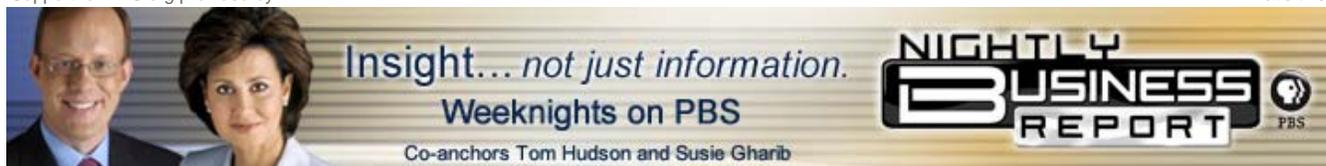


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What's this?



December 11, 2009

BILL MOYERS: Welcome to the Journal. There's only one way to counter the power of organized money, and that's with the power of organized people. This is the theme of our broadcast this week.

We've all seen in recent months how the insurance companies, the drug cartels, Wall Street bankers, corporate lobbies and other powerful interests are reaching deep into their pockets to stifle efforts at reform. And they've been winning. It's been a year since the big financial firms blew a hole in the economy and took down the jobs, wages, pensions and homes of millions of people. They would have gone down too — devoured by their own greed — were it not for the taxpayer bailout. But now major banks and securities firms are on track to pay their employees up to \$140 billion in compensation this year. That's more than the combined budgets of the Departments of Commerce, Education, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, the National Science Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Goldman Sachs — the godfather of Wall Street — is projected to earn around \$45 billion this year in net income with its employees slated to receive an average paycheck of \$743,000.

But get this — just this week, Goldman announced that its top 30 executives will forego their usual big cash bonus in response to public outrage over runaway compensation deals. Maybe people in the streets are getting through at last to Wall Street. Here's what I mean.

MAN: Are you tired of predatory lenders? Are you tired of sub-prime mortgages? Are you tired of the banks? Hallelujah ...

BILL MOYERS: You might have thought this was an old-time revival...

CROWD: Somebody say 'I'm tired!' I'm tired!

BILL MOYERS: But this was not about the life hereafter, these people want a better world in the here and now.

CROWD: Banks got bailed out; we got sold out!

BILL MOYERS: So earlier this fall, from foreclosure blighted California and small farming towns in Iowa and the struggling suburbs of the east coast they came to Chicago to take on the financial giants whose greed and reckless gambling brought the American economy to its knees.

MIKE MCCARTHY: We're losing jobs. We're losing state employees. We're losing industry and businesses. We're losing farms and homes. And meanwhile, these people across the street are trying to divvy up their record profits, in tens of millions of dollars worth of bonuses. And that's not fair, it's not fair.

BILL MOYERS: Across the street The American Bankers Association was holding its annual convention. The symbol, to these protesters, of a system turned upside down.

REV. BOOKER VANCE: What it appears is that banks are getting richer; some of the employees and officers are getting raises while we're seeing more homes go under and people suffering in the community.

What we're trying to do is to let the banks know, they have more responsibility to take the money, they have a responsibility to help educate and to inform and to work with community groups to stop the foreclosures. We need a moratorium on foreclosures in the

state. We need to address many of the concerns of small businesses who are trying to keep afloat, able to get loans and access the loans — the money that was given to the banks. We need a flow down, we don't need a trickle down. We need a flow down at this particular point.

GEORGE GOEHL: Here in Chicago in the last two years, we've had foreclosure filings double, in a two year period. Foreclosures were already a big problem in Chicago in 2006, but they jumped up to 20,000 filings in 2008. We have a neighborhood in Chicago that has 200 new foreclosure filings this year per square mile. So, communities are hurting. That story's not getting out.

These are the same folks that came up with the ideas that led to 30 years of deregulation, and we've seen how that worked out. They created the economic crisis. They created the foreclosure crisis. They needed billions and billions of bailout dollars. And now they're lobbying to kill common sense reforms who would protect every day people.

CROWD: ABA, you're the worst, time to put the people first!

BILL MOYERS: From the bankers' convention the protestors moved on to the Chicago offices of Goldman Sachs...

CROWD: Goldman sucks! Goldman sucks!

BILL MOYERS: ...that global goliath who's on track to divvy up the companies richest bonus booty ever.

CROWD: We're fired up! Can't take it no more!

VALERIE BENJAMIN GLOVER: You took our tax dollars. We bailed you out. At least have consideration for the people who are flooding and feeding your bank accounts, your salaries. There's no compassion. There's just their own self interest, their own greed. And they just want to continue with the same cycle, the same old thing. It's just if you have Tide, you have the original Tide and then they lie and say, "We got the new and better Tide," but it's not a new and better Tide, it's the same product.

BILL MOYERS: From there, it was onto a nearby branch of Wells Fargo where protestors crowded into the bank lobby and, for a short time, disrupted business as usual.

DENNIS GANNON: I'll tell you what, the bankers haven't seen anything. The bankers are enjoying the money that our government gave 'em. It's time for us on Main Street to reach out to these folks and tell 'em, "We want real reform." And when do we want it?

CROWD: Now!

DENNIS GANNON: When do we want it?

CROWD: Now!

BRENDA LABLANC: All we want is to have them regulated. We need banks. God knows we need them. But they've got to do business in a decent fashion. And if they won't do it themselves, then the government has to make them do it.

JOE FAGAN: We got to change things. All these people, we're just regular people. It's got to stop, that's why we're here.

JOE FAGAN: Bust up!

CROWD: Big banks!

JOE FAGAN: Bust up!

CROWD: Big banks!

BILL MOYERS: Their message for the banks was clear and simple.

JOE FAGAN: Clean up your act. Enough is enough. We've caught onto your game. We know what you're doing. We're not fools. People know it. Clean up your act. And don't be a scandal to us and the world.

BILL MOYERS: They're up against the powerful lobby of the Financial Services Industry. It spent more than \$220 million in lobbying so far in 2009. Most of it directed at stopping reforms in Washington that would hold banks accountable and hopefully prevent a repeat of last year's disaster.

JAMES THINDWA: What we're doing here in Chicago ought to be replicated across the country. We need to get out by the millions to protest, to demand that this industry, in particular, the banking industry, that is spending 200, 250 million dollars lobbying against bank reform, this is unacceptable. And I think average Americans need to understand that.

REV. TONY PIERCE: I think it's hard for them to ignore our message at this point. Because everyday, this crowd gets larger, and everyday the American people get angrier, and everyday we are shouting to Congress and to the President. And everyday that that happens is a day that the bankers cannot ignore.

VALERIE BENJAMIN GLOVER: It's no longer people like me feeling that it's my fault. You feel that, "Oh, maybe I went to school for the wrong type of study." But, you know that there's some force bigger than you out there that's been sopping up your money and not giving you an opportunity to take advantage of the American dream.

JAMES THINDWA: We are fighting against big money interests. We don't have the billions of dollars. But we have legs, we still have voices and we're going to continue to march and we're going to continue to speak out. And to send a message quite frankly to Democrats in Washington that, once again, the November election was a referendum on the old practices that have been repudiated, that have been discredited. It's time for a new chapter in American politics. It's up to them to make a decision. Are they going to listen to the people on the ground here, or are they going to listen to the bankers? That's the question today. And we can say that even in Chicago, Obama's hometown, that many people are beginning to question his commitment to serious, sweeping reforms.

BILL MOYERS: So, as we heard here time and again, they cling to the audacity of hope.

BRENDA LABLANC: When enough people get active, things will happen. I think Obama will act if people will push him. But we've got to push him. He said that himself, he said, "You push us." And I think we're ready to do that.

GEORGE GOEHL: The one thing we have, our own political currency, is people. And people are ready to hit the streets. Today is a beginning of a much larger set of mobilizations that are going to take place all across the country. We're just getting' started.

BILL MOYERS: With me now is George Gale, one of the community organizers you just saw in our report from Chicago. He's Executive Director of National People's Action, a group dedicated to organizing for social justice.

Also with us is Heather Booth, who's been a political activist and organizer for 40 years, ever since she joined the civil rights movement in the sixties. She's currently Director of Americans for Financial Reform and President of the Midwest Academy, a training program for leaders and organizers.

Welcome to you both.

HEATHER BOOTH: Oh, wonderful to be here.

GEORGE GOEHL: Thank you.

BILL MOYERS: George, you say at the end of that report, "We're not going away, we're just starting." Who's we?

GEORGE GOEHL: Who is we? 'We' is everyday people from across the country. We saw something really interesting happen over the course of the summer. We were having meetings with the Federal Reserve. And what started out as people coming out around predatory lending and foreclosures started to evolve. And suddenly retirees were coming out. Saying, "How come my pensions been depleted by 30 percent?"

People who'd lost their jobs were coming out. People who were worried about State budget cuts were coming out to these meetings. And I think more and more people are making connection around their own economic insecurity to what's happening with the banks and on Wall Street. So, suddenly we've got a growing movement of people who want to get out on the streets, put pressure on the banks, they recognize it's a David and Goliath fight. And it's only through their action that we're going to make things happen. I think people don't believe right now that their Members of Congress are going to lead the way. They're questioning whether Obama will lead the way. And it's becoming more clear that they've got to lead the way.

BILL MOYERS: Heather, you're based in Washington. George is in Chicago. Who are Americans for Financial Reform?

HEATHER BOOTH: Well, it's the fight of Main Street against Wall Street. And it's unified both from the grassroots working closely with George and other grassroots organizations. And also folks in D.C. So, we've got trade unions, civil rights organizations, religious organizations, investors.

And we broadly would like to see the values of decency, democracy, accountability, transparency, and fairness in the financial system. That system should work for us, for the American public

BILL MOYERS: Those people we saw in Chicago, what did you sense they were feeling when they were there?

GEORGE GOEHL: A number of places have really been ravaged by foreclosures. So, we do have communities that just have intense foreclosure concentration. The foreclosures keep rising. And they see banks doing less. And then you've got more people in desperate financial situations, which turns people to payday lenders. Which Senator Durbin called it the event in Chicago the bottom feeders of an industry that I would say is like chalk full of bottom feeders. So...

BILL MOYERS: Payday lenders are?

GEORGE GOEHL: Payday lenders are these little shops, these little storefronts that make 400 percent interest loans to people. The average \$300 payday loan ends up costing the borrower \$900. So, it's a classic, you know, lending scam that actually strips wealth from people and from communities. So, actually more and more people are having to go to payday lenders, 'cause they want to keep the lights on, get their groceries paid. They want to save their housing.

So, people are seeing more and more abuse, more and more scams at the local level. And I think people are angry for a few reasons. One, their relationship with their bank is not a good relationship. We were having a conversation with people across the country the other day. And they were like, "What if we had banks that actually helped people build wealth?" Like that was a radical idea. Versus banks that are stripping wealth from people.

So, that's one thing people are frustrated about. You know, high interest rates and overdraft fees. Then the actual actions that led to this crisis. So, you know, launching the sub prime foreclosure crisis. Sending the economy into a tailspin. Needing billions in taxpayer bailouts. People are upset around that. And then there's just the principle that the same banks that created the crisis, that we're all facing. And you want to talk about the classic example that we're all in this together. This is it. We're all facing this crisis. The banks created it. And now they've activated this massive lobbying apparatus to kill reforms that would prevent a future meltdown.

BILL MOYERS: So, you are really up against some very powerful interest in Washington, Heather. I mean, the financial sector spent \$110 million lobbying. The health care sector \$133 million. The energy sector \$100 million. All in the second quarter of this year. What makes you think you stand a chance up against those kind of forces?

HEATHER BOOTH: Well, first of all as George rightly said, it's though it's a David and Goliath fight, we should remember that sometimes David wins. Especially when it's not...

BILL MOYERS: A clean shot right between the eyes?

HEATHER BOOTH: And it's not just David, it's Jane and Sue and all sorts of folks getting together, because we really do have a people power, especially in the financial industry. There has really never been an organized, popular protest. This has been a secret temple, as Bill Greider referred to it. Where...

BILL MOYERS: "Washington Post" reporter who's covered the Fed for a long time, right?

HEATHER BOOTH: Absolutely. And as he and others have said, this was kept secret in the back rooms. Right now we still don't know what's actually going on. We don't know what happened with that money.

BILL MOYERS: You mean the TARP money? The bailout money? We don't...

HEATHER BOOTH: Absolutely.

BILL MOYERS: All of it hasn't been accounted for, right?

HEATHER BOOTH: Not at all. In fact, we need to audit the Federal Reserve. What did they do with the money? What happened to this money? And what's happened now is that

people are joining together and are saying let's take that curtain away. Let's open it up to the sunlight. And people are starting to organize. We saw it clearly in Chicago. We see it in the last few weeks maybe 150 demonstrations around the country.

GEORGE GOEHL: Like on Black Friday, a bunch of clergy went to take over and shut down a payday lending office in Bloomington, Illinois, led by...

BILL MOYERS: Black Friday being?

GEORGE GOEHL: Being the day after Thanksgiving when everybody else is out spending money. These folks decided it was time to go shut down a payday lender. And say, 'Hey, until we have a consumer financial protection agency, we're going to protect ourselves. We're going to be the first line of defense in our community.'

On this last Saturday in Iowa, 60 people took over a payday lending branch there and said, "Enough is enough." So, a lot of the action, and I think the kind of action that leads to true movement building, and we really need a popular movement if we're going to win this kind of fight. We can play in the game of inches in D.C. But if we really want to move things in terms of feet and yards, it's going to take part popular unrest that the media cannot deny happening across the country. And it's starting to happen all over the place.

GEORGE GOEHL: I think as progressive organizers, this is our chance to bring more people into our tent, to help develop a more clear analysis around what's happening with big time capital and unregulated corporations.

I got an email from a friend the other day basically explaining or I should say a long-time acquaintance explaining that how they had been ripped off by a mortgage lender. In detail explained this to me. And then how they had been laid off at 64 and were they were not going to get their full pension. So, two experiences where corporations did not treat them well.

And then the last couple sentences, they laid the responsibility at Obama's feet. So, there there's a mix in kind of the reality of what's happening to people. And then people's analysis around it. So, I think we have a job to bring as many people into the tent. There are a lot of Republicans that came out to Chicago, particularly family farmers who still, regardless of like political affiliation, said, 'Unregulated capital is not good for me.'

HEATHER BOOTH: In part, I think they come together when you combine, you say no to bailouts, yes to jobs. That people are hurting. We're over ten percent unemployment. And actually real unemployment's probably 15 percent or even more. The foreclosures are increasing now driven by that unemployment, while the banks are making these billion dollar bonuses. So people are furious.

BILL MOYERS: How do you how do you get the members of Congress to feel what we sensed in the streets that are listening to these people?

HEATHER BOOTH: Well, we know that the amount of money in politics often dominates the political dialogue. And so, we're trying to bring a people power, as well as the inside relationships. It's an outside/inside relationship.

GEORGE GOEHL: What we're trying to do is really organize around a set of ideas. And when we think a real successful movement would be more around an allegiance to ideas over party. And some of that'll contain protests. But it's really about a vision of what we want to create. Around a more fair and just economy. So, right now, I think a lot of the action is around banking reform. But I think we're building the foundation for a big movement around an economy that serves us all.

GEORGE GOEHL: As Heather knows, there was a period in the in the field of community organizing, where the different networks didn't always work that well together. And the people that we served were not served well by that lack of collaboration. But there's a new generation of leadership that's trying to break through those old barriers and say, "Hey, what if we came together? What if we started to aggregate all the power that we're doing around the country into something much bigger?" So, I'm more- we're definitely on the ropes right now in financial reform. It's a tough fight. I'm more optimistic than ever that we're in a position to turn the tide.

HEATHER BOOTH: Change is hard. Partly because money, largely dominates politics, media, and so many factors of our life. These opposition forces, the insurance companies, the big financial interests, the big energy companies. They're still around. But this is a new moment. I actually believe that it is a historic opening. Not with a guarantee of change, but with a promise that there's an opening for change if we seize it.

Partly because there is a crisis. And people are saying, "You've got to do something about

it." Partly because the old ideas don't work of saying just deregulation. Free market without really concern about real people. Or the greed is good spirit. It's partly because there is a new leadership that is turning the country. We are now moving in a new direction with big ideas around important agendas. On health care, on climate, on jobs, and on financial reform.

BILL MOYERS: But here in New York this week at the big annual meeting of the supporters of "The Nation Magazine," one of the progressive magazines in the country, you could really feel the division between people who say we've got to stay with Obama, because he is the agent of change. And people who are saying, "Wait a minute, he's made his peace with with the Wall Street interests. He took his first big appointments to the financial system from the very people who brought this about. How far do you go in criticizing Obama or praising Obama, when he seems to be cutting the corners on a lot of the agenda he was elected to achieve?"

HEATHER BOOTH: You know, these kinds of divisions are present in all movements. They're present in the tea baggers. And they're present in movements for progressive change. You know, back in the 1960s, even for the big March on Washington with Dr. King that so many people remember before that march, there was a whole debate. Should they allow John Lewis, who was seen as a dangerous radical, part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee should they let John Lewis, who's now a congressman

BILL MOYERS: Right.

HEATHER BOOTH: Should they let him speak at that March on Washington? Because he was going to criticize a young and dynamic and charismatic and hopeful young President, at that point, President Kennedy? And in fact, they decided he should speak. And he was also part of that dialogue, because he was representing the voice of people in SNCC, out in the people in Mississippi, in Alabama, and other places around the country. And so, that that difference of opinion is part of the healthy, internal creative conflict.

BILL MOYERS: So, how do you grade Obama right now on banking reform? A, B, C, D, or a flunk?

HEATHER BOOTH: He is certainly moving us in a positive broad direction for change of for regulation, for a consumer protection agency, for trying to address this casino economy and get derivatives regulated and controlled. Now, there are other areas in which we think we have to go much further. There are questions about the Federal Reserve. We think it does need to be democratized. And really should function for the people and not just for the largest banks, who largely control it.

BILL MOYERS: So, A, B, C, D, or F?

HEATHER BOOTH: I think the grade depends in large part on what we do. You know, Obama himself said that he doesn't he's not asking us to believe in him. He's asking us to believe in ourselves and our ability to organize and mobilize. We have to be there and engage the grading is not done yet.

BILL MOYERS: Do you think he still remembers when he was a community organizer in your city of Chicago?

GEORGE GOEHL: I don't know. It doesn't feel like it right now. I would give him a C on leadership in terms of fighting for the issue. I don't feel like he's been out there at the level he could be. Really championing serious reform. It's interesting in Illinois, he actually worked with organizations like ours to pass an anti-predatory lending bill at the state. It was one of the first in the country.

But he needs to be out there using his bully pulpit and using his power to get the message out there. And I feel like lately a lot of members of the Democratic Party have been running like a washed up prize fighter. And not getting out there and really leading for us. And I think that's why more and more Americans like the folks you saw in the clip said, "We're going to deputize ourselves. We're tired of waitin'. We're going to take the lead."

And I think about people like Brenda LaBlanc who was in that video, from Des Moines, Iowa. Eighty-one, retired. She says, 'I'm going to form the first line of defense against predatory lenders. Against payday lending. Against Wells Fargo in my community.' Or the Reverend Charlotte Dotts, who's leading the fight in Central Illinois. Or Mitzy-Rivers Singleton in Wichita, Kansas. These are unpaid people that say, 'We're tired of waiting for leadership. We're the leaders we've been looking for. And we're going to lead the way.'

BILL MOYERS: How do you create a movement out of them when they're many of them are just struggling to stay afloat personally?

GEORGE GOEHL: Yeah, there's a new level of collaboration between organizing networks that gives me a ton of hope. So, right now, you take our organization, National People's Action, or another national organizing network. We maybe we cover 15-20 states. And we're strong in some and not strong in the other. But if you put that all together, you have a federation of people moving around a set of ideas around a shared set of principles and a shared strategy. And you could really start to turn the tide. I do think on this fight, we don't win unless we figure out how to toxify the banking money in politics. Until...

BILL MOYERS: Do what?

GEORGE GOEHL: Toxify that money. It's amazing to me that the same banks that created the foreclosure crisis, sent the economy into the tail spin, needed and billions and billions of taxpayer bailouts, are still able to hand out millions in campaign contributions. You'd think there would be a political price to pay for taking that money. But Members of Congress like Melissa Bean, I wonder how she sleeps well at night. Well, I figured she must sleep on a bed of campaign contributions.

BILL MOYERS: She is?

GEORGE GOEHL: She's a Democrat from Illinois, who's been selling us out left and right. And until we as the public say, 'You're going to pay a political price for taking banking money from the same banks that created the crisis and we bailed out.'" I think it's going to be a real uphill battle.

BILL MOYERS: The...

HEATHER BOOTH: In our view, it's at this sort of two part approach. One part is working this working the system and moving for legislation that is moving for concrete change. And this legislation is moving through Congress right now. And that legislation wouldn't have been there if there wasn't the leadership that President Obama's providing. But it also won't get through unless there's a grassroots support that George and other organizations are doing around the country. And focusing on the banks and the largest banks and the role they're playing.

BILL MOYERS: The Senior Senator for George's State of Illinois, Dick Durbin, he said this summer, you know, the banks own the place, speaking of the Senate, the House, and Washington. The senior Senator from George's State of Illinois, the majority leader of the Senate, Dick Durbin, told me on this broadcast, repeated what he had said in Illinois. He said, "The banks own the Senate."

HEATHER BOOTH: They own the place.

BILL MOYERS: They own the place. Yeah, they the banks own the place. Is that true in from your experience?

HEATHER BOOTH: It is certainly the domination of political money is affecting the politics. And he said that precisely at the point when there was about to be a renegotiation of loans with a provision in the bankruptcy bill. And when that provision went down, he was so frustrated, because here people were facing foreclosures. And the banks basically stood in the way of the interests of the American public. So, on one side you've got organized money and on the other side, you've got organized people.

BILL MOYERS: But the organized money. It'll be there next year when these people that came to Chicago have to go home and try to make a living. And take care of their families. It's an uneven playing field, isn't it?

GEORGE GOEHL: It is. And I think until we change it, we're going to have, you know, lots of tough fights. And be in an uphill battle. In this case, I do think we have the opportunity to toxify that money. And make it too tainted to touch. I feel like the Democrats and Republicans fight on many things. But when it seems to campaign contributions, they're not that different. They all like that money. There are a few exceptions. And they're happy to take it. Until they stop taking it, we're going to be in one hell of a fight.

HEATHER BOOTH: We want to show that it's politically smart, as well as in the interests of the people, to stand up for Main Street. And not to just keep standing up for Wall Street.

BILL MOYERS: So, what's next for both of you?

HEATHER BOOTH: Well, the fight continues. There's a vote in the House on financial reform. And then it goes over to the Senate. And it's interesting. There's actually even a stronger bill in the Senate. And Senator Chris Dodd is actually leading a fight for real reform, for democratizing the Federal Reserve, for ensuring that derivatives, this casino

economy is more regulated. That we can move for an end to the kind of foreclosure crisis we've got. And that we move for our consumer financial protection agency. And then we're talking about activities well, actually, December 14th when the bonuses come out, they'll be bonus demonstrations around the country. And then that will carry on through January and February. And we think there's a gathering storm.

GEORGE GOEHL: This is an incredible opportunity to turn a tragedy into something good. So, if we can get it together, and I really think is not about the Congress. This is not about the President. This is about the people watching this show and other Americans saying, 'Enough is enough.' And I'm going to move from my seat out into the streets, from fingers on a keyboard, boots on the ground, and get out there." Whether that means calling the Members of Congress. Whether it means organizing a little protest in front of a bank. Whether it means making a YouTube video and cutting up your credit cards and posting it and sending it out to your friends. If people get engaged, we can win this fight. And that's happening. There are actions planned all across the country in 25 states over through the end of the year. And then as next year comes around, you'll start to see more events like the showdown in Chicago.

BILL MOYERS: How can people watching find out how to be in touch with you? What how can they know what you're doing?

GEORGE GOEHL: Sure, they should go to the website, ShowdownInAmerica.org. Which will give them ideas around what's happening around the country. And ways that they can plug in and be a part of this movement.

BILL MOYERS: And Heather, how do they reach Americans for Financial Reform?

HEATHER BOOTH: OurFinancialSecurity.org is our website. And also they can link up with various organizations that really are in every state, whether it's National People's Action or U.S. Action or Center for Community Change. Whether it's their trade union. Whether it's their religious institution. There are ways that we can combine altogether. The Civil Rights organizations. And be much stronger together in this gathering storm.

BILL MOYERS: Heather Booth and George Goehl, thank you very much for being on the Journal.

GEORGE GOEHL: Thank you.

BILL MOYERS: There's a long tradition in America of people power, and no one has done more to document it than the historian, Howard Zinn. Listen to this paragraph from his most famous book. Quote: "If democracy were to be given any meaning, if it were to go beyond the limits of capitalism and nationalism, this would not come, if history were any guide, from the top. It would come through citizen's movements, educating, organizing, agitating, striking, boycotting, demonstrating, threatening those in power with disruption of the stability they needed." This son of a working class family got a job in the Brooklyn shipyards and then flew as a bombardier during World War II. He went to NYU on the G.I. Bill, taught history at Spellman College in Atlanta, where he was first active in the Civil Rights movement, and then became a professor of political science at Boston University.

There, he and his students sought a more down-to-earth way of looking at American history. And when no book could provide it, Zinn decided to write one. Since his publication in 1980, "A People's History of the United States" has sold more than two million copies. This Sunday night, the History Channel will premiere a 90-minute special, "The People Speak" based on Howard Zinn's book. It was produced by Zinn along with Matt Damon, Josh Brolin, Chris Moore and Anthony Arrove.

[VIGGO MORTENSEN as PLOUGH JOGGER]: Let them say what they will.

BILL MOYERS: Actors and musicians bring to life voices of protests from America's past —

[DARRYL MCDANIELS as DAVID WALKER]: All men are created equal.

BILL MOYERS: - performing words and music that have given us, as Howard Zinn himself says, "whatever liberty or democracy we have." Welcome to the Journal.

HOWARD ZINN: Oh, thank you, Bill.

BILL MOYERS: So, history and Hollywood. Is this the beginning of a new career for you?

HOWARD ZINN: I hope not. No, but I am happy it is a way of reaching a larger audience with the ideas that were in the book. The -- well, the ideas that you just spoke about. The idea of people involved in history, people actively making history, people agitating and

demonstrating, and pushing the leaders of the country into change in a way that leaders themselves are not likely to initiate.

BILL MOYERS: What do you think these characters from the past that we will see on the screen, what do they have to say to us today?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, I think what they have to say to us today is think for yourself. Don't believe what the people up there tell you. Live your own life. Think your own ideas. And don't depend on saviors. Don't depend on the Founding Fathers, on Andrew Jackson, on Theodore Roosevelt, on Lyndon Johnson, on Obama. Don't depend on our leaders to do what needs to be done.

Because whenever the government has done anything to bring about change, it's done so only because it's been pushed and prodded by social movements, by ordinary people organizing, by, you know, Lincoln pushed by the anti-slavery movement. You know, Johnson and Kennedy pushed by the southern black movement. And maybe hopefully Obama today, maybe he will be pushed by people today who have such high hopes in him, and who want to see him fulfill those hopes.

You know, traditional history creates passivity because it gives you the people at the top and it makes you think that all you have to do is go to the polls every four years and elect somebody who's going to do the trick for you. And no. We want people to understand that that's not going to happen. People have to do it themselves. And so that's what we hope these readings will inspire.

BILL MOYERS: One of my favorite sequences is in here, is when we meet Genora Dollinger. Tell me about her.

HOWARD ZINN: She was a woman who got involved in sit-down strikes of the 1930s. Those very dramatic moments when workers occupied the factories of General Motors and wouldn't leave, and therefore left the corporations helpless. But this was a time when strikes all over the country galvanized people and pushed the New Deal into the reforms that we finally got from the New Deal. And Genora Dollinger represents the women who are very often overlooked in these struggles, women so instrumental in supporting the workers, their men, their sweethearts. And Genora Dollinger just inspires people with her words.

BILL MOYERS: She was only 23 when she organized.

HOWARD ZINN: Amazing. Yes.

[MARISSA TOMEI as GENORA DOLLINGER]: Workers overturned police cars to make barricades. They ran to pick up the fire bombs thrown at them and hurl them back at the police. The men wanted to me to get out of the way. You know the old "protect the women and children" business. I told them, "Get away from me." The lights went on in my head. I thought I have never used a loud speaker to address a large crowd of people but I've got to tell them there are women down here. I called to them, "Cowards! Cowards! Shooting into the bellies of unarmed men and firing at the mothers of children." And then everything became quiet. I thought, "The women can break this up." So I appealed to the women in the crowd, "Break through those police lines and come down here and stand beside your husbands and your brothers and your uncles and your sweethearts." I could barely see one woman struggling to come forward. A cop had grabbed her by the back of her coat. She just pulled out of that coat and she started walking down to the battle zone. As soon as that happened there were other women and men who followed. That was the end of the battle. When those spectators came into the center of the battle and the police retreated, there was a big roar of victory.

BILL MOYERS: That's Marisa Tomei as Genora Dollinger. What do you think when you hear those words?

HOWARD ZINN: First, I must say this, Bill. When my daughter saw this she heard Marisa Tomei shout to the police, "Cowards, cowards." My daughter said a chill, a chill went through her. She was so moved. And so, when I see this, and I've seen this so many times, and each time I am moved because what it tells me is that just ordinary people, you know, people who are not famous, if they get together, if they persist, if they defy the authorities, they can defeat the largest corporation in the world.

BILL MOYERS: When I was last at the National Portrait Gallery in London, I was struck all over again by how the portraits there were all of wealthy people who could afford to hire an artist. It's like when you go to Egypt, and you see the pyramids and the tombs, you realize that it was only the wealthy people who could afford to consider their legacy and have the leisure time to do what they want to. We know almost nothing about the ordinary people of Egypt, right?

HOWARD ZINN: Exactly. I remember when I was going to, you know, high school and learning, it was such a thrilling story to read about the Transcontinental Railroad. You know, and the meeting of the two union pacific -- you know, the golden spike and all of that. But I wasn't told that this railroad was built by Chinese and Irish workers who worked by the thousands- long hours, some- many of them died in sickness, and overwork, and so on. I wasn't told about these working people. And so, that's what we're trying to do in this documentary. That's what I tried to do in the People's History of the United States. To bring back into the forefront the people who created what was called the economical miracle of the United States.

BILL MOYERS: One of your producers of this film is Matt Damon. And I understand that when Matt Damon was in the fifth grade, he took a copy of this book into his teacher on Columbus Day and said, "What is this? We're here to celebrate this great event, but two years after Columbus discovered America, 100,000 Indians were dead according to Howard Zinn. He said, what's going on?" Is that a true story?

HOWARD ZINN: It's true. Not all stories are true. But this — it's true. Matt Damon, when he was ten years old, was given a copy of my book by his mother. They were next-door neighbors of ours.

BILL MOYERS: Oh. I didn't know that. Where?

HOWARD ZINN: In the Boston area, in Newton. And Matt would say that he and his brother Kyle would- they'd wake up sometime in the middle of the night and see the light on in my study, where I was writing this book. So, they were in on it from the beginning. So, yeah, Matt knew the book early.

BILL MOYERS: Even today, people are inspired by celebrities, TV performers, athletes, famous politicians. Are there people doing today what Genora Dollinger and others did in the past?

HOWARD ZINN: I think there are people like that today. But very often, they're ignored in the media. You know, or they appear for a day, you know, on the pages of the Times or the Post. They- and then they disappear. But, well, you know, there are those people recently who sat in Chicago in this plant that was going to be closed by the Bank of America and these people sat in and refused to leave. I mean, that was a modern-day incarnation of what the sit-down strike is- in the 1930s. But there are people — there are people today who are fighting evictions, fighting foreclosures. And, you know, very often, there's a superficial understanding of a passive citizenry today, which is not true. There are people all over the country who are really conscience-stricken about what's going on. But the media are not covering them very well.

BILL MOYERS: So, help us get a handle on the word and the tradition of Populism. What was Populism in essence?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, populi-- the word Populism came into being in the late 1800s, 1880, 1890, when great corporations dominated the country, the railroads, and the banks, and these farmers were victims of them. And these farmers got together and they organized north and south, and they formed the Populist movement. It was a great people's movement. And they sent orators around the country, and they published thousands of pamphlets. And it was-- I would say a high moment for American democracy.

BILL MOYERS: Well, if populism is thriving today, it seems to be thriving on the right. I mean, Sarah Palin, for example. And the tea parties. Some-- one conservative writer recently in "The Weekly Standard" even said that Sarah Palin could be the William Jennings Bryan of this new conservative era because she is giving voice to millions of people who feel angry at what the government is doing, who feel that they're being cheated out of a prosperous way of life by forces beyond their control. What do you think about that idea?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, I guess William Jennings Bryan would turn over in his grave if he heard. William Jennings Bryan was antiwar, and she is not antiwar, she is very militaristic and so on. But it's true that she represents a certain angry part of the population. And I think it's true that when people are — feel beleaguered and people feel that they are being overlooked, they will turn to whoever seems to represent them. Some of them will turn to her. And some of them will turn to the right-wingers, and you might say that's how fascism develops in countries, because they play upon the anger and the frustration of people. But on the other hand, that anger, that frustration can also lead to people's movements that are progressive. You can go the way traditionally of the Populists, of the labor movement of the '30s, of the Civil Rights movement, of the women's movement to bring about change in this country.

BILL MOYERS: You mentioned the women's movement, and there's another remarkable moment in your film of Susan B. Anthony, when she's on trial for trying to vote when she and other women didn't have the right.

[JOSH BROLIN as JUDGE HUNT]: The sentence of the Court is that you pay a fine of one hundred dollars and the costs of the prosecution.

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

HOWARD ZINN: Christina Kirk, a wonderful actress and she brings Susan B. Anthony alive. And I think what that says to people today is you must stick up for your principles, even if it means breaking the law. Civil disobedience, it's what Thoreau urged, it's what Martin Luther King, Jr. urged. It's what was done during the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War. If you think you're right, then — Susan B. Anthony thought it was right for her to try to register to vote. And yeah, people should defy the rules if they think they're doing the right thing.

BILL MOYERS: You have said elsewhere that if President Obama were listening to Martin Luther King, Jr. he'd be making some different decisions. What do you mean by that?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, first of all, he'd be taking our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and he'd be saying we are no longer going to be a war-making country. We're not going to be a military country. We're going to take our immense resources, our wealth, we're going to use it for the benefit of people. Remember, Martin Luther King started a Poor People's Campaign just before he was assassinated. And if Obama paid attention to the working people of this country, then he would be doing much, much more than he is doing now.

BILL MOYERS: I remember- all of us remember who were around then that 1967 speech that Martin Luther King gave here in New York at the Riverside Church, a year before his assassination. And he said, "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice, a structure, which produces beggars, needs restructuring." I mean, that's pretty fundamental, right? Change the system?

HOWARD ZINN: King had a much more fundamental critique of our economic system. And certainly more fundamental than Obama has because a fundamental critique of our economic system would not simply give hundreds of billions of dollars to the bankers and so on, and give a little bit to the people below. A fundamental change in our system would really create a greater equalization of wealth, would I think give us free medical care. Not the kind of half-baked health reforms that are being now debated in Congress.

BILL MOYERS: This is one reason you are seen as a threat to other people. People at the top, because your message, like King's message, goes to a fundamental allocation of power in America, right?

HOWARD ZINN: Yeah, that is very troublesome for people at the top. They're willing to let people think about mild reforms and little changes, and incremental changes, but they don't want people to think that we could actually transform this country into a peaceful country, that we no longer have to be a super military power. They don't want to think that way because it's profitable for certain interests in this country to carry on war, to have military bases in 100 countries, to have a \$600 billion military budget. That makes a lot of money for certain people. But it leaves the rest of the country behind.

BILL MOYERS: Take a look at this.

[VIGGO MORTENSEN as IWW MEMBER]: If you were a bum without a blanket; if you had left your wife and kids when you went west for a job, and had never located them since; if your job had never kept you long enough in a place to qualify you to vote; if you slept in a lousy, sour bunkhouse, and ate food just as rotten as they could give you and get by with it; if deputy sheriffs shot your cooking cans full of holes and spilled your grub on the ground; if your wages were lowered on you when the bosses thought they had you down; if every person who represented law and order and the nation beat you up, railroaded you to jail, and the good Christian people cheered and told them to go to it, how in the hell do you expect a man to be patriotic? This war is a business man's war and we don't see why we should go out and get shot in order to save the lovely state of affairs which we now enjoy.

HOWARD ZINN: Viggo Mortensen. And he's reading the words of a labor person, I.W.W. man--

BILL MOYERS: I.W.W., International Workers of the World? (Editor's Note — Correction: IWW is Industrial Workers of the World)

HOWARD ZINN: That's right. And they refused to go along with World War I, and he's explaining why they won't. And he — basically, he's speaking to poor people in all wars. Your-- he's saying, "It's a businessman's war." And war is a businessman's war. It always is. And so, the people- the ordinary guys were like- and Viggo Mortensen portrays here- ordinary guys have nothing to gain from this war.

BILL MOYERS: So, how do you explain the absence of protest in the streets today? The abs- the passivity in response to the fact that we will-- we have now doubled the number of troops in Afghanistan that George W. Bush had. How do you explain the apathy?

HOWARD ZINN: Let's put it this way — I don't think people are apathetic about it. I believe most people in this country do not want us to be in Afghanistan. But they're not doing anything about it, you're right. We're not seeing protests in the street. And I think one of those reasons is that the media- the major media, television, and newspapers- they have not played their role in educating the public about what is going on.

BILL MOYERS: There was a poll late this week showing that a bare majority of Americans do support sending more troops to Afghanistan. How do you read that?

HOWARD ZINN: You have to remember this — it is not easy for people to oppose sending troops to Afghanistan, especially once they have been sent and once the decision has been made. It's not easy for people to oppose what the President is saying, and what the media are saying, what both major parties are working for. And so, the very fact that even close to a majority of the people are opposed to sending troops to Afghanistan tells me that many more people are opposed. So I have a fundamental faith in the basic decency, and even, yes, the wisdom of people, once they make their way through the deceptions that are thrown at them. And we've seen this historically. People learn.

BILL MOYERS: I was struck in your special by what the labor leader, Cesar Chavez, had to say about organizing his fellow farm workers.

[MARTIN ESPADA as CESAR CHAVEZ]: I'm not very different from anyone else who has ever tried to accomplish something with his life. My motivation comes from watching what my mother and father went through when I was growing up; from what we experienced as migrant farm workers in California. It grew from anger and rage — emotions I felt 40 years ago when people of my color were denied the right to see a movie or eat at a restaurant in many parts of California. It grew from the frustration and humiliation I felt as a boy who couldn't understand how the growers could abuse and exploit farm workers when there were so many of us and so few of them.

I began to realize what other minority people had discovered: That the only answer-the only hope-was in organizing.

Like the other immigrant groups, the day will come when we win the economic and political rewards which are in keeping with our numbers in society. The day will come when the politicians do the right thing by our people out of political necessity and not out of charity or idealism. That day may not come this year. That day may not come during this decade. But it will come.

BILL MOYERS: It will come. MartAn Espada as Cesar Chavez.

HOWARD ZINN: Yeah, a great poet.

BILL MOYERS: Do you believe that it will come?

HOWARD ZINN: I do. I can't give you a date.

BILL MOYERS: Gee.

HOWARD ZINN: But I have confidence in the future. You know why? You know, you have to be patient. Farm workers were at one point in as helpless a position as the labor movement is today. But as Cesar Chavez said, we learned that you have to organize. And it takes time, it takes patience, it takes persistence. I mean, think of how long black people in the South waited--

BILL MOYERS: Three hundred years.

HOWARD ZINN: Yeah.

BILL MOYERS: A long- and thenâ€”100 years after the Civil War which was fought for freedom.

HOWARD ZINN: Yeah. Well, I don't think we'll have to wait 100 years.

BILL MOYERS: So, populism isn't really- and people's power, isn't really a left or right issue, is it? It's more us versus them, bottom versus top?

HOWARD ZINN: It's democracy. You know, democracy doesn't come from the top. It comes from the bottom. Democracy is not what governments do. It's what people do. Too often, we go to junior high school and they sort of teach us democracy is three branches of government. You know, it's not the three branches of government.

BILL MOYERS: I'd like to end with a woman who showed us the power of a single voice, speaking for democracy. Born into slavery, largely uneducated, she spoke out for the rights of all people who didn't have any. I mean she was an unforgettable truth teller, you know. And here is Kerry Washington as Sojourner Truth.

[KERRY WASHINGTON as SOJOURNER TRUTH]: That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as any man — when I could get it — and I could bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? That man in the back there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Well, where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? He came from God and a woman! Man didn't have nothing to do with it. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, well these women here together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And they asking to do it, the men better let them.

BILL MOYERS: Why did you include that one?

HOWARD ZINN: Well, we included that one because it's so empowering. And, I mean, because here is this woman who was a slave and, you know, oppressed on all sides, and she's defiant. And so, she represents the voice of people who've been overlooked. And she represents a voice which is rebellious and, yeah, troublesome to the powers that be.

BILL MOYERS: Well, I will be watching the History Channel Sunday evening with your book in my lap. Howard Zinn, "A People's History of the United States." Thank you for being with me.

HOWARD ZINN: Thank you, Bill.

BILL MOYERS: That's it for the Journal. Go to our website at pbs.org and click on "Bill Moyers Journal." You will find out more about historian Howard Zinn and read a selection of his writings. There's also a web exclusive essay on land mines and Barack Obama's Nobel Prize. That's all at pbs.org. I'm Bill Moyers. See you next time.

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