

1620 » Seeking religious freedom, the Pilgrims arrive in New

England and establish America as a refuge for dissidents. 1635 » Roger

Williams, a devout Calvinist, opposes state-enforced religion as inconsistent with spiritual faith. Puritan leader Cotton Mather labels him “the first rebel against the divine church-order established in the wilderness.” Williams is later expelled from Massachusetts Bay Colony.

1637 » Anne Hutchinson is banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for expressing dissenting religious

beliefs. 1765 » Colonists protest the Stamp Act, Britain’s tax on printed material, with peaceful demonstrations and

violent attacks. 1773 » To protest the Tea Act, Bostonians dump 342 crates of East India Company Tea into Boston Harbor.

1775 » Quakers organize the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. 1786 » Daniel Shays leads a farmers’

rebellion against mounting debt. Journeymen printers in Philadelphia strike over wages. 1798 » The Bill of Rights is adopted; its First

Amendment adds freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition to the Constitution. » The Sedition Act is passed, making it a crime to

“write, print, utter or publish any false, scandalous and malicious... writing against the government of the United States” with intent to defame the said

government or to bring [it] into contempt or disrepute. The General Assemblies of Virginia and Kentucky protest against the Act. 1820-1840s » Communities

in Indiana, New York, Massachusetts, and elsewhere provide havens for dissenters seeking alternative economic and social arrangements. 1829 » Working Man’s

Party creates the first large-scale labor movement, calling for public schools, equal property and equal privileges. 1835 » Southern abolitionists help African slaves

escape to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Pamphlets illustrating slavery’s horrors are disseminated widely. In 1835 President Jackson proposes prohibiting the mailing

of abolitionist publications, in response to Southerners’ fears over slave rebellion. 1831 » Nat Turner leads a bloody slave revolt in Virginia. » William Lloyd Garrison founds the New

England Anti-Slavery Society. 1845-1850s » Escaped slave Sojourner Truth travels and preaches abolition and equality for women. 1848 » The Seneca Falls Convention declares equal

rights for men and women. 1863 » Slavery is abolished by the Emancipation Proclamation. 1872 » Victoria Woodhull, who advocates women’s equal rights, suffrage, and free love, becomes

the first woman to be nominated for president. » Susan B. Anthony is arrested and tried for breaking the law by voting. 1860-70s » Low wages and child labor practices fuel discontent and lead to

a rise of organizations such as the Knights of Labor (founded in 1869). Business leaders call on police to crush strikes and petition courts to restrict union activities. 1870-90s » Miners and factory workers

join striking railroad workers. Violence erupts, and federal troops and state militia help crush the strikes. Legal injunctions prevent labor resistance, making the courts an effective ally of big business.

1916 » Margaret Sanger is jailed for opening the nation’s first birth control clinic in Brownsville, Brooklyn, NY. 1917-1918 » The Espionage Act of 1917 prohibits vaguely defined

antwar activities. » More than 1,500 people are charged under the Sedition Act of 1918, which imposes heavy penalties for “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the Constitution, government, military, or

the flag. » Rose Pastor Stokes is sentenced to ten years for saying, “The government is for the profiteers and I am for the people.” Eugene V. Debs, a prominent socialist leader, is sentenced to ten years for a speech analyzing the

economic causes of war and attacking the Espionage Act. 1918 » The American Civil Liberties Union is founded to defend the right to dissent. 1919 » The Supreme Court upholds convictions under the Sedition Act. Justice Oliver Wendell

Holmes Jr. writes that when the exercise of free speech constitutes a “clear and present danger” to the nation, the government may suspend the right of free speech. » Mine workers in Matewan, West Virginia, strike against low wages and dangerous

working conditions. Federal troops crush the strike. 1920 » The 19th Amendment is ratified. Women gain the right to vote. 1930 » The Communist Party forms Unemployed Councils, which, in 1931 and 1932, lead massive hunger demonstrations.

1959 » Congress passes the Alien Registration Act (or Smith Act), making it unlawful to advocate or teach the overthrow of the U.S. government by violence, or to organize or become a member of a group that does. Eventually, more than 160 Communist Party

members are tried and found guilty. The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the act in 1951, although it overturns the decision in 1957. 1940-50s » Paul Robeson is banned from performing in many communities after he criticizes U.S. foreign policies. His passport is revoked

after he speaks against sending U.S. troops to Korea. In 1958 the Supreme Court declares such suspensions unconstitutional. 1954 » In Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to cede her seat in the front of a bus to a white passenger. The Montgomery bus

boycotts follow, demanding the desegregation of buses. In November 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court declares bus segregation unconstitutional. 1942-64 » Students conduct lunch-counter sit-ins throughout the South to protest racist policies. 1963 » Freedom rides mobilize students,

clergy, and others to attack segregation in interstate travel. 1964 » Students from around the country come to Mississippi during “Freedom Summer” to protest against race discrimination. » Civil Rights Act is passed. 1965 » Labor leaders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta organize migrant workers

to strike against California grape growers. 1967 » Voting Rights Act is passed. 1966-68 » Campuses erupt in protests against the Vietnam War. 1969 » Patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, confront police conducting a routine raid on gay gathering places, launching the gay liberation

movement. 1970 » Some 10,000 gays and lesbians march for Gay Pride Week to commemorate the first anniversary of Stonewall. » National Guardsmen fire on anti-Vietnam war protesters at Kent State University, killing four students. 1984 » At a political demonstration during the Republican National Convention

in Texas, Gregory Johnson sets fire to an American flag. Johnson is convicted for desecration of a venerated object. Overturning the conviction, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals says, “Recognizing the right to differ is the centerpiece of our First Amendment Freedoms... a government cannot mandate by fiat a feeling of unity

in its citizens.” 1988-89 » Members of ACTUP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) demonstrate on Wall Street and around city hall, demanding “a comprehensive national policy on AIDS” and “increased drug research and testing.” 1998 » Antiglobalization organizations gather in Seattle to protest the World Trade Organization meeting.

2001 » In the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Congress approves the USA PATRIOT Act, which creates a federal crime of “domestic terrorism” broadly defined to include acts intended “to influence the policy of a government by intimidation and coercion.” » White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer warns

Americans that “they need to watch what they say, watch what they do.” » Major TV networks agree to abide by videotaped statements from Osama bin Laden and his followers. » Two newspaper columnists, one in Oregon and another in Texas, are fired for criticizing President Bush’s actions on September 11. » Attorney General John Ashcroft testifies before

the Senate Judiciary Committee, “To those who sear peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty my message is this: Your tactics only aid terrorists; they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. They give ammunition to America’s enemies, and pass to America’s friends.” 2002 » Protesters at political events attended by President Bush are confined to

specially designated remote “free speech zones,” where the president cannot see them; spectators and supporters of the administration may stand anywhere. 2003 » The Pentagon blocks news organizations from taking photographs of the coffins of service members killed in Iraq. » Radio stations nationwide ban music superstars the Dixie Chicks because lead singer Natalie Maines

says she is “ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas.” Station managers say they are prompted by calls from listeners who claim criticism of the president is unpatriotic. 2004 » CBS rejects a MoveOn.org paid political ad critical of the government’s economic policies. » Walt Disney Co. refuses to distribute Michael Moore’s film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which is critical of the Bush presidency.

It could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

JAMES MADISON, 1787

Always America will be agitated and turbulent. This day it is taking shape, not to be less so, but to be more so....

WALT WHITMAN, 1856

If there is any fixed star in our constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.

JUSTICE ROBERT JACKSON, 1943

We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. When the loyal opposition dies, I think the soul of America dies with it.

EDWARD R. MURROW, 1954

We must go against the prevailing wind... We must dissent from the apathy. We must dissent from the fear, the hatred, and the mistrust. We must dissent from a government that has left its young without jobs, education, or hope... We must dissent because America can do better, because America has no choice but to do better.

JUSTICE THURGOOD MARSHALL, 1992

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprave agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, 1857

To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public.

PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1918

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither.

BEN FRANKLIN, 1759

Dissent is the highest form of patriotism.

PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON

dissent

THE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

DISSENT, REBELLION, AND ALL-AROUND HELL-RAISING REMAIN THE TRUE DUTY OF PATRIOTS.

National Coalition Against Censorship

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

275 SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY WWW.NCAC.ORG

BARBARA EHRENREICH, 1991