Attending public school in Bloomington, Indiana, from the mid-1970s to 1987, I had many wonderful, dedicated, hardworking teachers. A few still stand out in my memory for their skill at stimulating my imagination, instilling values I still find important, and setting me down paths I am still exploring. But during those years of schooling, I honestly never found a compelling entry point into U.S. history. I took a terrific world history course, but, for the most part, U.S. history struck me as a rather top-down, one-sided affair. I also knew enough from my upbringing to question the exceptionalism that seemed to be its driving force.

It was only when I attended Oberlin College in Ohio, a school with a rich historical connection to the struggles for abolition, women’s rights, and civil rights, that my view of history really began to change. And then I read Howard Zinn’s book *A People’s History of the United States*. For me, as for so many others, the book provided a life-changing experience. Here I encountered, for the first time, Indiana native and lifelong resident Eugene

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Anthony Arnove is co-producer with Brenda Coughlin and Jeremy Scahill of the documentary film *Dirty Wars* (dirtywars.org), which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2014. Arnove wrote, co-directed, and produced *The People Speak*, a documentary film companion to Zinn’s bestselling *A People’s History of the United States* and its primary source companion, *Voices of a People’s History*, which Arnove co-edited with Zinn. An updated tenth anniversary edition of *Voices of a People’s History* will be published in November 2014. Arnove is the editor of several books including *The Essential Chomsky* (2008), and *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions* (2003), and the author of *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal* (2006).
Debs. I recalled having learned about Davy Crockett’s brief time in Indiana, but not about Debs’s five runs for the presidency as a Socialist—one time from federal prison—or his leadership in the railway unions, or his brilliant speeches against war. I also encountered a different way of thinking about history—as something not just past but very much present, in which ordinary people can participate collectively.

I never set out to meet Howard or work with him, but the road he helped guide me toward ultimately led to our paths crossing accidentally in the late 1990s when I was working at the independent publishing house South End Press. From one chance phone call, and incredible good fortune, emerged years of friendship and collaboration. Together we produced two books (a book of interviews, Terrorism and War, and Voices of a People’s History of the United States, the primary source companion to his People’s History of the United States), dozens of staged readings of Voices of a People’s History of the United States, a play (Rebel Voices with Rob Urbinati), and two movies (The People Speak and a United Kingdom version of the same project).1

Howard’s death in 2010, just days after we had been together in New York and had planned our next rendezvous, shocked me as if I had lost a friend my own age. He was so alive, so youthful, so energetic; I felt as if I were the one always struggling to keep up with him. Howard thrived on his friendships and work, and also on his enjoyment of what in earlier days would have been called “the struggle” or “the fight.”

Far less surprising to me was the subsequent news of Indiana governor Mitch Daniels sending emails seeking to ensure that no Indiana teachers were using A People’s History of the United States and openly relishing Howard’s death. It is clear why Daniels and his allies would have felt threatened by Howard’s approach to history and by his politics, and why someone who was, for example, seeking to dismantle present-day unions, would not have wanted people studying the vital role that unions have played in protecting the rights of working people (as they would in Howard’s work). If Howard had been alive to hear the news, I don’t think he would have been surprised either. In fact, I think he would have accepted Daniels’s attack as a badge of honor. He also would have welcomed the chance

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1 Howard Zinn, Terrorism and War, ed. Anthony Arnove (New York, 2002); Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, Voices of a People’s History of the United States (New York, 2004); Rob Urbinati, Howard Zinn, and Anthony Arnove, Rebel Voices (2007); The People Speak, directed by Howard Zinn, Anthony Arnove, and Chris Moore (Los Angeles: History Channel, 2009); The People Speak UK, directed by Anthony Arnove, Colin Firth, and Stuart McDonald (London: History UK, 2010).
to engage in a debate with him, a debate he would have handily won if Daniels—remarkably the current president of Purdue University—were ever foolish enough to agree to explore publicly the issues raised by his campaign against the teaching of Zinn’s work. 

Unfortunately, we will never get to see that debate. We will instead have to find ways to have that debate in other fora, as many Purdue and IUPUI faculty did by organizing teach-ins and “read-ins” of Howard’s work on November 5, 2013. The revelations about Daniels are a brilliant example of a “teachable moment.” If I were still in a classroom, I would start with Daniels’s emails and public statements defending his views and seeking to discredit Zinn, and then read them alongside Zinn’s debates with like-minded opponents from the past. Daniels’s positions were by no means original, nor were they marginal. Indeed, they are commonsense. But it is precisely because they seem commonsense that we must interrogate them. When I was teaching at Brown University and Rhode Island College, one of my favorite classroom texts was Bertolt Brecht’s play Galileo. In the title character Brecht embodies a view of knowledge very much in keeping with Howard’s: “Science trades in knowledge distilled from doubt” and “aims at making doubters of everybody.” Brecht writes:

But princes, landlords and priests keep the majority of the people in a pearly haze of superstition and outworn words to cover up their own machinations. The misery of the many is as old as the hills and is proclaimed in church and lecture hall to be as indestructible as the hills. Our new art of doubting delighted the common people. They grabbed the telescope out of our hands and focused it on their tormentors—princes, landlords, priests. Those self-seeking violent men greedily exploited the fruits of science for their own ends but at the same time they felt the cold stare of science focused upon the millennial, yet artificial miseries which mankind could obviously get rid of by getting rid of them. They showered us with threats and bribes, which weak souls cannot resist. But can we turn our backs on the people and still remain scientists? The movements of the heavenly bodies have become more comprehensible; but the movements of their rulers remain unpredictable to the people. The battle to measure the sky was won by doubt; but credulity still prevents the Roman housewife from winning her battle for milk. Science … is involved in both battles. If mankind goes on stumbling

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in a pearly haze of superstition and outworn words and remains too ignorant to make full use of its own strength, it will never be able to use the forces of nature which science has discovered. What end are you scientists working for? To my mind, the only purpose of science is to lighten the toil of human existence.  

Howard believed that the reading and teaching of history could also contribute to people learning to doubt, learning to question politicians, to question their history textbook’s omissions, and to question the idea that they have no role in shaping history. In doing so, Howard sincerely hoped historians could also, to quote Brecht, “lighten the toil of human existence.” That is why his work will live on and continue to be relevant for generations to come, no matter how many times politicians such as Mitch Daniels try to silence him.

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