SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WHO ARE CHANGING OUR WORLD

Based on the book by KERRY KENNEDY
Photography by EDDIE ADAMS and ARCHITECTS OF PEACE
Containing the play Speak Truth To Power: Voices from Beyond the Dark
by ARIEL DORFMAN
ROBERT F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS
in partnership with CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS and the
CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION
Each spoke to me with compelling eloquence of the causes to which they have devoted their lives, and for which they are willing to sacrifice them— from freedom of expression to the rule of law; from environmental defense to eradicating bonded labor; from access to capital to the right to due process; from women's rights to religious liberty, Gandhi, and Maathais of their countries, these leaders hold in common an inspiring record of accomplishment and a profound capacity to ignite change.

The defenders’ own voices provoke fundamental questions: why do people who face imprisonment, torture, and death continue to pursue their work when the chance of success is so remote and the personal consequences are so grave? Why did they become involved? What keeps them going? Where do they derive their strength and inspiration? How do they overcome fear? How do they measure success? Out of the answers emerges a sympathetic and strength-giving portrait of the power of personal resolve and determination in the face of injustice. These voices are, most of all, a call to action, much needed because human rights violations often occur by cover of night, in remote and dark places. For many of those who suffer, isolation is their only hope. We must bring the international spotlight to violations and broaden the community of those who know and care about the individuals portrayed. This alone may well stop a disappearance, cancel a torture session, or even, some day, save a life. Included with each story is a resource guide of contact information for the defenders and their organizations in the hope that you, the reader, will take action, send a donation, ask for more information, get involved. The more that voices are raised in protest, the greater the likelihood of change.

I grew up in the Judeo-Christian tradition, where we painted our prophets on ceilings and sealed our saints in stained glass. But here on earth, people like these and countless other defenders are living, breathing human beings in our midst. Their determination, valor, and commitment in the face of overwhelming danger challenge each one of us to take up the torch for a more decent society. Today we are blessed by the presence of certain people who are gifts from God. They are teachers who show us not how to be saints, but how to be fully human. Indeed, the project, a partnership between the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union, has been developed by educators to whom we are profoundly grateful.

Speak Truth To Power: a project of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, is a multi-faceted, global initiative that uses the experiences of courageous defenders from around the world to educate students and others about human rights, and urge them to take action. Issues range from slavery and environmental activism to religious self-determination and political participation.

Speak Truth To Power began as a book written by Kerry Kennedy (once translated into six languages, with more coming) and has been adapted into a dramatic production by Ariel Dorfman. The portraits of the human rights defenders by the late Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Eddie Adams feature in the show and have been made into an exhibition that has since traveled to over twenty cities in the United States after its initial launch at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. It is now displayed on four continents. The Speak Truth To Power human rights education curriculum has been disseminated to hundreds of thousands of students in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Hosted by President Bill Clinton, the play, Speak Truth To Power: Voices from Beyond the Dark, premiered at the Kennedy Center in the year 1999 and has since been broadcast on PBS as part of its Great Performances Series. Many of America’s greatest actors have performed in the play, including: Alec Baldwin, Matthew Broderick, Glenn Close, Woody Harrelson, Kevin Kline, John Malkovich, Sean Penn, Vanessa Redgrave, Martin Sheen, Meryl Streep, Sigourney Weaver and more. The play has been produced across the United States and performed by major actors in Barcelona, Cape Town, Florence, Geneva, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Madrid, Mantua, Milan, Phnom Penh, Rome, Seoul, and Sydney. Notable was a performance in Doha, Qatar; transmitted live on Al Jazeera and read by ten of the most celebrated actors and singers of the Arab world. It has also been performed by school children, college students, local heroes, and even prisoners (in a major theater in Bucharest, after rehearsals in the penitentiary). Future productions are planned for Harare, Istanbul, Mexico City, Paris and Stockholm.

Speak Truth To Power encourages governments, NGOs, major foundations and individuals to support human rights, and brings much-needed attention to continuing abuses. But perhaps its most lasting effect will be to demonstrate the capacity of each individual to create change.

Everyone can become a defender, whether you have one day or an entire academic year. Following are a few examples of how you can support students in their efforts to be defenders.

TIPS:
• Have a strategy: Identify the problem to be addressed.
• Research the problem: why is this a problem, what solutions have been tried (some of this will have been covered in the lesson).
• What is the change required?
• Define actions steps and specific target audiences—who can make the change happen?
• How to involve other supporters?
• How will the impact of your efforts be measured?

1 DAY:
If you have one day to take action, select an action that is simple and focused, such as a letter writing or an information day in your school.

1 WEEK:
If you have a week to take action, focus on an event or program that builds over the week from awareness to action.

1 SEMESTER:
If you have a term to take action, focus on building a program that integrates your classroom learning with a comprehensive, multi-layered project. Consider designing a human rights-based service learning project.
Mikhail Gorbachev

Born to Russian peasants in 1931, Mikhail Gorbachev quickly ascended the ladder of power in the Soviet Union. In his youth, Gorbachev joined the Komsomol or “Youth Communist League” and drove a combine harvester at a state-run farm in his hometown. Local party officials recognized his promise and sent him to law school at Moscow State University. At university, Gorbachev was an active Communist Party member and, by 1970, first secretary of the regional party committee. Only ten years later, Gorbachev had risen to the youngest full member of the Politburo, which was the highest executive committee in the Soviet Union.

In 1985, after two general secretaries of the Politburo died within a year of each other, the Party was looking for a young, yet experienced leader. On March 11, 1985, the Politburo elected Gorbachev general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After his election, Gorbachev set about installing bold reforms. Democratizing the Soviet bureaucracy to be more efficient, to increase worker creativity among countries and nations. peace is movement towards globality and universality.

Into reds and whites, Into strangers, Into communities. this moment is no less emotional for me than the one when I first learned about the decision of the Nobel Committee. For on occasion great men addressed humankind—men who are to be remembered in working to bring together morality and politics. Among them were our compatriots.

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize makes one think once again about a seemingly simple fact: what is peace?

Preparing for my address I found in an old Russian encyclopedia a definition of “peace” as “a commune”—the traditional cell of Russian peasant life. I saw in that definition the people’s profound understanding of peace as harmony, concord, mutual help, and cooperation.

I see the decision to award me the Nobel Peace Prize also as an act of solidarity with the people’s crisis, our task is to stay the course while building for our common house. it is a “commune”—the traditional cell of Russian peasant life. I saw in that definition the people’s profound understanding of peace as harmony, concord, mutual help, and cooperation.

I am grateful for this to the members of the Committee and wish to acknowledge my countrymen’s understanding of my intentions, my aspirations, the objectives of the profound transformation we have begun in our country, and the ideas of new thinking. I see it as your acknowledgment of my commitment and service to the people of the Soviet Union.

I will never agree to having our society split once again into reds and whites, into those who claim to be for peace and those who are against it. I will never agree to having our society split once again into reds and whites, into those who claim to be for peace and those who are against it.

Now about my position. As to the fundamental change, I have long ago made a final and irrevocable decision. Nothing and no one, no pressure, either from the right or from the left, will make me abandon the positions of perestroika and new thinking. I do not intend to change my views or convictions. my choice is a final one.

It is my profound conviction that the problems arising in the course of our reforms cannot be solved by constitutional means. That is why I make every effort to keep this process within the confines of democratic political forces.

This applies also to the problem of self-determination of nations, which is a challenging one for us. We are looking for mechanisms to solve that problem within the framework of a constitutional process. We recognize the peoples’ legitimate choice, with the understanding that if a people really decides, through a fair referendum, to withdraw from the Soviet Union, a certain transition period will then be needed.

Our democracy is being born in pain. A political culture is emerging—one that presupposes debate and pluralism, but also legal order and, if democratic norms prove weak, strong authority based on one law for all.

The market ideas to take hold in Soviet economic and political life are much more difficult than was anticipated at the beginning of the perestroika era. There are still difficulties regarding the market economy, which is a challenging one for us. We are looking for mechanisms to prevent the elements of chaos from becoming catastrophic.

There is already a consensus in our society that we have to move toward a market economy. Yet many difficulties have arisen. Many took fright and wanted to return to the past. It was not only those who were for a change, but also those who were against it, who stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when an idea receives such strong support, when the elements of chaos are actualized, and a growing understanding that we have a State, a country, a common life. This is what must be preserved first of all. Only then can we afford to start figuring out which party or club to join and what God to worship.

The stormy and contradictory process of perestroika, particularly in the past two years, has made us face squarely the problem of measures to develop the market economy. This is a problem of ensuring the autonomy of the individual market economy, particularly in a multiparty system. Freedom of thought, rediscovered ethnic identity and sovereignty of the republics, the interests of society must absolutely be protected. It is the parties and political forces that must take the initiative and set the pace of change.

During the last six years we have discarded and destroyed much that stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when society is transformed, it is necessary to set new goals. Now we have to add another one to them. Peace “propagates wealth and justice, which constitute the prosperity of nations”: a peace which is “just a respite from wars... is not worthy of the name” peace implies “general counsel.” This was written almost 200 years ago by Voltaire as “the dawn of light.”

Since then, of course, history has added a great deal to the specific content of the concept of peace. In this nuclear age it also means a condition for the survival of the human race. But the essence, as understood both by the popular wisdom and by intellectual leaders, is the same.

Today, peace means the ascent from simple coexistence to cooperation and mutual understanding among countries and nations. Peace is movement towards globality and universality of civilization. never before has the idea that peace is indivisible been so true as it is now. Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences. And, ideally, peace means the absence of violence. It is an ethic value. And here we have to recall Rajiv Gandhi, who died so tragically a few days ago.

I see the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize also as an act of solidarity with the monumental undertaking which has already placed enormous demands on the Soviet people in

Excerpts from Mikhail Gorbachev: 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Lecture

terms of efforts, costs, hardships, willpower; and character. And solidarity is a universal value which is becoming indispensable for progress and for the survival of humankind.

But a modern state has to be worthy of solidarity, in other words, it should pursue. In both domestic and international affairs, policies that bring together the interests of its people and those of the world community. This task, however, is not a simple one. Life is much richer and more complex than even the most perfect plans to make it better. It ultimately takes courage for attempts to resolve abstract schemes, even with the best of intentions. Perestroika has made us understand this about our past, and the actual experience of recent years has made me come to know with the most general laws of civilization.

Perestroika, which once again is returning our people to commonplace, has enabled us to open up to the world, and has restored a normal relationship between the country’s internal development and its foreign policy. But all this takes a lot of hard work. To a people which believed that its government’s policies had always been true to the cause of peace, we propose various ways of different policy, which really should serve the cause of peace. While differing from the prevailing view of what it meant and particularly from the established stereotypes as to how one should protect it. We proposed new thinking in foreign policy. Thus, we embarked on a path of major changes which may turn out to be the most significant in the twentieth century, for our country and for its peoples. But we also did this for the entire world.

Of course, learning from the experience of others is something we have been doing and will continue to do. But this does not mean that we will come to be exactly like others. Our State will preserve its own identity within the international community. A country like ours, with its uniquely close-knit ethnic composition, cultural diversity and tragic past, is difficult to find its own path to the civilization of the twenty-first century and its own place in it. Perestroika has to be conceived solely in this context; otherwise we will fail and be rejected. After all, it is impossible to “shed” the country’s thousand-year history—a history, which, we still have to subject to various analysis in order to find that truth which we shall take into the future.

We want to be an integral part of modern civilization, to live in harmony with it. And we will do so. It is our duty as representatives of international law, follow the “rules of the game” in our economic relations in harmony with mankind’s universal values, abide by the norms of international law, follow the “rules of the game” in our economic relations. We want to share with all other peoples the burden of responsibility for the future of our common house.

Perestroika has now entered its most dramatic phase. Following the transformation of the philosophy of perestroika into real policy, which began literally to explode the old way of life, difficulties began to mount. Many took fright and wanted to return to the past. It was not only those who used to hold the levers of power in the administration, the army and various other sectors that wanted to go back into the past; there were many people whose interests and way of life was put to a severe test and who, during the preceding decades, had forgotten how to take the initiative and be responsible—be effective and be in control.

During the last six years we have discarded and destroyed much that stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when society is transformed, it is necessary to set new goals. Now we have to add another one to them. Peace “propagates wealth and justice, which constitute the prosperity of nations”: a peace which is “just a respite from wars... is not worthy of the name.” Peace implies “general counsel.” This was written almost 200 years ago by Voltaire as “the dawn of light.”

Many took fright and wanted to return to the past. It was not only those who used to hold the levers of power in the administration, the army and various other sectors that wanted to go back into the past; there were many people whose interests and way of life was put to a severe test and who, during the preceding decades, had forgotten how to take the initiative and be responsible—be effective and be in control.

During the last six years we have discarded and destroyed much that stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when society is transformed, it is necessary to set new goals. Now we have to add another one to them. Peace “propagates wealth and justice, which constitute the prosperity of nations”: a peace which is “just a respite from wars... is not worthy of the name.” Peace implies “general counsel.” This was written almost 200 years ago by Voltaire as “the dawn of light.”

Many took fright and wanted to return to the past. It was not only those who used to hold the levers of power in the administration, the army and various other sectors that wanted to go back into the past; there were many people whose interests and way of life was put to a severe test and who, during the preceding decades, had forgotten how to take the initiative and be responsible—be effective and be in control.

During the last six years we have discarded and destroyed much that stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when society is transformed, it is necessary to set new goals. Now we have to add another one to them. Peace “propagates wealth and justice, which constitute the prosperity of nations”: a peace which is “just a respite from wars... is not worthy of the name.” Peace implies “general counsel.” This was written almost 200 years ago by Voltaire as “the dawn of light.”
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:
- Article 20: Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association
- Article 19: Freedom of Opinion and Information
- Article 20: Right of Participation in Government and Free Elections

GUIDING QUESTIONS:
- How do the goals of those who govern affect political processes?
- How do powerful individuals and masses drive political change?

OBJECTIVES:
After this lesson, students will understand:
- How the policy of perestroika led to political, social, and economic change in the Soviet Union.
- The reasons why President Gorbachev pursued the policy of perestroika.
- How the changes within the Soviet Union led to a different relationship between the Soviet Union and other nations.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:
- Students will be able to:
  - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole (RH.11-12.1).
  - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses them and refining the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10) (RH.11-12.2).
  - Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem (RH.11-12.7).
  - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (WHST.11-12.9).

ILLINOIS STATE LEARNING STANDARDS:
- 14.B.5 Analyze similarities and differences among world political systems (e.g., democracy, totalitarianism, communism).
- 14.E.5 Analyze relationships and tensions among members of the international community.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ANTICIPATORY SET:
- Show the students the clip of President Ronald Reagan speaking at the Berlin Wall.
- After viewing the clip begin a discussion using the following prompts:
  - What reforms initiated by Mr. Gorbachev were mentioned in the speech?
  - What did the Berlin Wall symbolize?
  - Why did President Reagan ask Mr. Gorbachev to tear down the wall?
  - Thinking of the information you learned about the Soviet Union, why were these reforms so radical?

ACTIVITY 1:
The students should view the following two videos:
- Mikhail Gorbachev
- Ronald Reagan at the Berlin Wall

ACTIVITY 2:
- Separate students into groups of four.
- Assign the students to place each post-it note on the appropriate newsprint.
- The teacher will distribute the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY:
- Separate the students into groups of four.
- Distribute the Nobel diploma that will be designed by the students.
- The teacher will review the criteria for the Nobel Prize.
- The students will design their own Nobel Prize diploma.
- The teacher will display the Nobel Prize diplomas created by the students.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:
- LINKS: http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/
- BODIES: Committee and Nobel Lecture or Nobel Prize
- Book: An Introduction to Human Geography
- Online Reading:
  - “What are Human Rights?” to “Become a Defender”
  - Handout B-Biography of Mikhail Gorbachev
  - Handout C-Article on the Disintegration of the Soviet Union

MATERIALS:
- An Introduction to Human Geography
- CIA World Factbook
- Handout A-Ant绛 from Speak Truth To Power (pp. 14-21) from “What are Human Rights?” to “Become a Defender”
- Handout B-Biography of Mikhail Gorbachev
- Handout C-Article on the Disintegration of the Soviet Union
- Online Reading: http://hoffman.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/01/why_gorbachev

ACTIVITY 3:
- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis, reflection, and research (WHST.11-12.9).
- Assign the students to place each post-it note on the appropriate newsprint.
- The teacher will distribute the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY:
- Separate the students into groups of four.
- Distribute the assignment and read the instructions to the class.
- You are a group from the Nobel Peace Prize Committee.
- Your task is to design the Nobel Diploma that will be presented to Mikhail Gorbachev. The Diploma must include the following information:
  - Reforms under Glasnost and Perestroika
  - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - The reforms represent
  - How the economic transformation of the Soviet Union led to the award
  - You may refer to the Nobel Prize web site on Nobel Diplomas for ideas.
• Write an article for the school newspaper identifying a spatial or cultural conflict within the school and a possible solution for that problem; include the possibility of meeting with the student council or the school administration to work out the solution. Then meet with the bodies and create avenues to solve the problem and then implement the solution.
• Create a neighborhood map identifying safe play zones and potential dangers or neighborhood concerns.
• Organize a letter-writing campaign targeting agri-business giants, chocolate producers, or other American businesses that tacitly cooperate with human rights violators.
• Organize a letter-writing campaign targeting actions taken by the local government, such as zoning, renting, or other services which may not in the best interests of the citizens living in a particular area.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY:
• Agricultural density
• Arithmetic density
• Demographic transition
• Physiological density
• Ecumenie
• United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) Factors
• Life Expectancy at Birth (UN-HDI)
• Mean Years of Schooling (UN-HDI)
• Expected Years of Schooling (UN-HDI)
• GDI (Gross Domestic Income) per Capita (UN-HDI)

MAPPING ACTIVITY:
• Assign each student to create a map. These maps will illustrate the 15 former Soviet Republics (both then and now), showing religions, languages, ethnic groups, and HDI factors. Compare these maps to the maps previously created in order to answer the guiding questions and achieve the listed objectives.
• Students will present their maps to the class and make an argument evaluating the impact of Mr. Gorbachev’s reform decisions on the quality of life within those republics (according to UN HDI factors).
• Students will write a paper reflecting on an individual’s ability to affect their world and should cite an action by Mr. Gorbachev that inspired their paper.
• Create maps showing population density, transportation, resource location, and industry location in the former Soviet Union. Students should begin to get the impression that the resource location, and industry location in the former Soviet Union. Students may have to go back to pre-WWII maps to see where Soviet industries were located before the German invasion. Soviet industry relocated during the war for purposes of security, which has nothing to do with profits.
• Did they move back after the war or were the new sites further developed?
• How does this affect the Soviet ability to integrate into a world economy based on consumption and profit?
• How can the Soviet exports compete?
• How does this further define Mr. Gorbachev’s role, and his decisions?
• Were they foolish decisions, or were they the decisions of a brave man who knew what he was doing?

TELL US ABOUT IT

The Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights is sponsoring an annual contest honoring a student who submits the best advocacy activity based upon the lesson studied. A goal of the lesson is to inspire each student that one voice, one person can make monumental changes in the lives of many. Tell us how you became a defender!

THE CRITERIA FOR THE CONTEST ARE:
• A one-page summary of the advocacy activity
• Digitized copies of materials that can be sent electronically
• Photos of the activity (please include a parental consent form)
• A one-page summary of how the activity changed the lives of one or many persons

THE PRIZES INCLUDE:
• A week-long “virtual” internship at the RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights
• An opportunity to meet the defender through a SKYPE visit
• A visit from Kerry Kennedy or a defender to your school
• A poster of a Speak Truth To Power human rights defender
• A donation of a signed copy of the book Speak Truth To Power for the school library

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Nobel Prize:
The Nobel Prize is an award for achievement in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and for peace. It is an internationally administered by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden.

Achievement Academy Organization:
http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/gor0bio-1
The Academy of Achievement is a non-profit organization that brings students across the globe in contact with the greatest thinkers and achievers of the age.

The International Foundation for Socio-economic and Political Studies Website:
The Gorbachev Foundation is an international non-governmental non-profit organization that conducts research into social, economic and political problems of critical importance at the current stage in Russian and world history. The Foundation seeks to promote democratic values as well as moral and humanist principles in the life of society.

Youtube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yfc2wtllwu
Mikhail S. Gorbachev, former President of the USSR

5min Life Videopedia
http://www.5min.com/Video/Mikhail-Gorbachev-Biography-Part-1-119825956
Mikhail Gorbachev Biography, Part I

BBC News Website:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1112551.stm
A timeline of the rise and fall of the Soviet Union beginning with the 1917 Russian Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin and ending in 1991 with the Russian government take over the USSR offices.

The Cold War Museum Website
http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/fall_of_the_soviet_union.asp
A description of the disintegration of the Soviet Union into 15 separate states and the triumph of democracy over totalitarianism.
ABOUT THIS PLAY

Speak Truth To Power: Voices From Beyond the Dark is a play for ten actors (preferably five male and five female, though can also be cast, if necessary, with four female and six male actors). Eight of these actors, four male, four female, will represent the human rights defenders. The other two (a man and a woman, or two men) represent evangelists of evil, malicious and sarcastic embodiments of fear and repression first and then, as the play advances, of the indifference which is the perpetual opposite of love. These oppressors should be dressed differently, sit differently, act differently, and speak differently from the human rights defenders. They are supposed to have more mobility, should be allowed to roam the stage at will, whispering, probing, threatening, determined to undermine the message from the heroes and heroines. This differentiation is crucial to the drama of the play.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PLAY

Many of those who have suffered most grievously in South Africa have been ready to forgive—people who you thought might be consumed by bitterness, by a lust for revenge. We had a hearing at the Truth Commission, chock-a-block full with people who had lost loved ones, massacred. Four officers came up, one white and three black. The white said: “We gave the orders for the soldiers to open fire” – in this room, where the tension could be cut with a knife, it was so palpable. Then he turned to the audience and said, “Please, forgive us. And please receive these, my colleagues, back into the community.” And that very angry audience broke out into quite deafening applause. I said, “Let’s keep quiet, because we are in the presence of something holy.”

My name is Kailash Satyarthi.

When I was five or six years old, the very first day that I went to my school I found a cobbler and his son, sitting right on the doorstep of my school and they were cleaning and polishing shoes of children and as soon as I was entering, there was a lot of joy and happiness. I was carrying new books and a new bag and new clothes, new uniform, everything new and I wanted to ask this question but I did not have enough courage, so I entered in and my teacher welcomed me but I did not ask this question though I still had that feeling in my heart that I should, but a couple of hours later I collected all my courage and I asked my teacher, that sir, I wanted to know why this child of my age is sitting right on the doorstep and cleaning shoes? So he looked at me strangely and said, “What are you asking? you have come to study here not for all these unnecessary things and these questions. It is not your business.” So I was a little angry. I thought that I should go back home and ask these questions to my mother and I asked and she said, “Oh, you have not seen many children are working. It is their destiny. They are poor people. They have to work.” I was told not to worry about it. But one day I went to the father, the cobbler, and I said, “I watch this boy every day. I have a question. Why don’t you send your child to school?” So the father looked at me, for two minutes he could not answer. Then he slowly replied, “I am untouchable and we are born to work.” So I could not understand why some people are born to work and why some people like us are born to go to school. How does it come from? So it made me a little bit rebellious in my mind, because nobody was there to answer. Whom should I ask? My teacher had no answer. Nobody had a good answer. And I carried that in my heart for years. And now, I am doing something about this. Five million children in India alone are born into slavery. Small children of six, seven years, forced to work fourteen hours a day. If they cry for their parents, they are beaten severely, sometimes hanged upside down on the trees and branded or burned with cigarettes. And the number of children are going up – parallel to the growth of exports. The export of carpets go up and the children in servitude go up and up. So we conduct consumer campaigns. And direct actions: secret raids that free those children and return them to their families. But when you free them, work has just begun.
ALL GREAT QUESTIONS
MUST BE RAISED BY
GREAT VOICES, AND
THE GREATEST VOICE
IS THE VOICE OF THE
PEOPLE—SPEAKING
OUT—IN PROSE, OR
PAINTING OR POETRY OR
MUSIC; SPEAKING OUT—
IN HOMES AND HALLS,
STREETS AND FARMS,
COURTS AND CAFES—
LET THAT VOICE SPEAK
AND THE STILLNESS
YOU HEAR WILL BE THE
GRATITUDE OF MANKIND.”

—ROBERT F. KENNEDY,
NEW YORK CITY,
JANUARY 22, 1963