers, nonwhites. Zinn has written short introductions to the texts, which range in length from letters or poems of less than a page to entire speeches and essays that run several pages. *Voices of a People's History* is a symphony of our nation's original voices, rich in ideas and actions, the embodiment of the power of civil disobedience and dissent wherein lies our nation's true spirit of defiance and resilience.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Howard Zinn is famous primarily for *A People's History of the United States*, the book in which he presented alternative versions of American milestones, including Columbus's "discovery" of the New World. *Voices of a People's History of the United States* is the follow-up to that original landmark work, but where *People's History* contained Zinn's interpretations of events, *Voices* turns the platform over to others, in a collection of first-hand accounts, journal entries, speeches, personal

letters, and published opinion pieces from the nation's history. The purpose of Zinn's work, *Voices* included, is to engage in an act of political dissidence and activism. "What is common to all of these voices," Zinn and co-editor Anthony Arnove write in the book's introduction, "is that they have mostly been shut out of the orthodox histories, the major media, the standard textbooks, the controlled culture ... to create a passive citizenry." With *Voices*, Zinn and Arnove seek to address that malaise, showing that the impossible--slaves rising up against their slave masters, for example--is not only possible, but has occurred repeatedly throughout the country's history. "Whenever injustices have been remedied, wars halted, women and blacks and Native Americans given their due," they write, "it has been because 'unimportant' people spoke up, organized, protested, and brought democracy alive." The common thread throughout *Voices* is this mandate, and each selection is preceded by a brief introduction by the authors, written from a far-left perspective. (As an example, one section is titled "The Carter-Reagan-Bush Consensus.") *Voices* often works better as a reference book than a sit-down-to-read title. Its early chapters--on Columbus, slavery, the War of Independence, and the early women's movement--tend to be more engaging than later excerpts, largely because a contrary point of view to mainstream mythology has been so rarely heard. The modern sections have a haphazard, "greatest hits of the left" feeling, as the book jumps from an Abbie Hoffman speech to the lyrics of Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." The problem may be inherent in the format of the book. Everything is treated equally, and a speech by Danny Glover is given as much weight as an excerpt from W.E.B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. For context and background, it's best to stick with the original *People's History*, but to hear the words right from the speakers' mouths, there's no better resource than *Voices*. --Jennifer Buckendorff --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

•Voices really captures the voices as if they were speaking right to us over the years and all the differences. It calls on us to add our own voices and, quite apart from its value as a learning tool, that may be its greatest contribution. • Paul Buhle, Z Magazine  
Voices of a People's History of the United States should be required reading for every individual lucky enough to call America home. • Scott Thill, Salon.com

History is sometimes written with the goal of documenting the attitudes or opinions of a particular class of people, such as the intellectuals, the politicians, the scientists, or the warriors. Each of these groups has made important contributions to human accomplishment, which should not be forgotten or discarded under the guise of some egalitarian or multicultural reading of history. But

when the stories of these groups are documented in history, too often other voices are deafened, and these voices represent the vast majority of historical participants. It is not enough to view history through the eyes of intellectuals, politicians, or warriors. For an historical account to be meaningful, it must offer insight into the collaborations, opinions, belief structures, and longings of those who chose not to become famous, but instead chose to indulge themselves in the unique fascinations that each historical epoch possesses. But because most humans throughout history did not record their experiences, the historian is left wanting for accurate appraisals of these experiences. Diaries, journals, and other personal writings can assist the historian in this regard, and there have been many uses of these throughout the historical literature. It is important to remember though that because of the paucity of these personal documents, one should not be too hasty in imputing the opinions of their authors to the entire population at the time. One cannot view them as representing the "voices of the people" without establishing this with (difficult) statistical analysis. Sometimes however these documents were written more as a catharsis, as a way of expressing, in a strong and determined way, an idea, grievance, or opposition to the status quo. The opening quotation in the book by Frederick Douglass reinforces this view, for in that quotation Douglass essentially states that power must be challenged before it can be defeated (Douglass does not want to stop with mere words though, for in the same quotation he asserts the need for physical confrontation if necessary). It is in this light that this book should be read. It is a collection of essays and letters that reveal attitudes that are not the typical ones that one would be exposed to in United States secondary schools. Those readers familiar with the author's earlier book on United States history will appreciate this book even more, but both can be read independently of each other. This is not a book that will please the elitist historian who discounts any view of history that does not magnify the contributions of intellectuals or military leaders over and above the "common" person. It is a book for those who are genuinely interested in the moods and aspirations of the people of a given time, if only from a limited vantage point. It will certainly upset the intellectual equilibrium of anyone who holds to a view of American history that has been sanitized by the educational establishment.

I read from this book constantly. The speeches included truly bring history to life by providing the actual words of the actors involved in the events. It underscores the personal convictions of the individuals, their intelligence and their passion. This book is informative and inspirational. I never fail to feel revived and encouraged by reading these chronicles of individual participation in the betterment of the person and the society. One of my favorite books!

Memorable overview. Points out how advantage happens. Some gain a foothold, set up shop, keep others out, regulate to their advantage. Shows the selfish side of human nature to this point.

It's nice to read history without the political slant and hyperbole. I always knew WW2 was wrapped up when the U.S decided to send a message to the world by dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, but there is so much more to learn about and Mr. Zinn lays it out in beautiful prosaic form. A must read for students who require truth and facts about our checkered history.

A book that everyone must read! There are many stories by slaves, indentured slaves, and other journey entries. You get to discover the lies of Christopher Columbus too.

I bought this book for my College U.S. History class. This book is a primary source that has many interesting and useful content for those who want to learn more about U.S. History! One thing I do not like so much about this book is the one sidedness... I wish both sides were equally covered

This book gives a lot of historical writings on the struggle and sufferings of the common man at the hands of rulers and aristocrats. From Columbus to the modern day, this book gives a chronological history of the people's struggle for freedom from oppression; though it is all from a Marxist historical-economic perspective.

book was in great condition, this helped me understand parts of history from perspectives I never thought of.

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