

EXCERPTS FROM SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER: VOICES FROM BEYOND THE DARK

a play by Ariel Dorfman

Adapted from **Speak Truth to Power**, a book by Kerry Kennedy.

Anatole Taubman betritt die Bühne.

ANATOLE TAUBMAN

It is not enough to allow dissent. We must demand it. For there is much to dissent from. We dissent from the fact that millions are trapped in poverty while the nation grows rich. We dissent from the conditions and hatred which deny a full life to our fellow citizens because of the color of their skin. We dissent from the monstrous absurdity of a world where nations stand poised to destroy one another, and men must kill their fellow men. We dissent from the sight of most of mankind living in poverty, stricken by disease, threatened by hunger and doomed to an early death after a life of unremitting labor. We dissent from cities which blunt our senses and turn the ordinary acts of daily life into a painful struggle. We dissent from the willful, heedless destruction of natural pleasure and beauty. We dissent from all those structures--of technology and of society itself--which strip from the individual the dignity and warmth of sharing in the common tasks of his community and his country.

Anatole Taubman kündigt die weiteren SchauspielerInnen an.

*Die SchauspielerInnen stehen aufgereiht auf der Bühne.
Man und Woman haben eine Sonderposition. Sie geben
das Startsignal zum Stück.*

LEA BLAIR WHITCHER (Talking about a Revolution by Tracy Chapman):

Don't you know you're talking
about a revolution It sounds like a
whisper

Don't you know they're talking
about a revolution It sounds like a
whisper

While they're standing in the welfare lines
Crying at the doorsteps of those
armies of salvation Wasting time in
unemployment lines
Sitting around waiting for a promotion

Don't you know you're talking
about a revolution It sounds like a
whisper

Poor people are gonna
rise up
And get their share
Poor people are gonna
rise up
And take what's theirs

Don't you know you better
run, run, run, run, run, run,
run, run, run, run, run, run,
run
Oh I said you better run, run,
run, run, run, run, run, run,
run, run, run, run, run

Finally the tables are starting
to turn Talking about a
revolution

Finally the tables are
starting to turn Talking
about a revolution oh no
Talking about a revolution
oh no

While they're standing in the welfare lines
Crying at the doorsteps of those
armies of salvation Wasting time in
unemployment lines
Sitting around waiting for a promotion

Don't you know you're talking
about a revolution It sounds like a
whisper

And finally the tables are
starting to turn Talking about
a revolution
Finally the tables are starting to turn

Talking about a
revolution oh no
Talking about a
revolution oh no
Talking about a
revolution oh no

Man gibt First Voice

ein Zeichen.

FIRST VOICE (MALE)

Courage begins with
one voice. It's that
simple.

I did what I had
to do. That is
what we know.

You walk into the corridor of death and you know.

MAN

They know. They can't say they don't know.

WOMAN

They can't say they don't walk into this with their eyes open.

*Man gibt First Voice
ein Zeichen.*

FIRST VOICE (MALE)

You walk into the corridor of death and you know. You know this
moment might be your last.

SECOND VOICE (FEMALE)

You walk into the corridor of death. . .

FIRST VOICE (MALE)

. . . and you know, you know this moment might be your last.

SECOND VOICE (FEMALE)

That is what you know.

FOURTH VOICE (FEMALE)

I know what it is to wait in the dark for torture and what it is to wait in the dark for truth. I did what I had to do. Anything else would have tasted like ashes.

WOMAN

They can't say they don't know.

Man und Woman gehen ins

*Publi
kum.*

THIRD VOICE (MALE, Guillaume Ngefa Atondoko, Congo)

I am told that as a child I reached out to others. I befriended pygmies, even though in my community, in the Congo, they were considered to be animals. I cut bread with them, I brought them to our house, I gave them my clothes. It was sick to society that I associated with pygmies, but I saw them as my friends, just like anyone else.

MAN

Guillaume Ngefa Atondoko.

Yes. He befriended pygmies as a child. Yes. Of course.

FIRST VOICE (MALE, Hafez Abu Seada, Egypt)

My name is Hafez Abu Seada.

These scars across my face are from when they pushed me through a window. They asked me who was responsible for managing everything here at the Egyptian Human Rights Organization. I told them it was me. I wrote the report, I read it, I reviewed it, and I decided to publish it in a newspaper. This is

our job, to point the finger at government errors. If we don't do this, who will?

SECOND VOICE (FEMALE, Digna Ochoa, Mexico)

If we don't do this, who will?

My name is Digna Ochoa. I am a nun and a lawyer. My father was a union leader in Veracruz, Mexico. In the sugar factory where he worked, he was involved in the struggles for running water, roads, and securing land certificates. Then he was “disappeared” and tortured —the charges against him, fabricated. And then I myself was “disappeared” and held *incommunicado* for eight days by the police. Now I felt in the flesh what my father had felt, what other people had suffered. I've always felt anger at the suffering of others. If an act of injustice doesn't provoke anger in me, it could be seen as indifference, passivity. . . . One time we filed a *habeas corpus* on behalf of a man who had been “disappeared” for twenty days. The authorities denied having him in custody and then denied us access to the state hospital where we knew he was being held. During a change in shifts, I slipped in. I got to the door of his room, took a deep breath, opened the door violently and yelled at the federal judicial police officers inside. I told them they had to leave immediately because I was the person's lawyer and needed to speak with him. They didn't know how to react, so they left. I had two minutes, but it was enough to get him to sign a piece of paper proving he was in the hospital. Then the police came back. Fierce. They didn't expect me to assume an attack position—the only position in karate I know from movies, I suppose. Of course, I don't *really* know karate, but they thought I was going to attack. Trembling inside, I said that if they laid a hand on me they'd see what would happen. And they drew back, saying, “You're threatening us.”

And I said, “Take it any way you want.”

FIFTH VOICE (MALE, Doan Viet, Vietnam)

My name is Doan Viet Hoat.

I spent twenty years in Vietnamese prisons. Four of those were in isolation. I was forbidden pen, paper, books. To keep my spirits up, I sang, I talked to myself. The guards thought I was mad, but I told them if I did not talk to myself I would go mad. I tried to think of my cell as home, as though I had entered a religious way of life, like a monk. Zen meditation helped – with it you turn inside. And I managed to secretly write a report about conditions in the camp. I felt that if I kept silent in jail, then the dictators had won. I wanted to prove that you cannot, by force, silence someone who doesn't agree with you.

I continued to fight, even from within the prison walls. If we don't do this, who will?

THIRD VOICE (MALE, Koigo Wa Wamwere, Kenya)

One night, when I had escaped to Uganda, five people, all masked, kidnapped me and brought me to Kenya. I woke up in a sea of water. I was naked and had been sitting in that basement cell all night. I stayed in that water for about one month. They could freeze it, keep the water cold that you shivered uncontrollably, and then make it so hot you felt like you were suffocating. I was interrogated during the day. They would threaten to throw me off the roof.

WOMAN

A lie. We never threatened to throw him off the roof. Koigi Wa Wamwere is lying. Yes.

MAN

Yes. He lied about the treatment of forest workers in Kenya. And he lied when he wrote about corruption in government-controlled companies in Kenya.

WOMAN

He lies all the time. We should have thrown him off the roof.

THIRD VOICE (MALE, Koigo Wa Wamwere, Kenya)

Being in prison is tough, but it takes less courage to survive it than to

come out of prison and continue where you left off, knowing you could go back. And I continued. I continued.

FIRST VOICE (MALE, Sezgin Turikulu, Turkey)

When I am in court here in Turkey, eye to eye with people that I am accusing of torture, when they look into my eyes and I don't look away, when they look into my eyes and I don't look away, when they look into my eyes and I don't look away, I feel that I have more courage than they do. Of course, I was followed from the moment I stepped foot outside my door every morning.

There was nothing to do but find humor in the situation. Most of the time when people are killed they were assassinated with one bullet from behind. At our human rights organization, we joked at the notion of placing mirrors on our shoulders so we could see who was creeping up! So we could see who was creeping up from behind to try and kill us!

FOURTH VOICE (FEMALE, Marina Pisklakova, Russia)

The phone rang and the voice said, the man said: "I know who you are. I know your name. I know where you are located. I know where you live. And I am going to come with some guys and kill you."

MAN

I know your name, Marina Pisklakova. I know where you live, Marina, my Marina. I am going to kill you, Marina Pisklakova.

FOURTH VOICE (FEMALE, Marina Pisklakova, Russia)

I started the first domestic violence hot-line in Russia in 1993 almost by accident. My son has a class-mate and his mother asked me for advice. When a button fell off her husband's suit and it was not fixed quickly, he took a shoe and slapped her in the face. For two weeks she couldn't go out. She called me one evening, really distressed, half her face black and blue. I asked her, "Why don't you just leave him?" And she said, "Where would I go, Marina? I depend on him completely."

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE, Juliana Dogbadzi, Ghana)

My name is Juliana Dogbadzi.

I am from Ghana. When I was seven years old, my parents took me from our home and sent me to a shrine where I was a slave to a fetish priest for seventeen years. My grandfather, they said, had stolen two dollars. When members of my family began to die, a soothsayer said that my family must bring a young girl to the shrine to appease the gods.

SECOND VOICE (FEMALE)

Twelve of us, four women and eight children, lived in a one-room, thatched-roof house. No windows, no doors. Rain got in. The snakes got in. The ceiling was low, just shy of our heads, and we all slept together on a mat on the floor. A typical day in the shrine: you wake up at five in the morning, go to the stream so far away to get water for the compound, sweep, prepare meals for the priest, not eating any yourself, go to the

farm, work until six o'clock, and return to sleep after scrounging for leftovers. At night the priest would call one of us to his room.

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE, Juliana Dogbadzi, Ghana)

I was about twelve when I was first raped. I had to do something that would change my life. Finally, one day, I got my chance. I don't know where my sudden confidence came from, but all my fear had disappeared. With my new born baby strapped to my back and my first child, Wonder, in my hands, I escaped through the bush.

Now that I have escaped, I help to diminish the women's fears by telling them my story. What I do is dangerous, but I am prepared to die for a good cause. This was my weapon. This is still my weapon.

FIFTH VOICE (MALE, Elie Wiesel, USA)

My name is Elie Wiesel. I like the weak and small. That's why in every book of mine, there's always a child, always an old man, always. Because they are so neglected by the government and by society. So I give them shelter. I think of the children today who need our voices. I owe something to the people left behind. And I hope that my past should not become your children's future.

FIRST VOICE (MALE, Gabor Gombos, Hungary)

My Name is Gabor Gombos. I am from Hungary. I am schizophrenic. If I don't take these pills every day, I start hearing voices. I spent seven years in asylums. My mother was also schizophrenic, and when they forced her to take medicines against her will, they killed her. When they tried the same medicines on me, I escaped, and founded an organization of survivors of insane asylums. If I told you I am like Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, you would laugh. But I am telling you, the struggle for people with mental disabilities, our struggle,

is no less a fight for human rights than that of Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King.

THIRD VOICE (MALE, José Zalaquett, Chile)

We had some protection. Had I been at greater risk, I cannot claim that I would have proceeded as I did. I do not claim to have innate bravery. Rather, I'm very normal and try to shun danger when possible. In the end, whatever bravery I displayed was an exercise in learning how to live with fears. After a while, I no longer took notice of the danger, in the same way a surgeon becomes accustomed to the sight of blood.

MAN

José Zalaquett. Yes. Of course. That lawyer from Chile who organized the defense of the prisoners after the coup. That lawyer who went into the concentration camps where nobody could go.

WOMAN

That lawyer we jailed twice. Zalaquett. Like that lawyer from Argentina, Juan Méndez – he wanted to find the *desaparecidos*.

MAN

We disappeared him for a few days, so he could know what it feels like, give him a taste of it, five sessions with him a day, so he could get a quick taste of it.

CHOIR

Even in dark
times even in
very dark times

there were people who stood up to protect others
there was at least one person who stood up to protect others.
Let it be said that in times like these there was at least one
person who stood up to protect others.
Few and far between
We have seen that light many times.

MAN

Have they? Have they really seen that light many times?
How many lights have they really seen? How many lives have
they really saved? Few and far between, this is what they know:
what it is to walk into the corridor of death.

WOMAN

And this is what they really fear: that nobody cares, that people
forget, that people watch t.v. and say these are not their
problems and then have dinner and then go to sleep. People
go to sleep.

MAN

People go to sleep. That is what they know and fear. They know
that three billion people live in poverty and forty thousand
children die each day of diseases that could be prevented.

WOMAN

They know that the three richest people in the world. . .

MAN

. . . have assets that exceed the combined gross domestic
product of the poorest forty eight countries. And that is not going
to change by saving one life and then another and then another.
Nothing is ever going to change. This is what they fear: that

nobody really cares.

THIRD VOICE (MALE, Oscar Arrias Sanchez, Costa Rica)

My name is Oscar Arias Sánchez. And I care.

Military spending is not merely a consumer excess; instead it represents a huge perversion in the priorities of our civilization: 780 billion dollars each year invested in instruments of death, in guns and fighters designed to kill people that could be spent on human development. If we channeled just five per cent of that figure over the next ten years, just five per cent of those billions, into anti-poverty programs, all of the world's population would enjoy basic social services. The poor of the world are crying out for schools and doctors, not guns and generals.

FIRST VOICE (MALE, Kailash Satyarthi, India)

My name is Kailash Satyarthi.

When I was five or six years old, on the very first day I went to school I found a cobbler and his son sitting right on the doorstep of my school. They were cleaning and polishing shoes of children. As soon as I entered the school, there was a lot of joy and happiness. I was carrying new books, a new bag, new clothes, and a new uniform. Everything was new. Then I saw this child and I stopped. For me, this was the first encounter with child labor, and I thought: a child of my age is sitting there polishing other children's' shoes. And here I am going to school. So I wanted to ask the child "Why?" but I did not have enough courage.

I entered the school and my teacher welcomed me. I still did not ask "Why" although I still had that feeling in my heart that I should. A few hours later I assembled all my courage and I asked my teacher. I wanted to know why this child of my age was sitting right on the doorstep cleaning shoes. So he looked at

me in a strange way and said, “What are you asking here? You come here to study and not for all these unnecessary questions. It is not your business.”

I was angry. I went home and asked my mother the same question.

She said, “Oh, you have not seen the many children who are working. It is their destiny. They are poor people. They have to work.” I was told not to worry about them.

But one day I went to the father - the cobbler - and said, “I watch this boy every day. I have a question. Why don’t you send your child to school? ” The father looked at me for two minutes but could not answer. Then he slowly replied, “I am untouchable and we are born to work.”

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE, Malala Yousafzai, Pakistan)

My name is Malala Yousafzai. In January, 2009, when I was in 7th grade, I started blogging for the BBC about how the Taliban edict banning girls education impacted me and my Pashtun community from the Swat Valley in Pakistan. I wanted to scream, shout and tell the whole world what we were going through. But it was not possible. The Taliban would have killed me, my father, my whole family. So I chose to write with a different name. And it worked. My valley has been freed. On the 9th of October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends too. They thought that the bullets would silence us. But they failed. And then, out of that silence came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change our aims and stop our ambitions but nothing changed in my life except this: Weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala.

My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. My dreams are the same.

FIFTH VOICE (MALE, Bobby Muller, USA)

We don't have the right to lose hope.

My name is Bobby Muller.

One of the things that really pissed me off when we were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for our work against land-mines, was the romanticized treatment in the media, to make people feel good – inspired. It was horseshit. People think that because there's an international treaty, that it's done, the job's over. Look, we live our lives largely insulated from the depth of despair of pain and anguish. That's why I feel so strongly in going after laws and making them real – the belief that you cannot allow the genocides, the Cambodias, the Rwandas of the world to play out. Because then it's a breeding ground and sows the seeds of destruction. One day, that degree of madness is going to walk up the block and come into your neighborhood.

FOURTH VOICE (FEMALE, Gertrud Kurz, Switzerland)

Es isch am früechä Morgä vom Buess und Bätig 1942 gsi: Vome einsame Gränzposchte höch obe ide Oberwalliser Alpe stöh zwöi Jüdischi Familie. Sie sie müed. U sie hei hunger. U si wöllesech über d Schwizer Gränze vordr Deportation ids Todeslager rettä. Usicher was er söu mache geit dr Gränzer ids Wirtshuus u lütet mer a: Es sigi Flüchtling da, aber er wüss nid ob er se dörf inelaa. So wit obe ide Bärge wüss är gar nid, ob d Gränze mittlerwile wider offe sig. U hüt, ame heilige Fiirtig, erreich är ja schliessli ou niemmer, dunge ufem Polzeiposchte. Ja, hani gseit. D Gränze isch off! Lönd sie die Flüchtling ine und schicket sie sie so schnäll wies gaat zu mir.

Mi Name isch Gertrud Kurz. I gloube, dass mer d Ungerächtigkeit müesse erkenne und sie furchtlos bekämpfe. Egal wo sie üs begänet. Wir müesse häre luegu und nis la störe. Wül wär siede die Verantwortliche? Sis die oberste Landesbehörde, dr General, die kantonale Polizeidirektore, oder sis nid zlescht mir säuber? Mängisch nämemer Befehl und Verbot grad so entgäge als chiem e Protest gar nid i Frag. Üsi Ufgab isch de Lüt id Ouge zluege u dert dr wahre Mönsch zentdeckä. I so schwirige Zitä müesse mer trotz de tägliche Erschwärnis spontan handlä, improvisierä, organisiere, angeri zum Häufe motiviere. Mir müesse um Solidarität bitte, Choscht u Logis uftribe, bide Behörde vorspräche u se beharrlich u immer wider ufs neue ad Mönschlechteit erinnere.

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE)

Every time I felt frightened, I would invite all our friends, other activists, and we would have a good laugh. A sense of humor, and the warmth of the people around, has made me survive. If I was sitting by myself, isolated, I would have gone crazy.

FOURTH VOICE (FEMALE, Anonymous, Sudan)

My name
is...

My name
is. . .

I cannot reveal my name. I am from Sudan. My parents taught us, as children, how to love our people, however simple, however poor. Our home was always a busy home. We always had somebody who was sick coming for treatment, or giving birth in our house. I learned to regard all the Sudanese as my own family. But I cannot reveal my name. Those whom the government suspects of working on human rights are arrested,

often tortured in ghost houses or, if one is lucky, put in prison. If I revealed my name I could not do my work.

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE, Rigoberta Menchu, Guatemala)

My name is Rigoberta Menchú.

We have to reinvent hope all over again. We are the ones who have, who will have, the last words.

SECOND VOICE (FEMALE, Marian Wright Edelman, USA)

In America we have more riches than we know what to do with, yet we let millions of children go hungry, without shelter and other basic necessities. In a nation that has been blessed with a nine-trillion dollar economy, poverty is killing children, more slowly, but surely as guns. I am clear that if we do not save our children, we are not going to be able to save ourselves.

Everybody needs to open up the envelope of their soul and get their orders from inside. And nobody has ever said it was going to be easy. You don't have to see the whole stairway to take the first step. If you can't run, walk, if you can't walk, crawl, if you can't crawl, just keep moving. Just keep moving, Marian Wright Edelman, just keep moving.

THIRD VOICE (MALE, Kofi Woods, Liberia)

My name is Samuel Kofi Woods. I am from Liberia.

You walk into the corridor of death and you know this moment might be your last. I went through this. But when a nation is so consumed in evil, it's difficult to see alternatives, unless people of conviction stand up. Even if you know this moment might be your last. If we don't do this, who will?

FIFTH VOICE (MALE)

If I turn my back and walk away, who is going to

do this work? If we don't do this, who will?

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE)

Did it take courage? I would say instead it took stubbornness. Like a metal chord inside.

FIRST VOICE

Courage begins with
one voice.

CHOIR

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this, who
will?

If we don't do this –

*Man und Woman
gehen auf die Bühne.*

WOMAN

- who will?

MAN

Yes. The names. José Ramos Horta from East Timor and his
useless

Nobel Peace Prize and the Dalai Lama and that judge from
Spain, Baltasar Garzón, and Freedom Neruda, that journalist
from Ivory Coast, of all places, and Maria Teresa Tula. . .

WOMAN

Maria Teresa Tula from El Salvador who was arrested so many
times and threatened so many times and just wouldn't stop, she
just wouldn't stop looking for the disappeared.

MAN

She just wouldn't stop. . .

WOMAN

. . . and meddling Natassa Kandic from Serbia and that tireless,
bothersome Jaime Prieto from Colombia and Vaclav Havel and . .
. All those names. Names I won't forget, not me.

MAN

Names we won't forget. Others will forget.

WOMAN

Others will forget these names. They're already fading from
memory, those names. In spite of the triumphant, defiant finale. If

we don't do this, who will? The lights on them now and the applause about to start and surround and caress them, the lights that begin to dim, go out one by one, as the audience enjoys the main course, listens to some speeches, and flicks on their t.v. set back home and maybe a faraway face, perhaps one of these very faces, flares up in pain and then dies down. . .

MAN

. . . and it's time for dinner and it's time again for sleep, and tomorrow it will be back where it always has been, finally them and us again. . .

WOMAN

Them and us again, them and me, them and me all over again, aware that out there, beyond us, beyond even these dim lights are the others, the ones who have never had a spotlight, whose names even I don't know, the expendable others beyond the lights, their voices never recorded or transcribed, their bodies beyond invisibility.

Man und Woman verbeugen sich. Man und Woman gehen ab.

FIFTH VOICE (MALE)

I don't want to pretend I was a hero
In the beginning I had neither pen nor paper to work with

THIRD VOICE (MALE)

Something is
there
A light is there
I did what I had to do
Knowing this

knowing this
The poor of the world are crying out

FOURTH VOICE (FEMALE)

That is what you know
Anything else would have tasted
like ashes That is what you know
The poor of the world are crying out
For schools and doctors, not generals and guns

FIRST VOICE (MALE)

I was never
alone That's
what you know
We did what we had to do, that's all

SECOND VOICE (FEMALE)

Did it take
courage?
It took
stubbornness
Stubbornness
Like a metal chord inside
The feeling of inner strength like a
metal chord inside Anything else
would have tasted like ashes
Knowing this knowing this
We owe something to the people left behind

SIXTH VOICE (FEMALE)

I don't want to pretend I was a hero

I did what I had to do, that's all It's
really so simple That is what you
know

The work has just begun

**LEA BLAIR WHITCHER & CHOIR (The Hanging Tree by
James Newton Howard ft. Jennifer Lawrance)**

Are you, are you
Coming to the
tree They strung
up a man
They say who
murdered three.
Strange things did
happen here No
stranger would it be
If we met at
midnight In the
hanging tree.

Are you, are you
Coming to the
tree
Where the dead man
called out For his love
to flee.
Strange things did
happen here No
stranger would it be
If we met at
midnight In the
hanging tree.

Are you, are you
Coming to the
tree Where I told
you to run, So
we'd both be
free.

Strange things did
happen here No
stranger would it be
If we met at
midnight In the
hanging tree.

Are you, are you
Coming to the
tree
Wear a necklace of
hope, Side by side
with me.

Strange things did happen here

No stranger
would it be If we
met at midnight
In the hanging
tree.

Are you, are you
Coming to the
tree Where I told
you to run, So
we'd both be
free.

Strange things did
happen here No
stranger would it be
If we met at
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happen here No
stranger would it be
If we met at midnight
In the hanging tree