

# TIMES SQUARE

STORY BY HOWARD ZINN

ILLUSTRATED BY WES MODES







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There on Bushwick Avenue,  
among the basketball players  
and street talkers, were  
some young Communists, a few  
years older than me.





They had jobs, but after work and on weekends they distributed Marxist literature in the neighborhood and talked politics into the night with whoever was interested.



OF COURSE THEY'RE EXHAUSTED AND DEMORALIZED! UNDER CAPITALISM, WORKERS CAN'T DIRECT THE LABOR OF THEIR OWN HANDS.

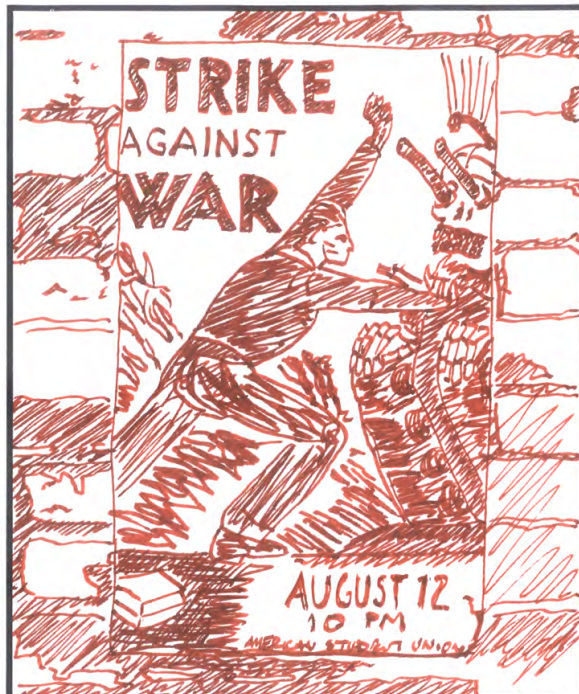


I was interested. I was reading about what was happening in the world. I argued with the Communist guys, but I agreed with them on lots of things.

They were ferociously antifascist, indignant as I was about the contrasts of wealth and poverty in America. I admired them -- they seemed to know so much about politics, economics, what was happening everywhere in the world.



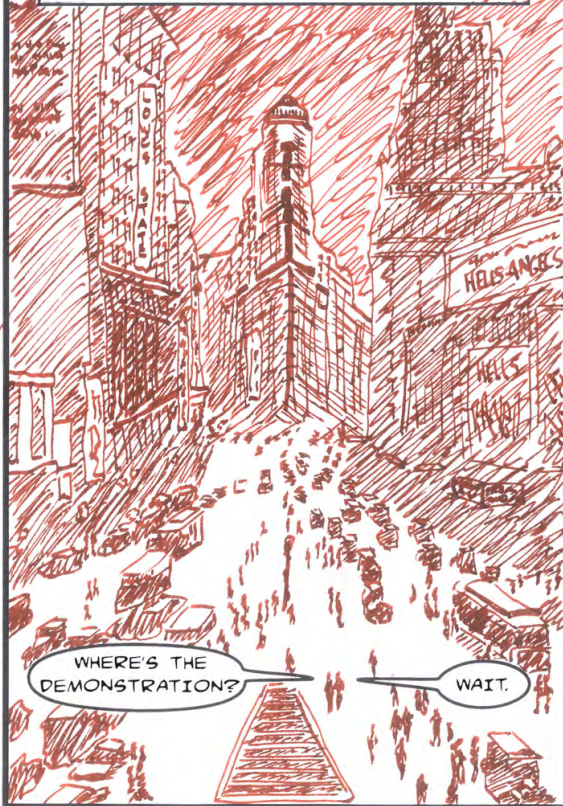
IF WE LOSE SPAIN TO THE FASCISTS, IT WILL BE THE BEGINNING OF A WORLD WAR AGAINST FASCISM!



One summer day they asked me if I wanted to go to a demonstration in Times Square. I had never been to such a thing, plus I'd never seen Times Square. I made some excuse to my parents, and a little bunch of us took the subway.

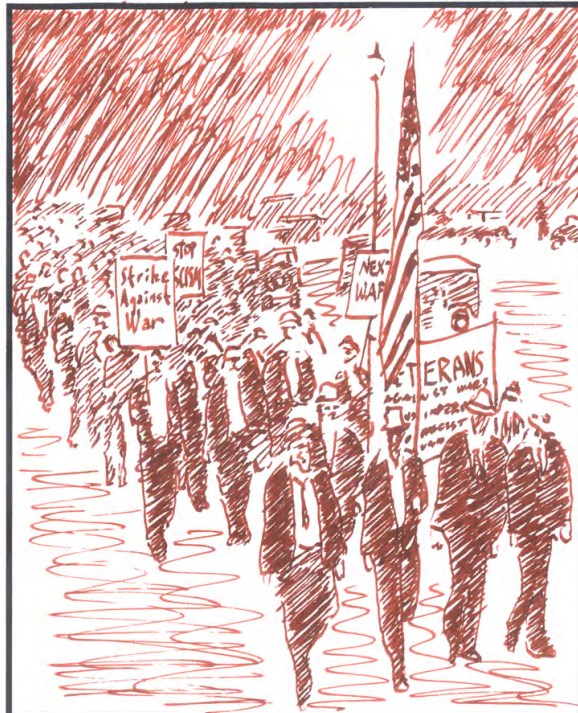


When we arrived it was just a typical evening in Times Square -- the streets crowded, the lights glittering.



WHERE'S THE DEMONSTRATION?

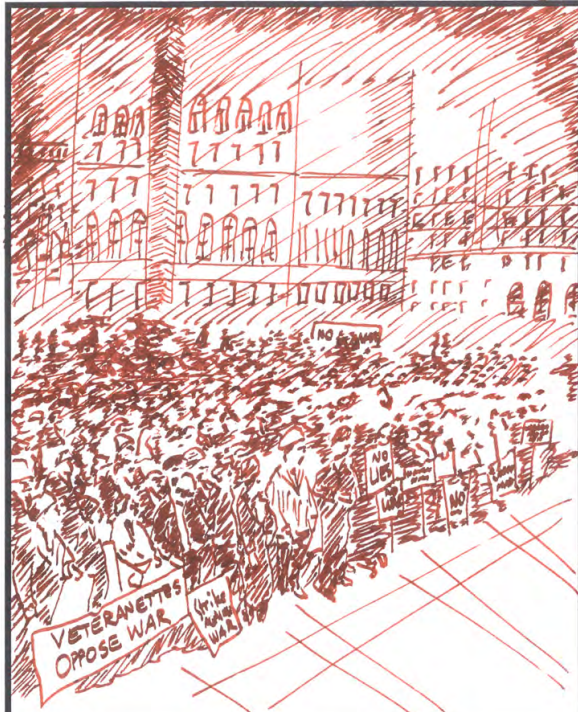
WAIT.



As the clock on the Times tower struck ten, the scene changed. In the midst of the crowd, banners were unfurled, and people, perhaps a thousand or more, formed into lines carrying banners and signs and chanting slogans.



I really didn't know what was going on. But it seemed good. The signs were for peace and justice and so on.



It was exciting, and it was peaceful. All these people were keeping to the sidewalks, not blocking traffic, walking in orderly, nonviolent lines through Times Square.

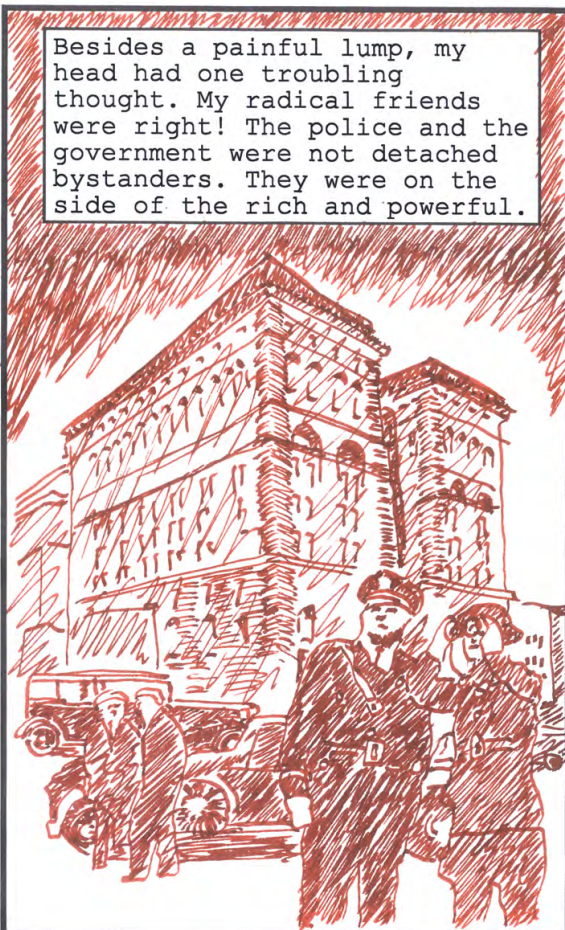
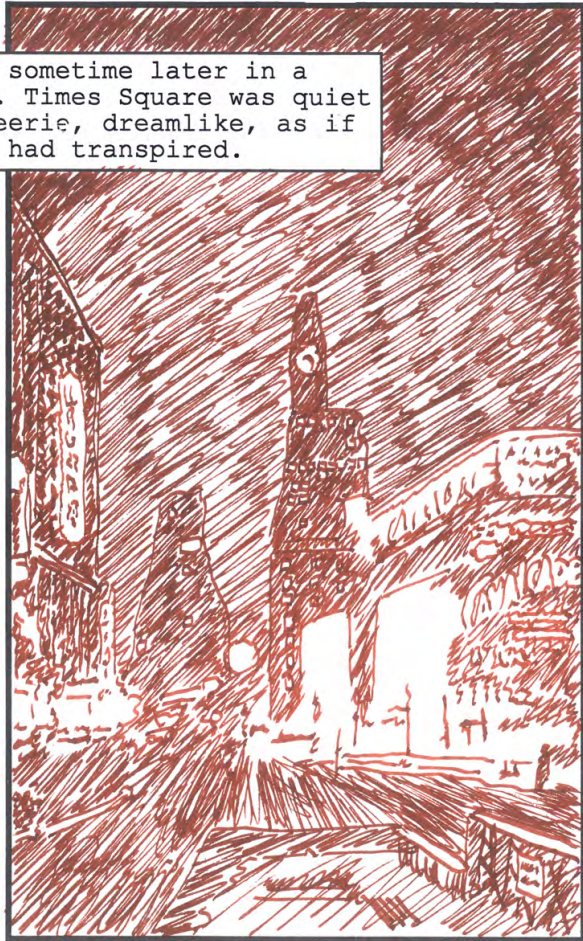




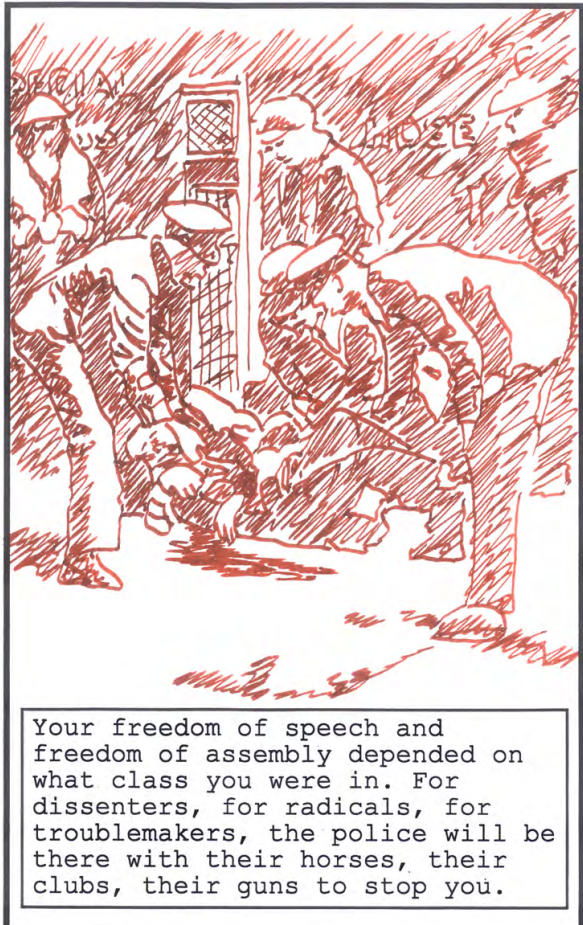




I awoke sometime later in a doorway. Times Square was quiet again, eerie, dreamlike, as if nothing had transpired.



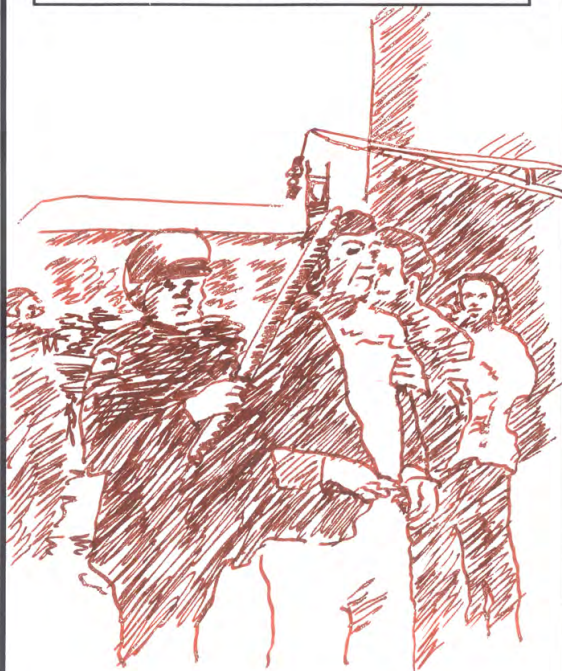
Besides a painful lump, my head had one troubling thought. My radical friends were right! The police and the government were not detached bystanders. They were on the side of the rich and powerful.



Your freedom of speech and freedom of assembly depended on what class you were in. For dissenters, for radicals, for troublemakers, the police will be there with their horses, their clubs, their guns to stop you.



So this gave me a radical view of the United States. From that moment on, I was no longer a liberal, a believer in the self-correcting character of American democracy.



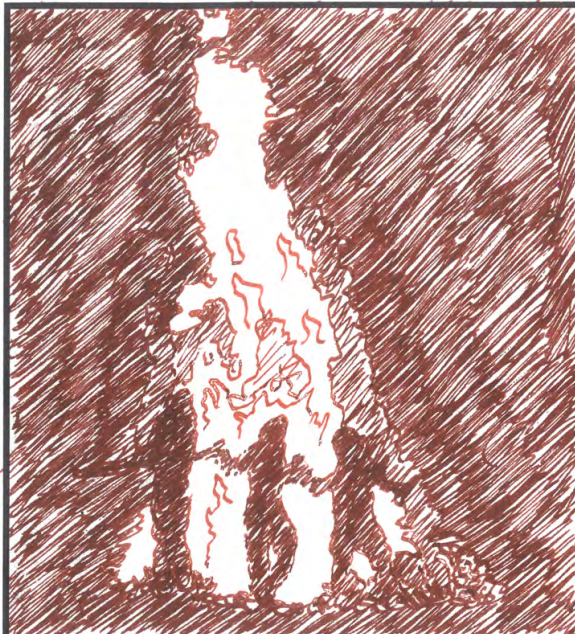
I was a radical, believing that something fundamental was wrong in this country -- not just the existence of poverty amidst great wealth, not just the horrible treatment of black and brown people, but something rotten at the root.



SINCE THEN, I'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND WE NEED NOT JUST A NEW PRESIDENT OR NEW LAWS, BUT AN UPROOTING OF THE OLD ORDER, A NEW KIND OF SOCIETY-- COOPERATIVE, PEACEFUL, EGALITARIAN.



The essential ingredients of these struggles are human beings who, if only for a moment -- if only while beset with fears -- still step out of line and do something, however small. And even the smallest, most unheroic of acts adds to the pile of kindling that may be ignited by some surprising circumstance into tumultuous change.





# A Radical History Reading List

(an incomplete and imperfect list)

*A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn

*Homage to Catalonia* by George Orwell

*Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* by Dee Brown

*Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo

*Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James W. Loewen

*Live from Death Row* by Mumia Abu-Jamal

*Living My Life* by Emma Goldman

*Native Son* by Richard Wright

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as told to Alex Haley

*The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

*The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

*The Chomsky Reader* by Noam Chomsky

*Wobblies!: A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World* by Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman

*You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times* by Howard Zinn



# Howard Zinn

## (1922-2010)

Zinn was a troublemaker and rabble-rouser for the whole of his life. He worked tirelessly against war, against racism, against the capitalist system, and against the idea of nation states. His most famous work is *A People's History of the United States*, which presents American history through the eyes of those outside the political and economic establishment. The text depicts the struggles of Native Americans against European and US conquest and expansion, slaves against slavery, unionists and other workers against capitalists, women against patriarchy, African-Americans against racism and for civil rights, and others whose stories are not often told in mainstream histories.

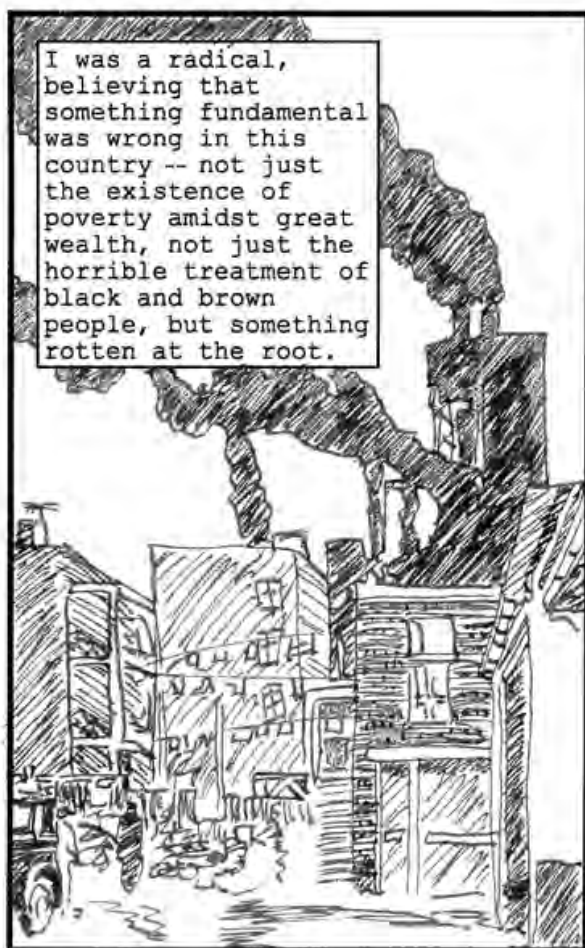
In a 2008 interview with CounterPunch, at the age of 85, Zinn expressed his anarchist view of the future:

I think what lies beyond the nation states is a world without national boundaries, but also with people organized. But not organized as nations, but people organized as groups, as collectives, without national and any kind of boundaries. Without any kind of borders, passports, visas. None of that! Of collectives of different sizes, depending on the function of the collective, having contacts with one another. You cannot have self-sufficient little collectives, because these collectives have different resources available to them. ...

I think our first step is to organize ourselves and protest against existing order—against war, against economic and sexual exploitation, against racism, etc. But to organize ourselves in such a way that means correspond to the ends, and to organize ourselves in such a way as to create kind of human relationship that should exist in future society. That would mean to organize ourselves without centralized authority, without charismatic leaders, in a way that represents in miniature the ideal of the future egalitarian society. So that even if you don't win some victory tomorrow or next year in the meantime you have created a model. You have acted out how future society should be and you created immediate satisfaction, even if you have not achieved your ultimate goal.

Printable PDFs of this zine are available at  
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