21 Speeches

That Shaped Our World

The People and Ideas That Changed the Way We Think

Chris Abbott

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Introduction

Shaping the World

"We see the world the way we do
not because that is the way it is,
but because we have these
ways of seeing."

Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Philosophical Investigations

(1953)

On a hot summer's day in August 1963, Martin Luther King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC and told the world about his dream. His words pointed the way to a different future and painted an image that still captures the imagination now, forty years after his assassination. On that day in 1963, King stood in front of some two hundred thousand people and many more watched him on television or listened on the radio, but millions more will have been moved by his words in the decades since. Truly great speeches can thus survive and inspire long after the crowds have gone home and the words are transcribed to the page. This is part of the power of speeches.

This book is not just about speeches, though. It is about the ideas behind them, the events that surround them and the power of people to inspire others. The twenty-one speeches explored in this book are moments in time – points in history used to illustrate the development of the ways we see the world today. I have split these 'ways of seeing', these world views, into two principal outlooks, which are discussed in the following chapters. Parts I and IV explore the view that all people are created equal and that division and confrontation often lead only to violence. The horror unleashed in Iraq since the 2003 invasion is just the latest in a long line of events that have served to prove this point in people's minds. Parts II and III explore the contrasting view that the world is divided into good and evil, and the powerful therefore have a responsibility to use force to make the world a safer place. The rise of al-Qaida and the so-called clash of civilisations between Islam and the West only serve to reinforce this perception, which led us into a disastrous war on terror. These two outlooks might be characterised, albeit simplistically, as idealist and realist respectively. They are explored here through the contrasting themes of 'all the world is human' with 'you're either with us or against us', and of 'might is right' with 'give peace a chance'. In this way, the speeches are arranged thematically rather than chronologically, which adds to the overall narrative.

These world views did not appear in isolation: they grew out of the events, ideas, politics and people of the last one hundred years or so. This process can be illustrated by examining some of the most influential and inspiring speeches given during that time – and this is the impetus for this book. I reviewed over a hundred speeches in deciding which ones to focus on but decided to limit the final number to twenty-one to represent the current century. It was important that the chosen speeches reflected the narrative framework described above and the final selection encompasses those people and ideas that I feel have shaped our world and the way that we view it today, in the context of this framework. They are the speeches that

spoke to me in a powerful way and captured the essence of the ideas that I was exploring. It is for the same reasons that after careful consideration I have not included some equally significant speeches in this book, such as ones by Woodrow Wilson, Sun Yat-sen, Adolf Hitler, Charles de Gaulle, John F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela, Anwar Sadat, the Dalai Lama and many others. It was also essential that the final selection included some female and non-Western voices (unlike in too many other books). To this end I have included speeches by Emmeline Pankhurst, Margaret Beckett, Margaret Thatcher and Marie Fatayi-Williams, as well as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Osama bin Laden, Salvador Allende and Mohandas Gandhi. This book features politicians, soldiers, activists and ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Many of these people brought about tremendous change, or at least came to represent that change. Whether you think they shaped the zeitgeist or grew from it depends on whether you believe in the pre-eminence of the individual or society as a whole. Examples pointing to both are included here.

Speeches can be so much more than just words and, in any case, words are rarely *just* words: they anticipate action. Few have expressed this more clearly than the American politician Deval Patrick during his successful 2006 campaign to become Governor of Massachusetts. He told a crowd of supporters gathered at the Rally for Change on Boston Common on 15 October:

> I will not engage in the politics of fear. Because fear is poisonous. All through history it has been used to hold back progress and limit fairness. Only hope defeats fear. It always has.
>
> At a candidates' forum last week, the moderator asked each of us to say something nice about the other candidates. Kerry Healey rather grudgingly said, 'Well, he can give a good speech.' She would know this not because she has ever attended a speech of mine, but because she has them filmed. But her dismissive point, and I hear it from her staff, is that all I have to offer is words. Just words.
>
> 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' Just words.
>
> 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself.' Just words.
>
> 'Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.' Just words.
>
> 'I have a dream.' Just words.
>
> Let me say it before you do: I am no Dr King, no President Kennedy, no FDR, no Thomas Jefferson. But I do know that the right words, spoken from the heart with conviction, with a vision of a better place and a faith in the unseen, are a

call to action. So when you hear my words, or speak your own to your neighbours, hear them and speak them as a call to action.

This extract from the last few minutes of his speech clearly articulates the way in which the right words spoken from the heart can inspire people to work for a better future. It is something that Barack Obama understood well during his 2008 bid for the US presidency. His powerful speeches and grassroots campaign saw him beat John McCain to the White House but not before echoing Patrick in a speech in Milwaukee in February 2008: 'Don't tell me words don't matter! "I have a dream." Just words. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Just words! "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Just words – just speeches!' This prompted accusations of plagiarism but the two men are friends and Patrick did not mind Obama borrowing his words to defend himself from criticism that he was all rhetoric and no substance.

The voices that are strangely silent in this book are the speechwriters'. That may sound counter-intuitive, as politicians in particular often rely on speechwriters and it is their words that are presented here on the page. While it may be the speechwriter who coins the pithy phrase or eloquently describes a course of action, it is the person delivering the speech who truly owns it. It is in the theatre of the event and the skill of the oratory that great speeches are created. It is the speaker who breathes life into the words, while the speechwriter, by nature of their profession, remains behind the scenes. In any case, the process of speechwriting involves a back-and-forth between the speechwriter and politician, with frequent redrafting until the words express exactly what the speaker wishes to say. Obama calls his surprisingly young chief speechwriter Jon Favreau his 'mind-reader' and the man has an obvious ability with words, yet no one would deny that it is Obama's presence and skill as an orator that gives his speeches their power. Of course some of the power of the speech can survive on the page and evidence of that can be found in the transcripts included in this book – a testament to the skill of those who wrote them.

Speeches come in many forms and in selecting those for inclusion in this book I have taken a broad definition of what constitutes a speech. *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines a speech simply as 'a formal address delivered to an audience'. While almost all the speeches included here would be considered speeches in the traditional sense, this book also includes a written last statement, a video message, a radio broadcast and a televised address. There may be surprise at some of the other speeches that have been included: George Bush is not known as the world's greatest orator and bin Laden – while a powerful speaker – is not usually considered to have delivered some of the modern world's most influential speeches, though he has. If, on the other hand, this book is missing some famous speeches, it is because it

is not intended to be a collection of the greatest speeches – some excellent anthologies already exist. Even if you have come across some, or all, of these speeches before, they warrant re-reading – and I hope to add to your understanding of how they have shaped the world we live in. In writing this book, I also hope to introduce a new generation of readers to some of the most important words ever spoken. Many will recognise lines such as 'we will fight on the beaches' or 'I have a dream' but have little understanding of their significance or perhaps not even know who spoke them or, more importantly, why. Hopefully this can be rectified, as each speech is preceded by an introduction exploring the context and wider impact of that moment and the background of the speaker.

"I do know that the right words,
spoken from the heart with conviction,
with a vision of a better place
and a faith in the unseen, are a
call to action."

The chapters that follow have not been written as detached, objective commentaries. Instead, they are deliberately polemical, designed to provoke critical thinking on key events from the last hundred years. And some incredible events are covered in this book: World Wars I and II; the demise of the British Empire; the partition of India; the assassinations of Gandhi and King; *coups d'état* in Iran, Guatemala, Chile and Argentina; the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union; Israel–Palestine and the wider Arab–Israeli conflict; the Falklands/Malvinas conflict; 9/11, the war on terror and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq; Australia's apology to the Stolen Generations; and the election of America's first black President. These events highlight a huge range of important issues, including human rights, racism, slavery, female emancipation, immigration, democracy, colonialism, national identity, capital punishment, non-violence, disarmament, religion, climate change and terrorism. In discussing these I have drawn upon my own background in international security, anthropology and psychology, as well as the lessons of political science, international relations, history and philosophy, in order to shine some light on how we got to where we are today.

Despite the modern desire for sound bites, the best speeches can remind us of Shakespeare: eloquent language and novel phrases are used to impart a message about the human condition that can be understood by almost everyone. They are akin to poetry and, in fact, utilise many of the poet's techniques, from rhythm to repetition.

Like the sophist teachers of philosophy and rhetoric in ancient Greece, though, speakers can also use ambiguous language and rhetorical sleight-of-hand to promote weak or false arguments or obscure the truth. A great speaker can use their verbal skills to manipulate our emotions and deceive our thinking. In this way, speeches have the power not only to inspire others to great achievement but also to lead them to great harm (some devastating examples of which are included in this book). In the end, though, this book is about hope: hope for a safer, more equal world, where our differences are not settled by wars and where we are able to work together to overcome the huge social and environmental challenges humanity will face over the course of this century. That may sound a little too idealistic; but is it really? Who, in fact, are the real realists?

Author's Note

The transcripts of the speeches are taken from official sources wherever possible and have been checked for accuracy where feasible. If sub-headings were included in the original published version of the speech they are also included here in order to break up the text and make reading easier. All transcripts are the full, unedited version of the speech unless stated otherwise in the preceding commentary. However, for consistency I have corrected the occasional typographical error, standardised the transliteration of Arabic words and changed American spellings to British.

Many of these speeches are in the public domain but where permission has been given to reprint a copyrighted transcript the relevant information is provided in the acknowledgements section.

In researching this book I have drawn on hundreds of books, articles, interviews, opinion polls, official reports and other such material, together with meetings and conversations with many different people over the years. Some of these are listed in the references section and readers looking for further information may wish to start there.

Audio and video recordings of many of the speeches featured in this book can be found at **www.21speeches.com**.

Part I

All the World is Human

"Every human heart is human."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
The Song of Hiawatha
(1855)

In 1550, King Charles V suspended Spain's wars of conquest in the New World and ordered a group of jurists and theologians to meet in Valladolid to hear arguments over the status of the peoples the Spanish had conquered in the Americas. The colonists were represented by the philosopher Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who defended Spain's right to conquest and argued that the indigenous peoples should not be treated as humans but as natural slaves. His opponent, the Dominican friar Bartolemé de las Casas, argued that 'all the world is human' and that the peoples of the Americas should therefore be governed in the same way as the people of Spain. Although both sides claimed victory in the debate, it would prove to be Sepúlveda's point of view that would shape the reality of Spanish behaviour in the Americas. However, Las Casas's arguments had a considerable influence on the King and the Catholic Church, and were an important step forward in the development of human rights and international law.

The Valladolid controversy, as it came to be known, is part of the complex debate over the centuries about our common humanity and the customary legal, political and social rights which that entails. It was not until four hundred years after Las Casas that such rights were finally expressed on a global level. On 10 December 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, guaranteeing certain rights for all people and declaring: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' This document was key in cementing the position of human rights in international law in the aftermath of World War II. It claimed that 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind'. The extent to which all the peoples of our world are considered equal, without distinction, is explored in the chapters that follow.

At least half the world's population are discriminated against to some degree simply because of their gender. All the fine words spoken through history about freedom and equality have only ever been, in truth, about men. This is the argument that the British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst put forward in a speech she gave in Hartford, Connecticut, on 13 November 1913 and is discussed in the first chapter. Pankhurst saw herself as a solider in the fight to secure women equal voting rights, which at that time they were largely denied. She defended the use of militant tactics such as arson, vandalism, sabotage and acts of civil disobedience and disruption in order to win that struggle. Though female suffrage is now almost universal, women are

still discriminated against in many different ways and are frequently denied full autonomy over their own lives and bodies.

The second and third chapters explore aspects of the race debate. Chapter two focuses on the struggle for African-American civil rights as described by Martin Luther King in his speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC on 28 August 1963. King's soaring rhetoric captured the shame that racial segregation had brought on the United States but also the potential dream of full civil rights for African Americans. There was, though, a crucial tension within the civil-rights movement. On the one hand there were those like King who promoted non-violence and racial harmony, on the other there were Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam who promoted black nationalism and self-defence against the white enemy. The more radical black-power movement continued to grow in strength following King's assassination in 1968, as the boundaries between racial inequality and other social injustices became increasingly blurred. Today, racial segregation has largely given way to a socio-economic segregation in which race plays a huge part.

Less than three weeks after King's assassination, the British MP Enoch Powell gave an apocalyptic speech to a Conservative Association meeting in Birmingham, on 20 April 1968. This speech, which is explored in the third chapter, highlighted the assumed impact of immigration on national identity. He argued that unbridled immigration was beginning to make the white English majority feel like strangers in their own country and warned that rivers of blood might flow as a result. Although Powell maintained that his arguments were based on national identity not race per se, his warnings were seized upon by extremist and right-wing groups and are still invoked today to underscore the supposed failings of multiculturalism. The debate on immigration is a complex and highly emotive one, marked by much ignorance and prejudice. Perhaps the one universal truth is that we should all have the right to live where we feel safe and happy, wherever that might be and whatever the colour of our skin.

One of the most obvious ways that racial divisions are manifested in the United States and elsewhere is in the legal system. Socioeconomic disparity and structural racism ensures that black inmates are disproportionally represented in the prison population as a whole and death row in particular. One such death-row prisoner was Napoleon Beazley, executed on 28 May 2002, and whose last statement is discussed in the fourth chapter. Though Beazley was by his own admission guilty of murder, there are concerns that he may have been subjected to a miscarriage of justice. The right to life is one of the central pillars of human rights, yet Beazley's government disregarded the sanctity of human life and executed him in retaliation for a crime he committed when he was only seventeen years old. The death penalty does not bring about justice

and rehabilitation; it is based solely on vengeance. It brutalises society and only creates more victims by perpetuating the very violence it condemns.

The final chapter examines the apology to the Stolen Generations that Kevin Rudd, the Australian Prime Minister, made in parliament in Canberra on 13 February 2008. The Stolen Generations are those tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1970s. This was the result of state and federal policies designed to assimilate indigenous children into white Australian society. Their existence demonstrates the fact that judicial and extra-judicial executions are not the only way in which the state can abuse its power over the individual and deny them their human rights. The Stolen Generations policies were part of a wider process of attempted genocide in Australia. Unfortunately, indigenous populations around the world have suffered similar crimes, as governments, missionaries and multinational corporations work together in the name of so-called civilisation, religion or profit. Rudd and others recognised that the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was wrong and that an apology could be an important step in the healing process.

It is over sixty years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, yet many people are still denied their humanity, let alone even the most basic of human rights. Huge numbers of people across the majority world of Asia, Africa and Latin America are marginalised politically, culturally and economically. Inequality is rife in a world where nearly a billion people must survive on less than a dollar a day and half the world's children live in poverty. People everywhere still face discrimination because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. It would seem that everyone is created equal, but some are created more equal than others.

Freedom or Death

– EMMELINE PANKHURST –

Female emancipation is not a minority issue. It is not the concern of a small special-interest group. It is not an issue only for feminists nor is it an issue only for women. It is an issue that concerns everyone; women's rights are human rights.[1] Women account for half the world's population and their emancipation cannot be considered peripheral. There is not a society on Earth where women enjoy entirely equal participation in social, political and economic life. Even in superficially equal societies – with little overt repression – discrimination often remains entrenched in law or custom: denying women the employment opportunities, fair wages, legal justice, sexual freedom, individual autonomy and general respect that they deserve on a par with their male counterparts.

Throughout the early 1900s the struggle for women's rights hinged on suffrage. Some of the first countries to allow women full voting rights were British colonies, such as New Zealand (1893) and Australia (1902, although Aboriginal women were not given the vote until 1967). However, at that time women in Britain, and indeed most other countries, were denied the right to vote in national elections. In 1869, the utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill was the first person in the British parliament to call for women to be given full voting rights. Twenty years later, Emmeline Pankhurst and her husband Richard founded the Women's Franchise League. Pankhurst came from a family with a history of radical politics and her husband was a strong advocate of women's rights until his death in 1898. She became frustrated with the more mainstream women's political organisations, such as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and she sought alternative methods to garner publicity for the suffrage movement. In 1903, she and her daughters founded the more radical Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).

Pankhurst moved to London in 1907 to join her daughters in the militant struggle for the vote. Over the next seven years she was arrested numerous times, often going on hunger strike in response. She also gave powerful public speeches on both sides of the Atlantic in support of the cause. She gave one of her most famous on 13 November

1913 in a theatre in Hartford, Connecticut (an edited extract of which is reproduced in the pages that follow). By then, she was a well-known figure within the suffrage movement but she started by saying, 'I do not come here as an advocate . . . I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle.' It was a powerful image to present to her audience; she was a gifted and entertaining orator – even known to address crowds from a stretcher when she was weak from a hunger strike.

At the time of her Hartford speech, she was on temporary release under the 'Cat and Mouse Act' from a three-year prison sentence for her part in a conspiracy that carried out a bomb attack on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's country house. The 'Cat and Mouse Act' stopped the force-feeding of suffragettes on hunger strike and instead allowed for extremely weak prisoners to be released to recover, whereupon they could be rearrested. Pankhurst told the crowd in Hartford, 'I dare say, in the minds of many of you . . . that I do not look either very like a soldier or very like a convict, and yet I am both'. She thought of the suffragettes as being engaged in a civil war against an unjust government and defended the use of militant tactics such as arson, vandalism, sabotage and acts of civil disobedience and disruption. Five months earlier, Emily Davison, a WSPU member, had thrown herself in front of the King's horse when it was running in the Derby. She was trampled, left unconscious and died four days later. Pankhurst pointed out that were she a man there would be no need to explain such revolutionary tactics in the face of taxation without representation (an injustice that would have been well understood by an American audience). 'We women', she said, 'always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact – a very simple fact – that women are human beings.' She said that women had found that 'all the fine phrases about freedom and liberty were entirely for male consumption'. In fact, she argued, women found that 'every principle of liberty enunciated in any civilised country on earth, with very few exceptions, was intended entirely for men'.

Pankhurst felt certain of her cause and her tactics and was convinced that if she could only explain the situation properly to people then they would surely understand. She told her audience that 'when I have finished you will say . . . that we could not do anything else, that there was no other way, that we had either to submit to intolerable injustice and let the women's movement go back and remain in a worse position than it was before we began, or we had to go on with these methods until victory was secured'. Suffragettes felt that they 'had to rouse the public to such a point that they would say to the government, you must give women the vote'. She told the audience that whether they agreed with her methods or not, 'we have succeeded in making woman suffrage one of the questions which even cabinet ministers now admit cannot indefinitely be neglected. It must be dealt with within a very short period of time. No other methods than ours would have brought about that result.' She told those who

thought that they could not succeed that ‘we have brought the government of England to this position, that it has to face this alternative: either women are to be killed or women are to have the vote’. ‘We will put the enemy in the position where’, she said, ‘they will have to choose between giving us freedom or giving us death.’

World War I broke out nine months after Pankhurst’s speech and campaigning for women’s suffrage was suspended in order to support ‘King and Country’. It was not until the war ended in 1918 that some women over the age of thirty gained the right to vote in general elections (provided they met certain criteria). This was in recognition of the contribution that women had made to the war effort but the age barrier was set at thirty years, partly to ensure that women did not outnumber men in the post-war electorate. It took another ten years for women to receive the vote on equal terms to men. The Equal Franchise Act came into law on 2 July 1928, but Pankhurst had died three weeks earlier, aged sixty-nine, so was never able to exercise the right she had fought for. The next day, her obituary in *The Times* said: ‘Whatever views may be held as to the righteousness of the cause to which she gave her life and the methods by which she tried to bring about its achievement, there can be no doubt about the singleness of her aim and the remarkable strength and nobility of her character.’ She was, it said, a ‘humble-minded, large-hearted, unselfish woman, of the stuff of which martyrs are made’.[2]

Fast-forward to today and there are those who hold the reactionary view that the pendulum has now swung too far the other way. They argue that men are being emasculated by female authority at home and losing out to positive discrimination at work. It is true that in many countries there is the perception, and occasionally the reality, that men lose out when custody over or access to their children is granted following divorce; suffer from worse health and have lower life expectancy; are less likely to seek support for mental-health problems and more likely to commit suicide; lack suitable male role models at home and in school; and are called upon to fight and die in time of war. But while these issues may be important, they do not in any way detract from the reality that women still suffer far more from legally or culturally embedded discrimination at the social, political and economic levels.

Men and women are equal, but different. However, many of the stereotypical gender differences have little biological or physiological basis. Many of the differences between men and women are in fact the result of socialisation and cultural conditioning – traditional roles and characteristics reinforced by society in each generation. It is because gender is such an obvious trait that we still focus on it long after many of the evolutionary and physical differences between men and women have ceased to have much meaningful impact beyond childbearing. That is not, however, to downplay the importance of these social forces. In the worst cases, patriarchal

societies maintained through tradition and religious practice continue to inflict suffering on women throughout their lives – from female foeticide, genital mutilation and denial of schooling to forced matrimony, rape in marriage and so-called honour killings. Even in more liberal societies, women are at risk of domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape. In this way, many women are still denied their individual autonomy and ownership over their own lives and bodies.

One of the worst manifestations of this lack of autonomy is the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. One British study found that almost all women trafficked in Europe had been physically or sexually abused during the process.[3] Another study found that 80 per cent of women working in off-street prostitution in London were not from the UK; many of them were being forced to work by traffickers or pimps (a similar figure was found among women working for escort agencies).[4] In the vast majority of cases, prostitution is an especially damaging form of violence against women, particularly as the average age of entry into prostitution for adolescent girls is only thirteen or fourteen.[5]

This discrimination extends from the social realm into the political. Despite the successes of Pankhurst and others, women are still denied equal voting rights in half a dozen countries. The subjugation of women is particularly bad in Saudi Arabia, where, in addition to being denied the right to vote in municipal elections, the policies of male guardianship and sex segregation leave women treated as legal minors.[6] Women are also greatly under-represented as elected officials and in the vast majority of political institutions. Around the world, women usually make up less than one fifth of the MPs in national parliaments (rising to nearly half in some Nordic countries but dropping to a tenth or less in some Arab states).[7] In a world of nearly two hundred countries, there are currently less than twenty female presidents and prime ministers. The first female prime minister was not elected until 1960 (in Sri Lanka) and since then only sixty or so women have been elected heads of state worldwide. Women's involvement in politics is essential because the institutions that govern our lives should be representative of the population as a whole, not just one half of it. Adequate representation of women is necessary to legitimise political systems and make it more likely that issues of particular importance to women will be addressed.

The situation is even worse in the corporate world. At the end of 2009, only three FTSE-100 companies had a woman as chair of the board and only fifteen had female executive directors. In all, only 12 per cent of the directorships on corporate boards were held by women; a quarter of companies had exclusively male boards.[8] The physical and practical restrictions imposed by pregnancy and child-rearing can impact directly on a woman's career if she is unfairly forced out of her job or her employer is unwilling to accept part-time or flexible working patterns. There is also plenty of

anecdotal evidence to suggest that many employers are reluctant to employ women of childbearing age because of the perceived difficulties and costs imposed by maternity leave.[9] For those women in employment, there still exists a gender income gap in many countries – with women earning significantly less on average than men, even when employed in similar roles. This difference varies widely between job sector and country but on average women earn less than four-fifths of their male counterparts' salaries.[10] Women are also more likely than men to be employed in the informal economy or to be responsible for food production, household chores, care of children or elderly relatives and other unpaid tasks that help a family to survive but provide little or no income. All this has led to what has been called the feminisation of poverty, whereby women are increasingly those who suffer most from extreme poverty (a 1995 UN study estimated that 70 per cent of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty were women).[11]

The work of Pankhurst and the suffragettes is clearly unfinished. Female emancipation does not stop with equal voting rights. While half the world's population still suffer discrimination simply because of their gender, it is the responsibility of all of us to continue to fight for equality. Women's rights are, after all, human rights.

Parsons Theatre, Hartford, Connecticut, United States

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13 NOVEMBER 1913

Many people come to Hartford to address meetings as advocates of some reform. Tonight it is not to advocate a reform that I address a meeting in Hartford. I do not come here as an advocate, because whatever position the suffrage movement may occupy in the United States of America, in England it has passed beyond the realm of advocacy and it has entered into the sphere of practical politics. It has become the subject of revolution and civil war, and so tonight I am not here to advocate woman suffrage. American suffragists can do that very well for themselves.

I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle in order to explain – it seems strange it should have to be explained – what civil war is like when civil war is waged by women. I am not only here as a soldier temporarily absent from the field of battle; I am here – and that, I think, is the strangest part of my coming – I am here as a person who, according to the law courts of my country, it has been decided, is of no value to the community at all; and I am adjudged because of my life to be a dangerous person, under sentence of penal servitude in a convict prison. So you see there is some special interest in hearing so unusual a person address you. I dare say, in the minds of many of you – you will perhaps forgive me this personal touch – that I do not look either very like a soldier or very like a convict, and yet I am both.

Now, first of all I want to make you understand the inevitableness of revolution and civil war, even on the part of women, when you reach a certain stage in the development of a community's life. It is not at all difficult if revolutionaries come to you from Russia, if they come to you from China, or from any other part of the world, if they are men, to make you understand revolution in five minutes, every man and every woman to understand revolutionary methods when they are adopted by men.

Many of you have expressed sympathy, probably even practical sympathy, with revolutionaries in Russia. I dare say you have followed with considerable interest the story of how the Chinese revolutionary, Sun Yatsen, conducted the Chinese revolution from England.[I] It is quite easy for you to understand – it would not be necessary for me to enter into explanations at all – the desirability of revolution if I were a man, in any of these countries, even in a part of the British Empire known to you as Ireland. If an Irish revolutionary had addressed this meeting, and many have addressed meetings all over the United States during the last twenty or thirty years, it would not be necessary for that revolutionary to explain the need of revolution beyond saying that the people of his country were denied – and by people, meaning men – were denied the right of self-government. That would explain the whole situation. If I were a man and I said to you, 'I come from a country which professes to have representative institutions and yet denies me, a taxpayer, an inhabitant of the country, representative rights', you would at once understand that that human being, being a man, was justified in the adoption of revolutionary methods to get representative institutions. But since I am a woman it is necessary in the twentieth century to explain why women have adopted revolutionary methods in order to win the rights of citizenship.

You see, in spite of a good deal that we hear about revolutionary methods not being necessary for American women, because American women are so well off, most of the men of the United States quite calmly acquiesce in the fact that half of the community are deprived absolutely of citizen rights, and we women, in trying to make

our case clear, always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact – a very simple fact – that women are human beings. It is quite evident you do not all realise we are human beings or it would not be necessary to argue with you that women may, suffering from intolerable injustice, be driven to adopt revolutionary methods. We have, first of all, to convince you we are human beings, and I hope to be able to do that in the course of the evening before I sit down.

Suppose the men of Hartford had a grievance, and they laid that grievance before their legislature, and the legislature obstinately refused to listen to them, or to remove their grievance, what would be the proper and the constitutional and the practical way of getting their grievance removed? Well, it is perfectly obvious at the next general election, when the legislature is elected, the men of Hartford in sufficient numbers would turn out that legislature and elect a new one: entirely change the personnel of an obstinate legislature which would not remove their grievance. It is perfectly simple and perfectly easy for voting communities to get their grievances removed if they act in combination and make an example of the legislature by changing the composition of the legislature and sending better people to take the place of those who have failed to do justice.

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But let the men of Hartford imagine that they were not in the position of being voters at all, that they were governed without their consent being obtained, that the legislature turned an absolutely deaf ear to their demands, what would the men of Hartford do then? They couldn't vote the legislature out. They would have to choose; they would have to make a choice of two evils: they would either have to submit indefinitely to an unjust state of affairs, or they would have to rise up and adopt some of the antiquated means by which men in the past got their grievances remedied. We know what happened when your forefathers decided that they must have representation for taxation, many, many years ago. When they felt they couldn't wait any longer, when they laid all the arguments before an obstinate British government that they could think of, and when their arguments were absolutely disregarded, when every other means had failed, they began by the tea party at Boston, and they went on until they had won the independence of the United States of America. That is what happened in the old days.

Well now, I want to argue with you as to whether our way is the right one; I want

to explain all these things that you have not understood; I want to make you understand exactly what our plan of campaign has been because I have always felt that if you could only make people understand most people's hearts are in the right place and most people's understandings are sound and most people are more or less logical – if you could only make them understand.

I am going to talk later on about the grievances, but I want to first of all make you understand that this civil war carried on by women is not the hysterical manifestation which you thought it was, but was carefully and logically thought out, and I think when I have finished you will say, admitted the grievance, admitted the strength of the cause, that we could not do anything else, that there was no other way, that we had either to submit to intolerable injustice and let the woman's movement go back and remain in a worse position than it was before we began, or we had to go on with these methods until victory was secured; and I want also to convince you that these methods are going to win, because when you adopt the methods of revolution there are two justifications which I feel are necessary or to be desired. The first is, that you have good cause for adopting your methods in the beginning, and secondly that you have adopted methods which when pursued with sufficient courage and determination are bound, in the long run, to win.

Now, it would take too long to trace the course of militant methods as adopted by women, because it is about eight years since the word militant was first used to describe what we were doing; it is about eight years since the first militant action was taken by women. It was not militant at all, except that it provoked militancy on the part of those who were opposed to it. When women asked questions in political meetings and failed to get answers, they were not doing anything militant. To ask questions at political meetings is an acknowledged right of all people who attend public meetings; certainly in my country, men have always done it, and I hope they do it in America, because it seems to me that if you allow people to enter your legislatures without asking them any questions as to what they are going to do when they get there you are not exercising your citizen rights and your citizen duties as you ought. At any rate in Great Britain it is a custom, a time-honoured one, to ask questions of candidates for parliament and ask questions of members of the government. No man was ever put out of a public meeting for asking a question until Votes for Women came onto the political horizon. The first people who were put out of a political meeting for asking questions, were women; they were brutally ill-used; they found themselves in jail before twenty-four hours had expired.

But instead of the newspapers, which are largely inspired by the politicians, putting militancy and the reproach of militancy, if reproach there is, on the people who had assaulted the women, they actually said it was the women who were militant and

very much to blame. How different the reasoning is that men adopt when they are discussing the cases of men and those of women. Had they been men who asked the questions, and had those men been brutally ill-used, you would have heard a chorus of reprobation on the part of the people toward those who refused to answer those questions. But as they were women who asked the questions, it was not the speakers on the platform who would not answer them, who were to blame, or the ushers at the meeting; it was the poor women who had had their bruises and their knocks and scratches, and who were put into prison for doing precisely nothing but holding a protest meeting in the street after it was all over. We were determined to press this question of the enfranchisement of women to the point where we were no longer to be ignored by the politicians as had been the case for about fifty years, during which time women had patiently used every means open to them to win their political enfranchisement.

We found that all the fine phrases about freedom and liberty were entirely for male consumption, and that they did not in any way apply to women. When it was said taxation without representation is tyranny, when it was 'Taxation of men without representation is tyranny', everybody quite calmly accepted the fact that women had to pay taxes and even were sent to prison if they failed to pay them – quite right. We found that 'Government of the people, by the people and for the people', which is also a time-honoured liberal principle, was again only for male consumption; half of the people were entirely ignored; it was the duty of women to pay their taxes and obey the laws and look as pleasant as they could under the circumstances. In fact, every principle of liberty enunciated in any civilised country on earth, with very few exceptions, was intended entirely for men, and when women tried to force the putting into practice of these principles, for women, then they discovered they had come into a very, very unpleasant situation indeed.