



The Radical Reader: A Documentary History of the American Radical Tradition

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Radicalism is as American as apple pie. One can scarcely imagine what American society would look like without the abolitionists, feminists, union organizers, civil rights workers, gay and lesbian activists, and environmentalists who have fought to breathe life into the promises of freedom and equality, the lifeblood of American democracy.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

It's bracing to be reminded that the American experiment was radical at its inception—that in their own day the founding fathers (and mothers) were not hallowed figures but revolutionaries charting a new political path. Thus, among the 155 entries selected by two Harvard academics, are the 1765 Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress and the Bill of Rights. Also here are crucial documents from the abolitionist movement (such as Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"); feminist texts, from Sarah Grimke's Letters on the Equality of the Sexes to the 19th Amendment giving women the vote; texts of the 60s counterculture, from Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" to a Weathermen brochure; and the volume ends in the immediate past with a 2002 open letter by academics opposing the invasion of Iraq. Each entry is preceded by a brief introduction providing historical and biographical context. "By definition, radicals are a minority," writes historian Eric Foner in his foreword. Members of the newest left, whether antiwar or anti-globalization, will find a sense of roots and tradition in this comprehensive anthology.

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From [Booklist](#)

Progressive radicalism, the array of traditions that "seeks to expand existing definitions of freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity," is intrinsic to American society and essential to democracy. From the revolution that gave birth to our nation to abolitionism, the labor movement, suffrage and feminism, civil rights, gay liberation, and environmentalism, radicalism has been responsible for maintaining the freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution, and for ensuring that quality of life and justice aren't forfeited in the pursuit of wealth and power. Two Harvard-based historians explicate and encapsulate the rich and vital spectrum of American radicalism by presenting more than 200 declarations, appeals, editorials, and essays by such radical thinkers (each introduced in a brief bio) as Frederick Douglass, Sarah Grimke, Henry David Thoreau, Upton Sinclair, Emma Goldman, Angela Davis, Betty Friedan, Mario Savio, Cesar Chavez, Rachel Carson, Tony Kushner, and Ralph Nader. The result is proof-positive that the U.S. has always been "a protest nation," a society of necessary sacrifice and tremendous achievement, and every citizen should hope that it remains so. *Donna Seaman*

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About the Author

Timothy Patrick McCarthy teaches history and literature at Harvard University, where he has won several teaching awards. He is co-editor, with John Stauffer, of *Millennial Vistas: Reconsiderations of American Abolitionism*, forthcoming from The New Press. **John McMillian** teaches history and literature at Harvard University. His articles and review essays have appeared in *Radical History Review*; *Rethinking History*; *American Quarterly*; and elsewhere. He is co-editor, with Paul Buhle, of *The New Left Re-examined* (Temple University Press).

Users Review

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