

Standing Up To the Madness: Ordinary Heroes In Extraordinary Times

Amy Goodman , David Goodman

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Standing Up to the Madness not only is a timely, inspiring, and even revolutionary look at who wields the greatest power in America--everyday people who take a chance and stand up for what they believe in--but also offers advice on what you can do to help.

Where are the millions marching in the streets to defend human rights, civil liberties, and racial justice? Where is the mass revulsion against the killing and torture being carried out in our name? Where are the environmentalists? Where is the peace movement?

The answer: They are *everywhere*.

The award-winning sister-brother team of Amy Goodman, host of *Democracy Now!*, and investigative journalist David Goodman traveled the country to detail the ways in which grassroots activists have taken politics out of the hands of politicians. *Standing Up to the Madness* tells the stories of everyday citizens who have challenged the government and prevailed.

As the Bush administration has waged war abroad and at home, it has catalyzed a vast groundswell of political action. From African-American residents of deluged New Orleans who are fighting racism and City Hall to regain their homes; to four Connecticut librarians who refused to spy on their patrons, challenged the USA PATRIOT Act, and won; to a group of high school students who were barred from performing a play they wrote on the Iraq War based on letters from soldiers; to the first U.S. Army officer to publicly refuse orders to deploy to Iraq, charging that his duty as an officer is to refuse to fight in an illegal and immoral war, *Standing Up to the Madness* profiles citizens rising to extraordinary challenges. And, in the process, they are changing the way that politics is done, both now and in the future.

In communities around the United States, courageous individuals have taken leaps of faith to stop the madness. They could only hope that if they led, others would follow. That is how movements are born. What begins as one, eventually becomes many. In that tradition, the authors have included the ways in which any individual can take action and effect change.

Standing Up To the Madness: Ordinary Heroes In Extraordinary Times Details

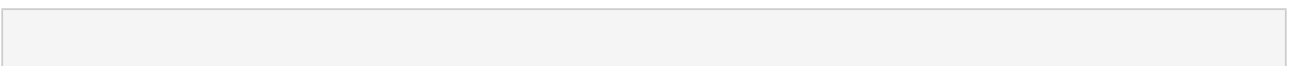
Date : Published May 1st 2008 by Hachette Books (first published 2008)

ISBN : 9781401322885

Author : Amy Goodman , David Goodman

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Politics, Nonfiction, Social Issues, Activism, Writing, Journalism, History, Political Science, Essays





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Adam says

The title summarizes the book well. "Standing Up to the Madness" paints portraits of individuals who are resisting oppression, usually by the State. Given that these are stories covered by Democracy Now! Radio, it's not surprising that these strike me as being better as radio segments. While the stories are powerful as written, I bet they are more powerful heard in these "ordinary" people's voices. The writing is not particularly strong, but the stories are very compelling, and totally enraging.

My biggest complaint with the book is that the authors don't transcend reporting the stories. The stories provide a great opportunity to glimpse into the nature of the State, or the psychology of individuals, or an inquiry into social change, or a study of hope in America (The authors write, "Saying 'no' to injustice is the ultimate declaration of hope" (216). But why don't the authors ask how it is that Americans come to hope? See Rebecca Solnit's excellent "Hope in the Dark," soon to be reviewed by me). There's no attempt made to explore the motivations behind these people's willingness to act, nor is there any indication as to why our government is so oppressive. The result is a journalistic brushstroke across a range of struggles.

The stories are diverse, though many deal with censorship: NASA scientists fighting the censorship of environmental research; high school drama students fighting the censorship of a play dealing with the Iraq war; psychologists fighting the censorship of colleagues' role in the torturing of political prisoners.

Another common thread I identified between these stories is how for many of these individuals, the oppression they were fighting intersected with their jobs. Injustices were being justified by their professions. The NASA scientists, psychologists, high school teacher, and librarians (fighting surveillance of patrons' check-out histories) fought back by appealing to the values of their professions. And so, the librarian, a public servant, stands off the government in the name of civil rights, a core value of the library profession. Even soldiers speak out against the war by calling upon their values of honor, truth, and duty.

For me, these stories are deeper than just "people standing up:" they also demonstrate how people develop loyalty to their professions. They also uncover the contradictions that can form in one's work, and call into question where the boundary lies between people's own actions and those actions that are just performed as "doing their job."

Wendy says

Inspirational read. Amy Goodman is great as always.

Paige says

In this book, Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! (and her brother) tell the stories of people taking a stand on crucial political issues, often against a huge well-oiled machine. For instance, some of the stories covered are a couple of public librarians against the FBI and a few low ranking Marines taking on the military

industrial complex. Not only do the authors interview these “ordinary heroes,” but they give a good amount of information on the political backdrop the actions took place in; we don’t *just* hear about how activists in New Orleans are fighting for the poor black neighborhoods there, we get to hear about how the Bush administration totally dropped the ball on the Hurricane Katrina situation and the ugliness of the political aftermath. The stories are interspersed with shorter, similar stands from yesteryear, like Rosa Parks and Daniel Ellsberg.

This book was published about seven years ago, at a time when I was kind of taking a break from the news and politics. So although I had heard about some of these stories, there was a lot of new information here. The essays managed to convey a lot of information without getting bogged down in it. Each essay is fairly quick, and each one deals with a different subject, so it stays pretty fresh. I know reading hundreds of pages on one political subject can be daunting, even if one is interested in the subject, and this book avoids that problem entirely. The common thread is of course injustice (the “madness” that is being stood up to), but all the stories show a different facet.

The writing itself could be somewhat corny at times, but in a charming way (“But as the Bush administration was about to learn, these librarians were not going to be so easily ‘shushed’”). Also, despite being ostensibly inspiring stories about people standing up and being successful, some of the resolutions were still heartbreaking to me—for instance, in the case of the Jena Six.

I would like to see a book like this published regularly, maybe twice a year: there is *so much* going on and although people do stand up to injustice, a lot of times those stories aren’t told enough. It is easy to feel hopeless. As was mentioned in the book, it can be very lonely and even dangerous to make a principled stand. Hearing about people doing it, and being even moderately successful, is heartening.

Paul Ivanov says

My labmate Tim sent me an email on Wednesday (April 15th) saying that Amy Goodman “Democracy Now! fame, and my heroin” [sic:] was speaking on campus at noon. The place was packed, and it’s the best way I could have imagined to snap back out of the Qualifying Exam bubble I’ve spent the last several months in, and re-engage with the world at large.

One of the excuses for the tour is the paperback release of *Standing up to the Madness: Ordinary Heroes in Extraordinary Times* by Amy and David Goodman.

Now that I’m a tenured grad student, I can actually allow myself to read for pleasure – guilt free! So I went to the library that Thursday, and picked up the hardcover, which came out last year.

What I liked about this book is what sets it apart from other political books of today. Amy and David don’t just provide us with a laundry list of wrongdoing by the Bush administration, congress, various governmental agencies, as well as highlighting some of the ongoing local struggles. Though the book is chock-full of such details, they are all provided in the context of a particular vignette. What’s more – instead of simply stating the problems, or providing an outline of the authors’ opinions regarding what course of action should be taken, the book highlights the work average citizens have already done to oppose injustice, censorship, racism, etc. One example is T-shirt “terrorist” Raed Jarrar, who wore a shirt with the words “We will not be silent” – written in both English and Arabic – a reference to the White Rose – and was forced to put another shirt over it because JetBlue customers were threatened or offended. With the help of the ACLU, Jarrar sued

the TSA and JetBlue, who ended up paying \$240,000 to settle the discrimination charges.

Like Hochschild's King Leopold's Ghost (1), this book is non-fiction that reads like fiction. Not because it is well-written, though it is, but because of the shocking realities of the content. Leadership cannot be taught, it can only be revealed. Standing up to the Madness gives us dozens of snapshots of the ongoing work of ordinary heroes.

1. which, after I first read it in 2001 became my measuring stick for gauging the quality of non-fiction?

Timothy Riley says

Amy Goodman rocks the party that rocks my body...no seriously, these were some great stories of common Americans that aren't blinded by the b.s. that this government forces down our throats. The chapter about the objectors to war was great-I am thinking very few service people know about it. The chapter on the Jena-6 PROVES that not much has changed since the Civil Rights movement in the dirty south. Trayvon Martin's murder is just another example. Would any town watch person in an all-black community chase down a white kid walking around their neighborhood? I don't think so. Things need to change and people like her won't stop until they do.

Kimberly Benson says

I enjoyed this book a lot. It is a fast inspiring read. I enjoyed the part about the White Rose:"We will not be silent. We are your guilty conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!" written during Nazi Germany. Any to tie it to today- there is a contemporary campaign will shirts that say "We will not be silent" in both english and arabic.

Patti says

This is a book that makes you proud of the Americans who stand up and say "No! No more, things have to change." Many of the people who are profiled in this book did not set out to take a stand, they made that decision on the fly and made a difference.

My favorite section is the one about the students at Wilton High School who were putting on a play, "Voices in Conflict" featuring the words of Iraq War Veterans. They had previously done plays that dealt with graphic sex, homosexuality, and violence, but this play was banned from being performed at the school. The subject of this play was war and that would not be tolerated.

The banning backfired because the story spread and the students were asked to do nine performances of the play at the National Theater in New York City and other theaters in Connecticut. After the last performance, the actors stated their feelings as they stood on the stage.

"Why is talking about the war 'sensational and inappropriate'?"

Since when has war not been graphic and violent?

If they consider the words of the soldiers biased, why do they allow an army recruiter into the school cafeteria?

Why has the school been silent on these issues?

Why did it take a New York Times article to start discussion?"

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨*♥? says

Q:

It is business as usual in our one-party state.

(c)

Q:

In 1942, a group of students and their professor at the University of Munich in Germany responded to the tyranny and oppression of the Nazi regime by secretly publishing and distributing a series of six leaflets. This nonviolent resistance group called itself the White Rose. Its leaders included Hans and Sophie Scholl, a brother and sister who were devout Christians, and philosophy professor Kurt Huber. The students typed the leaflets, ran off copies, and secretly sent them by courier to cities around Nazi Germany to be left in public places. They wanted to ensure that Germans could never say that they didn't know what was happening in their name. And they hoped to inspire their fellow citizens to rise up and actively oppose the Nazi regime. Hans and Sophie Scholl and Kurt Huber were caught by the Gestapo while distributing their sixth leaflet. They were tried for political crimes in the Volksgerichtshof, the so-called People's Court, and beheaded. Today, numerous buildings and streets in Germany are named for the Scholls and Huber. Polls show that they are considered to be among the most admired people in all of German history.

As their fourth leaflet implored: We will not be silent. We are your guilty conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!

(c)

Q:

is up. You gotta go," he said. "You can't be in here protesting." The silver-haired vet was baffled. Then the officer pointed to the problem: Ferner's black T-shirt said "Veterans For Peace." It featured a picture of a dove carrying an olive branch, the logo of the national peace group. This could mean only one thing: The aging seaman was a threat to national security. Ferner tried to convince Adkins to go back to his duties "guarding against serious terrorists." The officer flipped open his badge and said, "No, not with that shirt. You're protesting and you have to go." Ferner facetiously suggested the cop arrest him for his T-shirt. Within seconds, the veteran was wearing handcuffs and heading to jail. The charges: disorderly conduct, a weapons charge (Ferner was carrying a small Swiss Army knife), and criminal trespassing. He was fined \$275. "I'm sure I could go back to Officer Adkins's fiefdom with a shirt that said, 'Nuke all the hajjis,' or 'Show us your tits,' or any number of truly obscene things and no one would care. "I have to believe that this whole country has not yet gone insane, just the government," said this veteran for peace. "This kind of behavior can't be tolerated. It must be challenged."

Judith says

This is a beautiful and inspirational book about the real heroes in America, mostly people you never heard of. The most interesting story to me was the one about the 4 librarians in Connecticut who launched a civil liberties lawsuit against the American government and the FBI, when they were served with a "demand" for library records to show who was reading what books and what sites each individual was checking out on the

library computers. As an attorney, i found it fascinating that the American government circumvented the entire legal system by serving this demand and a gag order simultaneously, thus avoiding the usual remedies offered by the subpoena and/or court orders. In other words, our very system of government was just ignored following 9/11, with that ridiculous Patriot Act. I knew this before, but it is so dreadful to see the exact tricks they used. The only reason I couldn't give it 5 stars is that it was somewhat repetitive and not easy reading, but that is really my problem. It's not a cliffhanger and it's nonfiction.

Julie says

Well-documented and greatly-written in order not to burden the reader with facts and numbers, it is highly enlightening and kindles the flame of resistance in all of us. It is a perfect read in times of worldwide selfishness, open your mind, open your eyes and realize that not everything has to stay the way the politics put them.

Read this now! join the movement that wants to make our world a better place for all!

Valerie says

Dedication: "To our extraordinary mother, Dorrie Goodman, our hero"

This is a 2008 book, so of course it needs updates. Later books do include updates on the cases in question.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements (Many of these people are associates of Democracy Now!)

INTRODUCTION: "We Will Not Be Silent" Epigraph: "First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Next they fight you. Then you win.--attributed to Mohandas K Gandhi"

I STANDING UP TO THE MADNESS (note that each new section can be easily located, because sections are separated by a black page).

Turning Point: The Montgomery Bus Boycott

1 Reclaiming Common Ground (New Orleans (specifically the Lower Ninth Ward) after Katrina).

2 T Is for Terrorist (A man is arrested and forcibly removed from a plane because he has a shirt that says 'We will not be silent' in English and Arabic.)

3 Librarians Unbound (One of the most pernicious parts about 'intelligence' personnel demanding that librarians release records on what 'suspects' read is that the librarians are forbidden to say who has been approached, and about whom. Then the government agencies argue in court that nobody's constitutional rights have been encroached upon, because nobody is allowed to complain about it in public court.

II SCIENCE UNDER SIEGE

Turning Point: Standing Up to The Madness in 1971: The Pentagon Papers

4 Some Don't Like It Hot--An important part of the debate between scientists and the growing class of 'know-nothings' is a failure to recognize the importance of uncertainty and peer review in science. The basic method of scientific research is to frame a hypothesis, and then try very hard to prove it untrue. It's not NECESSARILY the case that something that isn't proven untrue is therefore true...the problem may be in the research design. But the ATTEMPT to prove something untrue is the only way to test hypotheses. Therefore, the fact that scientists have tried to prove something untrue is not data in itself--it's methodology.

5 Psychologists in Denial--The fact that psychologists (nb--NOT psychiatrists) have participated maximally in the process of torturing 'suspects' is underreported (and often specifically denied by psychological associations). Part of the issue is logic-chopping. Thus, there's an attempt to argue that torture is not 'really' torture if it doesn't literally involve twisting limbs. Sleep deprivation, for example, is a TORTURE--and a very deadly one, sometimes causing brain damage or even death.

Also, there's an attempt to argue that constitutional and human rights don't apply in certain 'rights-free' zones--in Guantanamo; in non-Americans; in 'detainees' who somehow don't (theoretically) qualify as prisoners of war...

One of the reasons the UN established a UNIVERSAL Declaration of Human Rights is to prevent this sort of 'oh, this doesn't count' rationalization.

III STUDENTS STANDING UP

Turning Point: Standing Up to The Madness in 1976: The Soweto Uprising (note that many of these 'uprisings' are predominantly boycotts)

6 Voices in Conflict--Questions of the civil rights of students (free speech rights, free press rights, fourth amendment rights, etc) are often seeds fallen among thorns. In this case, student actors perform an honest play based on reminiscences of Iraq war veterans--and are censored and prevented from presenting the play. When professional actors and others hear of it, they offer the students a more open venue.

7 Justice in Jena--Imprisoning the victims of abuse is a common additional abuse--and when people come to protest from outside, the cry of 'outside agitators' is raised.

IV SOLDIERS OF CONSCIENCE

Turning Point: Standing Up to The Madness in The 1970s: The GI Movement (Resistance in Vietnam by soldiers, including desertion)

8 Peace Warriors--A soldier refuses to be redeployed to Iraq.

CONCLUSION: "We Are The Leaders We've Been Waiting For" (A guide to joining the resistance. This is probably the part most in need of updates).

NOTES (These are almost entirely bibliographical notes--but most of them are websites.

INDEX

Jan says

As a long-time admirer of Amy Goodman and "Democracy Now" I found these stories of integrity and bravery to be uplifting and hope-inspiring. Of particular interest, given the current issue with Edward Snowden, was Chapter 3: "Librarians Unbound". Looks like they were ahead of the game on what was going on under the Orwellian "PATRIOT" (Uniting (and) Strengthening America (by) Providing Appropriate Tools Required (to) Intercept (and) Obstruct Terrorism) Act.

As more media are owned by fewer and fewer people, voices like those of Amy Goodman become the more important and urgent to be heard.

Connie says

Real life stories of people who stood up to injustice and changed their part of the world

Pam Rasmussen says

If you listen to Democracy Now religiously like I do, then this book doesn't add much, since it's mainly a collection of her reporting around a theme. But she does add a little more detail, and offers a very inspiring closing chapter that offers lessons and hope for everyone.

Sabiel says

Although some of these essays are a little repetitive, two of them are **so** good that it is worth getting the book just to read them. One is the story of the students at Wilton High School who battled a scarily pro-Bush Administration censorious regime at *their own high school* in order to put on a play that was not even anti-war, but merely used *soldiers' own first-person narratives* to convey the brutal reality of wartime.

The second, equally stellar essay profiles heroic librarians [also in Connecticut] "on the frontline of democracy," as they battle the Bush administration's US Attorney in CT [who boasts that "The Patriot Act is my mistress"] over a National Security Letter request for patron records. I can't recall reading another piece that so perfectly captures the "banal evil" of the Patriot Act.
