

**Transcription of Arundhati Roy reading and  
Ms. Roy and Howard Zinn in conversation  
Lentic Performing Arts Center  
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**Howard Zinn:** Well, thank you. [Applause]. This is a very nice crowd. [Laughter] Thank you Patrick Lannan for that introduction. I almost recognized myself. [Laughter] I'm here to introduce Arundhati Roy. I say this in hushed tones. Really, I never thought I would introduce Arundhati Roy.

I first encountered her - not personally - I encountered her when somebody said to me you must read *The God of Small Things*, which I did. And then, to almost everybody I met I said, you must read *The God of Small Things*. [Laughter]. And I was so struck by that book. You know, the passion, the eloquence, the beauty of language. I thought she must have written seven books before this. No. This is her first novel. I thought, well she will write seven books after this. No. This is her novel. Next thing I knew, I was reading essays of hers. David Barsamian showed me an interview which I listened to. An interview he did with her. Anthony Amove told me about her. People talked about her. I read this book of essays called *Power Politics* and another book of essays, *Cost of Living* and what I realized was that this was not just a novelist. This was a person who cared about what was going on in the world; who is speaking out, devoting her energy now to speaking out against the enormous corporations in India that were driving poor people off their lands. She was defying the Supreme Court of India. Anybody who defies a Supreme Court is worth listening to, [laughter] you see. The Supreme Court referred to her as "that woman" [laughter] and she was held in contempt of court, which, of course, is an honor. [Laughter]

What it was about her is that she was taking this enormous talent that she had, which everybody now recognized, which millions of people around the world recognized by buying her book and reading *The God of Small Things*, she was taking this enormous talent and she was not putting it at the service of the other publishers who were demanding more novels from her, or begging her to write more novels, or movie producers who were saying, oh we must turn this into a movie. No, she was taking her energy and her passion and her talent and putting it to the service of people: people in India and people around the world. And she was talking about war, and talking about globalization and talking about all of the controversial things that made the Supreme Court think that she was "that woman." This struck me because I've always had a very special, special admiration for those people who write poetry and novels and plays but who don't only do that; who take time out and speak to what is going on at the moment in the world on behalf of the children of the world, on behalf of people everywhere. This is what she has done.

She grew up...I don't know if I should go through her biography. That's what they do in introductions, right? [Laughter] A little bit. She grew up in Kerala which is a special place in India and studied architecture, which some people say accounts for the precision of her language. Who knows? There's a mystery there...about what's behind the way she uses language. She wrote screenplays. She also worked at all sorts of very ordinary jobs which is always helpful for enlarging a person's vision. And then, at a certain point, she sat down and wrote *The God of Small Things*. Or, she stood up and wrote *The God of Small Things*. I can't imagine how she wrote it, you see. [Laughter]

You might have gathered that I think it's a real honor to introduce Arundhati Roy. So, here she is.

[Applause]

**Arundhati Roy:** Thank you. I wish I could see you all better but it's quite dark out there. I'm so delighted to be here, and I'm so delighted that Howard Zinn is here to introduce me because I've never met him before but I think he's such a magical human being. Thank you, Howard. [Applause]

Just now, Howard asked me how do you decide what event or lecture you say yes to and how do you decide what you say no to? And I said I think it's perhaps one out of fifty on the average that I agree to do and I am very happy and proud to be doing this one because I know that those who have gone before me are people that I really admire and respect. So thank you to the Lannan Foundation for inviting me.

I have so many things to say and I hope I don't take too long to say them to you. I'm a writer, and so I've actually written what I want to say, for two reasons. One, because I'm sure that you are much more interested in the way I write than in the way I speak. And, second, because the things I have to say are complicated, dangerous things in these dangerous times and I think we have to be very, very precise about what we're saying and how we say them and the language that we use. So I hope it's okay if I read it out to you.

My talk today is called "Come September."

Writers imagine that they cull stories from the world. I'm beginning to believe that vanity makes them think so. That it's actually the other way around. Stories cull writers from the world. Stories reveal themselves to us. The public narrative, the private narrative - they colonize us. They commission us. They insist on being told. Fiction and nonfiction are only different techniques of story telling. For reasons that I don't fully understand, fiction dances out of me, and nonfiction is wrenched out by the aching, broken world I wake up to every morning.

The theme of much of what I write, fiction as well as nonfiction, is the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless, circular conflict they're engaged in. John Berger, that most wonderful writer, once wrote: "Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one." There can never be a single story. There are only ways of seeing. So when I tell a story, I tell it not as an ideologue who wants to pit one absolutist ideology against another, but as a story-teller who wants to share her way of seeing. Though it might appear otherwise, my writing is not really about nations and histories; it's about power. About the paranoia and ruthlessness of power. About the physics of power. I believe that the accumulation of vast unfettered power by a State or a country, a corporation or an institution - or even an individual, a spouse, a friend, a sibling - regardless of ideology, results in excesses such as the ones I will recount here.

Living as I do, as millions of us do, in the shadow of the nuclear holocaust that the governments of India and Pakistan keep promising their brain-washed citizenry, and in the global neighborhood of the War Against Terror (what President Bush rather biblically calls "The Task That Never Ends"), I find myself thinking a great deal about the relationship between Citizens and the State.

In India, those of us who have expressed views on Nuclear Bombs, Big Dams, Corporate Globalization and the rising threat of communal Hindu fascism - views that are at variance with the Indian Government's - are branded 'anti-national.' While this accusation doesn't fill me with indignation, it's not an accurate description of what I do or how I think. Because an 'anti-national' is a person who is against his or her own nation and, by inference, is pro some other one. But it isn't necessary to be 'anti-national' to be deeply suspicious of all nationalism, to be anti-nationalism. Nationalism of one kind or another was the cause of most of the genocide of the twentieth century. Flags are bits of colored cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's brains and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead. [Applause] When independent-thinking people (and here I do not include the corporate media) begin to rally under flags, when writers, painters, musicians, film makers suspend their judgment and blindly yoke their art to the service of the "Nation," it's time for all of us to sit up and worry. In India we saw it happen soon after the Nuclear tests in 1998 and during the Cargill War against Pakistan in 1999. In the U.S. we saw it during the Gulf War and we see it now during the "War Against Terror." That blizzard of Made-in-China American flags. [Laughter]

Recently, those who have criticized the actions of the U.S. government (myself included) have been called "anti-American." Anti-Americanism is in the process of being consecrated into an ideology.

The term "anti-American" is usually used by the American establishment to discredit and, not falsely - but shall we say inaccurately - define its critics. Once someone is branded anti-American, the chances are that he or she will be judged before they are heard, and the argument will be lost in the welter of bruised national pride.

But what does the term "anti-American" *mean*? Does it mean you are anti-jazz? Or that you're opposed to freedom of speech? That you don't delight in Toni Morrison or John Updike? That you have a quarrel with giant sequoias? Does it mean that you don't admire the hundreds of thousands of American citizens who marched against nuclear weapons, or the thousands of war resisters who forced their government to withdraw from Vietnam? Does it mean that you hate all Americans?

This sly conflation of America's culture, music, literature, the breathtaking physical beauty of the land, the ordinary pleasures of ordinary people with criticism of the U.S. government's foreign policy (about which, thanks to America's "free press", sadly most Americans know very little) is a deliberate and extremely effective strategy. It's like a retreating army taking cover in a heavily populated city, hoping that the prospect of hitting civilian targets will deter enemy fire.

But there are many Americans who would be mortified to be associated with their government's policies. The most scholarly, scathing, incisive, hilarious critiques of the hypocrisy and the contradictions in U.S. government policy come from American citizens. When the rest of the world wants to know what the U.S. government is up to, we turn to Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Howard Zinn, Ed Herman, Amy Goodman, Michael Albert, Chalmers Johnson, William Blum and Anthony Amove to tell us what's really going on.

[Applause]

Similarly, in India, not hundreds, but millions of us would be ashamed and offended if we were in any way implicated with the present Indian government's fascist policies which, apart from the perpetration of State terrorism in the valley of Kashmir (in the name of fighting terrorism), have also turned a blind eye to the recent state-supervised program against Muslims in Gujarat. It would be absurd to think that those who criticize the Indian government are "anti-Indian" - although the government itself never hesitates to take that line. It is dangerous to cede to the Indian government or the American government or *anyone* for that matter, the right to define what "India" or "America" are or ought to be.

To call someone "anti-American", indeed to *be* anti-American, (or for that matter, anti-Indian or anti-Timbuktuan) is not just racist, it's a failure of the imagination. An inability to see the world in terms other than those the establishment has set out for you. If you're not a Bushie you're a Taliban. If you don't love us, you hate us. If you're not Good, you're Evil. If you're not with us, you're with the terrorists.

Last year, like many others, I too made the mistake of scoffing at this post- September 11th rhetoric, dismissing it as foolish and arrogant. But I've realized it's not foolish at all. It's actually a canny recruitment drive for a misconceived, dangerous war. Everyday I'm taken aback at how many people believe that opposing the war in Afghanistan amounts to supporting terrorism, of voting for the Taliban. Now that the initial aim of the war - capturing Osama bin Laden (dead or alive) - seems to have run into bad weather, the goalposts have been moved. It's being made out that the whole point of the war was to topple the Taliban regime and liberate Afghan women from their burqas, we are being asked to believe that the U.S. marines are actually on a feminist mission [laughter, applause]. (If so, will their next stop be America's military ally Saudi Arabia?) [Laughter] Think of it this way: in India there are some pretty reprehensible social practices against "untouchables", against Christians and Muslims, against women. Pakistan and Bangladesh have even worse ways of dealing with minority communities and women. Should they be bombed? Should Delhi, Islamabad and Dhaka be destroyed? Is it possible to bomb bigotry out of India? Can we bomb our way to a feminist paradise? [Laughter] Is that how women won the vote in the U.S? Or how slavery was abolished? Can we win redress for the genocide of the millions of Native Americans upon whose corpses the United States was founded by bombing Santa Fe? [Applause]

None of us need anniversaries to remind us of what we cannot forget. So it's no more than co-incidence that I happen to be here, on American soil, in September - this month of dreadful anniversaries. Uppermost on everybody's mind of course, particularly here in America, is the horror of what has come to be known as 9/11. Nearly three thousand civilians lost their lives in that lethal terrorist strike. The grief is still deep. The rage still sharp. The tears have not dried. And a strange, deadly war is raging around the world. Yet, each person who has lost a loved one surely knows secretly, deeply, that no war, no act of revenge, no daisy-cutters dropped on someone else's loved ones or someone else's children, will blunt the edges of their pain or bring their own loved ones back. War cannot avenge those who have died. War is only a brutal desecration of their memory.

To fuel yet another war - this time against Iraq - by cynically manipulating people's grief, by packaging it for TV specials sponsored by corporations selling detergent and running shoes, is to cheapen and devalue grief, to drain it of meaning. What we are seeing now is a vulgar display of the *business* of grief, the commerce of grief, the pillaging of even the most private human feelings for political purpose. It is a terrible, violent thing for a State to do to its people. [Applause]

It's not a clever-enough subject to speak of from a public platform, but what I would really love to talk to you about is Loss. Loss and losing. Grief, failure, brokenness, numbness, uncertainty, fear, the death of feeling, the death of dreaming. The absolute relentless, endless, habitual, unfairness of the world. What does loss mean to individuals? What does it mean to whole cultures, whole

people who have learned to live with it as a constant companion?

Since it is September 11th we're talking about, perhaps it's in the fitness of things that we remember what that date means, not only to those who lost their loved ones in America last year, but to those in other parts of the world to whom that date has long held significance. This historical dredging is not offered as an accusation or a provocation. But just to share the grief of history. To thin the mists a little. To say to the citizens of America, in the gentlest, most human way: "Welcome to the World." [Applause]

Twenty-nine years ago, in Chile, on the 11th of September 1973, General Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in a CIA-backed coup. "Chile should not be allowed to go Marxist just because its people are irresponsible," said Henry Kissinger, Nobel Peace Laureate, then the U.S. Secretary of State.

After the coup President Allende was found dead inside the presidential palace. Whether he was killed or whether he killed himself, we'll never know. In the regime of terror that ensued, thousands of people were killed. Many more simply "disappeared". Firing squads conducted public executions. Concentration camps and torture chambers were opened across the country. The dead were buried in mine shafts and unmarked graves. For seventeen years the people of Chile lived in dread of the midnight knock, of routine "disappearances", of sudden arrest and torture. Chileans tell the story of how the musician Victor Jara had his hands cut off in front of a crowd in the Santiago stadium. Before they shot him, Pinochet's soldiers threw his guitar at him and mockingly asked him to play.

In 1999, following the arrest of General Pinochet in Britain, thousands of secret documents were declassified by the U.S. government. They contain unequivocal evidence of the CIA's involvement in the coup as well as the fact that the U.S. government had detailed information about the situation in Chile during General Pinochet's reign. Yet, Kissinger assured the general of his support: "In the United States as you know, we are sympathetic to what you're trying to do," he said. "We wish your government well."

Those of us who have only ever known life in a democracy, however flawed, would find it hard to imagine what living in a dictatorship and enduring the absolute loss of freedom means. It isn't just those who Pinochet murdered, but the lives he stole from the living that must be accounted for too.

Sadly, Chile was not the only country in South America to be singled out for the U.S. government's attentions. Guatemala, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador, Peru, Mexico and Colombia - they've all been the playground for covert - and overt - operations by the CIA. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been killed, tortured or have simply disappeared under the despotic regimes that were propped up in their countries. If this were not humiliation enough, the people of South America have had to bear the cross of being branded as people who are incapable of democracy - as if coups and massacres are somehow encrypted in their genes.

This list does not, of course, include countries in Africa or Asia that suffered U.S. military interventions - Vietnam, Korea, Indonesia, Laos, and Cambodia. For how many Septembers for decades together have millions of Asian people been bombed, and burned, and slaughtered? How many Septembers have gone by since August 1945, when hundreds of thousands of ordinary Japanese people were obliterated by the nuclear strikes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? For how many Septembers have the thousands who had the misfortune of surviving those strikes endured that living hell that was visited on them, their unborn children, their children's children, on the earth, the sky, the water, the wind, and all the creatures that swim and walk and crawl and fly? Not far from here, in Albuquerque, is the National Atomic Museum where Fat Man and Little Boy (the affectionate nicknames for the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) were available as souvenir earrings. Funky young people wore them. A massacre dangling in each ear. But I'm straying from my theme. It's September that we're talking about, not August.

September 11th has a tragic resonance in the Middle East, too. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1922, ignoring Arab outrage, the British government proclaimed a mandate in Palestine, a follow-up to the 1917 Balfour Declaration which imperial Britain issued, with its army massed outside the gates of Gaza. The Balfour Declaration promised European Zionists a national home for Jewish people. (At the time, the Empire on which the Sun Never Set was free to snatch and bequeath national homes like a school bully distributes marbles.)

How carelessly imperial power vivisected ancient civilizations. Palestine and Kashmir are imperial Britain's festering, blood-drenched gifts to the modern world. Both are fault lines in the raging international conflicts of today.

In 1937, Winston Churchill said of the Palestinians, I quote, "I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place." That set the trend for the Israeli State's attitude towards the Palestinians. In 1969, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir said, "Palestinians do not exist." Her successor, Prime Minister Levi Eschol said, "What are Palestinians? When I came here (to Palestine), there were 250,000 non-Jews, mainly Arabs and Bedouins. It was a desert, more than underdeveloped. Nothing." Prime Minister Menachem Begin called Palestinians "two-legged beasts." Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir called them "grasshoppers" who could be crushed. This is the language of Heads of State, not the words of ordinary people.

In 1947, the U.N. formally partitioned Palestine and allotted 55 per cent of Palestine's land to the Zionists. Within a year, they had captured 76 per cent. On the 14th of May 1948 the State of Israel was declared. Minutes after the declaration, the United States recognized Israel. The West Bank was annexed by Jordan. The Gaza strip came under Egyptian military control, and formally Palestine ceased to exist except in the minds and hearts of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people who became refugees. In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

Over the decades there have been uprisings, wars, *intifadas*. Tens of thousands have lost their lives. Accords and treaties have been signed. Cease-fires declared and violated. But the bloodshed doesn't end. Palestine still remains illegally occupied. Its people live in inhuman conditions, in virtual Bantustans, where they are subjected to collective punishments, twenty-four hour curfews, where they are humiliated and brutalized on a daily basis. They never know when their homes will be demolished, when their children will be shot, when their precious trees will be cut, when their roads will be closed, when they will be allowed to walk down to the market to buy food and medicine. And when they will not. They live with no semblance of dignity. With not much hope in sight. They have no control over their lands, their security, their movement, their communication, their water supply. So when accords are signed, and words like "autonomy" and even "statehood" bandied about, it's always worth asking: What sort of autonomy? What sort of State?

What sort of rights will its citizens have?

Young Palestinians who cannot control their anger turn themselves into human bombs and haunt Israel's streets and public places, blowing themselves up, killing ordinary people, injecting terror into daily life, and eventually hardening both societies' suspicion and mutual hatred of each other. Each bombing invites merciless reprisal and even more hardship on Palestinian people. But then suicide bombing is an act of individual despair, not a revolutionary tactic. Although Palestinian attacks strike terror into Israeli citizens, they provide the perfect cover for the Israeli government's daily incursions into Palestinian territory, the perfect excuse for old-fashioned, nineteenth-century colonialism, dressed up as a new fashioned, twenty-first century "war".

Israel's staunchest political and military ally is and always has been the U.S. The U.S. government has blocked, along with Israel, almost every U.N. resolution that sought a peaceful, equitable solution to the conflict. It has supported almost every war that Israel has fought. When Israel attacks Palestine, it is American missiles that smash through Palestinian homes. And every year Israel receives several billion dollars from the United States - taxpayers money.

What lessons should we draw from this tragic conflict? Is it really impossible for Jewish people who suffered so cruelly themselves - more cruelly perhaps than any other people in history - to understand the vulnerability and the yearning of those whom they have displaced? Does extreme suffering always kindle cruelty? What hope does this leave the human race with? What will happen to the Palestinian people in the event of a victory? When a nation without a state eventually proclaims a state, what kind of state will it be? What horrors will be perpetrated under its flag? Is it a separate state that we should be fighting for or, the rights to a life of liberty and dignity for everyone regardless of their ethnicity or religion?

Palestine was once a secular bulwark in the Middle East. But now the weak, undemocratic, by all accounts corrupt but avowedly nonsectarian P.L.O., is losing ground to Hamas, which espouses an overtly sectarian ideology and fights in the name of Islam. To quote from their manifesto: "we will be its soldiers and the firewood of its fire, which will burn the enemies."

The world is called upon to condemn suicide bombers. But can we ignore the long road they have journeyed on before they have arrived at this destination? September 11, 1922 to September 11, 2002 - eighty years is a long time to have been waging war. Is there some advice the world can give the people of Palestine? Should they just take Golda Meir's suggestion and make a real effort not to exist?

In another part of the Middle East, September 11th strikes a more recent cord. It was on the 11th of September 1990 that George W. Bush, Sr., then President of the U.S., made a speech to a joint session of Congress announcing his government's decision to go to war against Iraq.

The U.S. government says that Saddam Hussein is a war criminal, a cruel military despot who has committed genocide against his own people. That's a fairly accurate description of the man. In 1988, Saddam Hussein razed hundreds of villages in northern Iraq, used chemical weapons and machine guns to kill thousands of Kurdish people. Today we know that that same year the U.S. government provided him with \$500 million in subsidies to buy American farm products. The next year, after he had successfully completed his genocidal campaign, the U.S. government doubled its subsidy to \$1 billion. It also provided him with high quality germ seed for anthrax, and helicopters and dual-use material that could be used to manufacture chemical and biological weapons. So it turns out that while Saddam Hussein was carrying out his worst atrocities, the U.S. and the U.K. governments were his close allies.

So what changed? In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. His sin was not so much that he had committed an act of war, but that he had acted independently, without orders from his master. This display of independence was enough to upset the power equation in the Gulf. So it was decided that Saddam Hussein be exterminated, like a pet that has outlived its owner's affection.

The first Allied attack on Iraq took place on January '91. The world watched the prime-time war as it was played out on T.V. (In India in those days you had to go to a five-star hotel lobby to watch CNN.) Tens of thousands of people were killed in a month of devastating bombing. What many do not know is that the war never ended then. The initial fury simmered down into the longest sustained air attack on a country since the Vietnam War. Over the last decade American and British forces have fired thousands of missiles and bombs on Iraq. In the decade of economic sanctions that followed the war, Iraqi civilians have been denied food, medicine, hospital equipment, ambulances, clean water - the basic essentials.

About half a million Iraqi children have died as a result of the sanctions. Of them, Madeleine Albright, then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, famously said, "It's a very hard choice, but we think the price is worth it." "Moral equivalence" was the term that was used to denounce those of us who criticized the war on Afghanistan. Madeleine Albright cannot be accused of moral equivalence. What she said was just straightforward algebra.

A decade of bombing has not managed to dislodge Saddam Hussein, "the Beast of Baghdad". Now, almost 12 years on, President George Bush, Jr. has ratcheted up the rhetoric once again. He's proposing an all-out war whose goal is nothing short of a regime change. *The New York Times* says that the Bush administration is following, quote, "a meticulously planned strategy to persuade the public, the Congress, and the Allies of the need to confront the threat of Saddam Hussein." Andrew. H. Card, Jr., the White House Chief of Staff, described how the administration was stepping up its war plans for the fall, and I quote, "From a marketing point of view", he said, "you don't introduce new products in August." This time the catch-phrase for Washington's "new product" is not the plight of Kuwaiti people but the assertion that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. "Forget the feckless moralizing of peace lobbies", wrote Richard Perle, a former advisor to President Bush, "We need to get him before he gets us."

Weapons inspectors have conflicting reports of the status of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and many have said clearly that its arsenal has been dismantled and that it does not have the capacity to build one. However, there is no confusion over the extent and range of America's arsenal of nuclear and chemical weapons. Would the U.S. government welcome weapons inspectors? Would the U.K.? Or Israel?

What if Iraq *does* have a nuclear weapon, does that justify a pre-emptive U.S. strike? The U.S. has the largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world and it's the only country in the world to have actually used them on civilian populations. If the U.S. is justified in launching a pre-emptive strike on Iraq, why, then any nuclear power is justified in carrying out a pre-emptive strike on any other. India could attack Pakistan, or the other way around. If the U.S. government develops a distaste for, say, the Indian Prime Minister, can it just "take him out" with a pre-emptive strike?

Recently the United States played an important part in forcing India and Pakistan back from the brink of war. Is it so hard for it to take its own advice? Who is guilty of feckless moralizing? Of preaching peace while it wages war? The U.S., which George Bush has called "the most peaceful nation on earth", has been at war with one country or another every year for the last fifty.

Wars are never fought for altruistic reasons. They're usually fought for hegemony, for business. And then of course there's the business of war.

Protecting its control of the world's oil is fundamental to U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. government's recent military interventions in the Balkans and Central Asia have to do with oil. Hamid Karzai, the puppet President of Afghanistan installed by the U.S., is said to be a former employee of Unocal, the American-based oil company. The U.S. government's paranoid patrolling of the Middle East is because it has two-thirds of the world's oil reserves. Oil keeps America's engines purring sweetly. Oil keeps the Free Market rolling. Whoever controls the world's oil, controls the world's market. And how do you control the oil?

Nobody puts it more elegantly than *The New York Times* columnist, Thomas Friedman. In an article called, "Craziness Pays", he said, "The U.S. has to make it clear to Iraq and U.S. allies that...American will use force without negotiation, hesitation or U.N. approval." His advice was well taken. In the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in the almost daily humiliation the U.S. government heaps on the U.N. In his book on globalization, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Friedman says, and I quote, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist. McDonalds cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas...and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps." Perhaps this was written in a moment of vulnerability, but it's certainly the most succinct, accurate description of the project of corporate globalization that I have read.

After the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 and the War Against Terror, the hidden hand and fist have had their cover blown - and we have a clear view now of America's other weapon - the Free Market - bearing down on the Developing World, with a clenched, unsmiling smile. The Task That Never Ends is America's perfect war, the perfect vehicle for the endless expansion of American imperialism. In Urdu, the word for Profit, as in "p-r-o-f-i-t", is *fayda*. *Al Qaida* means The Word, The Word of God, The Law. So, in India, some of us call the War Against Terror, *Al Qaida* versus *Al Fayda* - The Word versus The Profit (no pun intended.)

For the moment it looks as though *Al Fayda* will carry the day. But then you never know...

In the last ten years of unbridled Corporate Globalization, the world's total income has increased by an average of 2.5 percent a year. And yet the numbers of poor in the world has increased by 100 million. Of the top hundred biggest economies, 51 are corporations, not countries. The top 1 percent of the world has the same combined income as the bottom 57 percent and that disparity is growing. And now, under the spreading canopy of the War Against Terror, this process is being hustled along. The men in suits are in an unseemly hurry. While bombs rain down on us, and cruise missiles skid across the skies, while nuclear weapons are stockpiled to make the world a safer place, contracts are being signed, patents are being registered, oil pipe lines are being laid, natural resources are being plundered, water is being privatized, and democracies are being undermined.

In a country like India, the "structural adjustment" end of the Corporate Globalization project is ripping through people's lives. "Development" projects, massive privatization, and labor "reforms" are pushing people off their lands and out of their jobs, resulting in a kind of barbaric dispossession that has few parallels in history. Across the world, as the "Free Market" brazenly protects Western markets and forces developing countries to lift their trade barriers, the poor are getting poorer and the rich richer. Civil unrest has begun to erupt in the global village. In countries like Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia and India, the resistance movements against Corporate Globalization are growing. To contain them, governments are tightening their control. Protesters are being labeled "terrorists" and then being dealt with as such. But civil unrest does not only mean marches and demonstrations and protests against globalization. Unfortunately, it also means a desperate downward spiral into crime and chaos and all kinds of despair and disillusionment which as we know from history (and from what we see unspooling before our eyes), gradually becomes a fertile breeding ground for terrible things - cultural nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism and of course, terrorism.

All these march arm-in-arm with corporate globalization.

There is a notion gaining credence that the Free Market breaks down national barriers, and that Corporate Globalization's ultimate destination is a hippie paradise where the heart is the only passport and we all live happily together inside a John Lennon song. ("Imagine there's no country...") But this is a canard.

What the Free Market undermines is not national sovereignty, but *democracy*. As the disparity between the rich and poor grows, the hidden fist has its work cut out for it. Multinational corporations on the prowl for "sweetheart deals" that yield enormous profits cannot push through those deals and administer those projects in developing countries without the active connivance of State machinery - the police, the courts, sometimes even the army. Today Corporate Globalization needs an international confederation of loyal, corrupt, preferably authoritarian governments in poorer countries to push through unpopular reforms and quell the mutinies. It needs a press that pretends to be free. It needs courts that pretend to dispense justice. It needs nuclear bombs, standing armies, sterner immigration laws, and watchful coastal patrols to make sure that it's only money, goods, patents, and services that are being globalized - not the free movement of people, not a respect for human rights, not international treaties on racial discrimination or chemical and nuclear weapons, or greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, or god forbid, justice. It's as though even a *gesture* towards international accountability would wreck the whole enterprise.

Close to one year after the War against Terror was officially flagged off in the ruins of Afghanistan, in country after country freedoms are being curtailed in the name of protecting freedom, civil liberties are being suspended in the name of protecting democracy. All kinds of dissent are being defined as "terrorism". All kinds of laws are being passed to deal with it. Osama bin Laden seems to have vanished into thin air. Mullah Omar is supposed to have made his escape on a motorbike. (They could have sent TinTin after him.) [Laughter] The Taliban may have disappeared but their spirit, and their system of summary justice is surfacing in the unlikeliest of places. In India, in Pakistan, in Nigeria, in America, in all the Central Asian republics run by all manner of despots, and of course in Afghanistan under the U.S.-backed, Northern Alliance.

Meanwhile down at the mall there's a mid-season sale. Everything's discounted - oceans, rivers, oil, gene pools, fig wasps, flowers, childhoods, aluminum factories, phone companies, wisdom, wilderness, civil rights, eco-systems, air - all 4,600 million years of evolution. It's packed, sealed, tagged, valued and available off the rack. (No returns). As for justice - I'm told it's on offer too. You can get the best that money can buy.

Donald Rumsfeld said that his mission in the War Against Terror was to persuade the world that Americans must be allowed to continue their way of life. When the maddened king stamps his foot, slaves tremble in their quarters. So, standing here today, it's hard for me to say this, but "The American Way of Life" is simply not sustainable. Because it doesn't acknowledge that there is a world beyond America.

[Applause]

But fortunately, power has a shelf life. When the time comes, maybe this mighty empire will, like others before it, overreach itself and implode from within. It looks as though structural cracks have already appeared. As the War Against Terror casts its net wider and wider, America's corporate heart is hemorrhaging. For all the endless, empty chatter about democracy, today the world is run by three of the most secretive institutions in the world: The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, all three of which, in turn, are dominated by the U.S. Their decisions are made in secret. The people who head them are appointed behind closed doors. Nobody really knows anything about them, their politics, their beliefs, their intentions. Nobody elected them. Nobody said they could make decisions on our behalf. A world run by a handful of greedy bankers and C.E.O.'s whom nobody elected can't possibly last.

Soviet-style communism failed, not because it was intrinsically evil but because it was flawed. It allowed too few people to usurp too much power. Twenty-first century market-capitalism, American style, will fail for the same reasons. Both are edifices constructed by the human intelligence, undone by human nature.

The time has come, the Walrus said. Perhaps things will become worse and then better. Perhaps there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.

Thank you. [Applause]

Thank you.

I just want to say that, you know, I was so terrified of coming to America, because, when you read the papers and when you watch whatever you get to see on TV, which is Fox News, you know, in India [laughter], you know... this corporate media just makes out as if everybody in America is, you know, a clone of George Bush. [laughter] I'm just so glad that I came because it just reaffirms my faith in humanity to see you here and to not have tomatoes thrown at me.

Thank you. [Applause]

## CONVERSATION

**Howard Zinn:** We're just going to sit up here. [Laughter] Arundhati just said to me, Well, we can talk about the things I left out. [Laughter] Well, I guess. . . . what did you leave out? [Laughter] I was sitting there, listening to you, and thinking: there it was. There it is.

**Arundhati Roy:** OK. Let's go. [Laughter]

**Zinn:** You don't want me to say anything nice about? OK. But really, what I thought as I was sitting there, is there is this mastery of detail, all expressed in the most poetic and beautiful way. That combination is so hard to achieve. I know this is not a lead-in to a conversation, it's a final statement. [Laughter] [Applause]

Let me ask you this, Arundhati. How did you come to decide, after writing *The God of Small Things*, that you were not going to immediately sit down and write another novel?

**Roy:** Well, actually, I would have had to decide *to* sit down and write another novel. In that I've never believed in this thing of having a single profession and doing it, doing the same thing all your life. It's like your brain is growing in one direction, like some tumor. I never...a lot of people keep saying to me that you must be under a lot of pressure from your publishers to write another book. Well, I think that's, I mean, it's a bit dishonest to put it that way for me because no one can pressurize me, you know. They don't have a handle on me. It's a relief. If I wanted to accept that pressure, it would be a pressure.

And I just think that very soon, actually, very soon after I finished writing *The God of Small Things*, and it came out, India did, you know, it's nuclear tests, and I recognized the fact that here was, you know, the papers, and lots of public people, and writers and painters, and everybody was standing up and applauding this horrible act. And I realized then that, you know, staying quiet was as political an act as speaking out. and I had this space to make a statement And if I didn't, it was something that I couldn't live with. Which was when I wrote *The End of Imagination*.

And also, I think being involved in the kinds of things I've been involved in in the last few years have been wonderful for me because I've met the most extraordinary people. I've been close to the most extraordinary political happenings. And I also know that when I'm ready to write another book, if I'm ready to write? I keep saying *The God of Small Things* was a collaboration between me and a little bit of magic. And you have to know how to wait, you know. It'll come. If it doesn't, that's all right, but if it does, it will come. You can't, you can't just force...you know it's not some factory product.

**Zinn:** No one would accuse that of being a factory product.

**Roy:** No. [Laughter] No, I mean the next.

**Zinn:** It was interesting what you said about, you know, turning to the political world from writing a novel. You encountered people.. you suddenly found all these people you could work with and do things with and the writer, working alone, writing a novel or a poem doesn't experience that. And the writers who never come out of their study, you know, or out of their agent's office, right, and get out into the struggle and turmoil of the world, they are missing something, you know, very, very important.

**Roy:** I think the truth is that I was actually always a political person. Obviously, it's not something that suddenly happens to you. So, when I was studying architecture, by the time I was in 4th year, I knew that I would never practice architecture. I had become very interested in town planning and how cities came to be the way they were and how land use plans, and architectural plans, are designed to exclude most people and make them illegal. You know, the whole business of the citizen, and the non-citizen.

So, in a sense, *The God of Small Things* is also a very political book. I don't think... obviously I was never the kind of person who was only in their agent's office because I didn't have an agent. I didn't even know there were such things, until you know, I wrote *The God of Small Things*...

**Zinn:** I'm sorry to have brought it up.

**Roy:** No. [Laughter] But, you're right. I think the business of getting into the world, and living your life, *Living* and then writing about what you live, is what interests me. And the idea that, I mean...I live in times, and I think that those times are here in America now, but they've been in India for a while, where, when you write something, the worst thing that can happen to you is not a bad review, you know. Some how it's injected directly into life and you never know what's going to happen if you write a book. I mean, *The God of Small Things*... I was, of course, taken to court for corrupting public morality...

**Zinn:** Yes.

**Roy:** ... which I had a technical problem with because, I said, at least he should have said, "further corrupting public morality". [Laughter]

**Zinn:** When I read about that charge against you I immediately went back to *The God of Small Things* because I wanted to see what pages they were...[laughter]...that were possibly corrupting public morality and I found them. [Laughter] It was wonderful. [Laughter]

You said before you were always a political person. I mean, not from the age of three or four or five. You said something about when you were somehow finishing work at the school of architecture at some point you decided, no, this was not for you. So something must - did something happen?

**Roy:** Well, actually, you know, absurdly, it does start from the age of three or four because I lived in a...you know my mother came from this very little village in Kerala called Kottayam and she belongs to a very parochial community called the Syrian Christians and she married a Bengali, you know, outside the community. And then made the mistake of marrying him and then divorcing him and came back to the village. And so we grew up sort of outside the realm of all the protections that that society chose to offer its members. So from a very young age, one was aware of the fact that you were not going to be given those protections. You had to constantly try to understand what was going on and how to survive in this space and how not to go under. So my mother is very political, not in this overt way but I think the minute you lose the protection of this nuclear family that protects you from the world you're on your own. And then politics is in your life. You have to ride the waves. You have to understand it.

**Zinn:** You were on your own, as a woman, which is a special situation. I mean, not just in India, I suppose being a woman on your own anywhere...

**Roy:** Yes.

**Zinn:** ...is something to deal with but I imagine that maybe in India there was something about that?

**Roy:** It was... though my mother and I are great mates now, when I was 17 I left home and I was on my own, being "that woman" as the Supreme Court judges write to call me. I think...you see what happens in India is that the "real life" is so frightening that the middle class really protects itself and really turns inwards. It's almost blind. It's almost like they have some lenses that fall over their eyes and they can't see. They can't see the horrors around because that's the only way to survive in some sense. I think when you fall out of that cozy, little nest and there's no safety net, you realize that it's not all that horrible, actually. I don't think that you can ever unlearn that, once you've been there, however briefly, or however temporarily. You don't forget. You don't forget, whatever happens to you. I keep thinking that there are people in the world who are safe, and there are people in the world who are unsafe. And if you're unsafe you always seek out the unsafe. Whatever happens to you in your life, you're always sort of taking that walk. So it was the best university, I think, to go to.

**Zinn:** It's interesting what you say about the middle class, blinding itself, protecting itself from what is happening to so much of the population. And this is so much the history of the United States which developed perhaps the largest middle class. That is, the United States has had enough wealth so it could bribe enough people in the population to create a middle class which became useful as a buffer between the very rich and that part of the population which could not even rise into the middle class. So the middle class, in the United States, has always been enticed by the establishment into thinking that it can rise into the upper class and not told that it can also descend. [Laughter]. The result is that the United States educational system teaches us from the very beginning that we are not a class society. To use the term "class", in the United States...it's just a term you use for school, right. [Laughter] "This is my class" sort of thing.

**Roy:** "I'm in 6th class."

**Zinn:** Yes. The idea of a class society is something that has always made people in power nervous. If anybody brings up the idea of class - class conflict, class struggle - you mustn't talk about that. We're brought up in the United States to believe that we're one big happy family. [Laughter]

**Roy:** And aren't you?

**Zinn:** [Laughter] We all have the same interests. In fact we have the language to try to make that imprint on the American people. The language of national interest, the phrase is "national interest"?

**Roy:** I'm familiar with it.

**Zinn:** ...assuming we all have the same interest: Exxon and I.

**Roy:** Enron and I. [Laughter]

**Zinn:** Enron and you. [Laughter] Yes. So it takes...but there's a perception that people in the United States have growing up, especially people in the working classes of the United States, they know that their interests and Exxon are not the same. And they show it.

**Roy:** Well, the thing is, in India it's so complicated that the more, the longer you live there, the more confused you get because when you think of class in India you have so many other things too. You have caste which is a complex business because...I grew up in Kerala which had the first ever democratically elected Marxist government in the world. But all the leaders of the Marxist party are Brahmins. [Laughter] It's a very complex way they use all these things. Indian democracy must be one of the most fascinating beasts on earth. Then you have such a complicated network of region and religion and language. So you have a situation where you have a country where we have I think it's 18 or 19 official languages, and hundreds and hundreds of dialects. You can't...you know the Supreme Court functions in English. Nobody can understand what's going on in there. I mean, even if you speak English you can't understand. [Laughter]

**Zinn:** Yes.

**Roy:** Imagine when they gave a judgment about me. They said, "vicious stultification and vulgar debunking cannot be permitted to pollute the pure stream of justice". [Laughter].

**Zinn:** That's what you were doing?

**Roy:** I had to look up in the dictionary to figure out what they meant and at the end of it they just kept saying, "but the respondent is not behaving like a reasonable man". [Laughter] At least I can follow what they're saying. But people from the Narmada valley, they have no idea what is this court, how do you file a police case? Or if there is a police case filed against you, what does it say, what are you supposed to do? It's like living ...it's like if I was living in Czechoslovakia or something. How would I function? And that's the way most Indians have to function in India.

**Zinn:** We don't understand our Supreme Court either. [Laughter] [Applause] The whole object of going to law school...

**Roy:** We're not meant to understand.

**Zinn:** ...is to not allow people to understand what you're saying.

**Roy:** Exactly. [Laughter] One of the reasons that the court got very angry with me was because when they filed this case, I said I won't get a lawyer and I will write my own reply, which I did. It was perfectly legal. I checked it with a lawyer. But it was written in language that ordinary people could understand. It was published in the press and that they didn't like. So every time I went to court they got a rash, like, why is she here? Take her away.

**Zinn:** Well, defending yourself is not something you're supposed to do because you're taking a job away from people who are desperately unemployed... [Laughter]...need work. So they don't like people to defend themselves.

But it's interesting. During the Vietnam war, we began to get used to people defending themselves in court because we had these anti-war protesters were part of this new '60s generation. Forget the experts, forget the professionals, we don't have any faith in them. All these lawyers are over 30. We don't want... and we don't trust professionals. We want to speak for ourselves. It was such a refreshing thing, actually. That they were breaking through this notion that somebody must speak for you. So, in trial after trial that took place of anti-war protestors, people represented themselves which made judges very nervous, made the prosecution very nervous, but enabled the honest feelings of the defendants to come across to the court.

**Roy:** But in India the whole thing about contempt of court... it has a very sinister edge to it because...the Supreme Court is actually the most powerful institution in India. As the government and the politicians get more and more corrupt, the Supreme Court has started making huge decisions on their behalf. So the Supreme Court decides whether a dam should be built or not, whether slums should be cleared or not, whether industry should be in the city or outside, whether privatization should be endorsed, whether structural adjustment is a good thing or not. All these decisions which affect the lives of millions of people are being taken now in the Supreme Court and the contempt of court act - law - says that while you can criticize a judgment, you cannot put a series of judgments together and say what is the Supreme Court up to? What is the politics of the Supreme Court? Supposing I have evidence that a Supreme Court judge was corrupt? Supposing I had him on film taking a bribe? It's not admissible in court because you can't lower the dignity of the court by saying that a judge is corrupt. [Laughter] This is the situation.

Even when I went to prison for contempt of court and came out - we had a big press conference, there were hundreds of journalists, a lot of senior editors spoke out quite bravely about this act. They are most scared of the court; more scared of the court than of politicians, and a normal journalist ...it's not that you're going to have a death sentence if you commit contempt of court, but six months in prison you're going to lose your job, you're going to have maybe two or three years of a criminal trial, you have to hire a lawyer, no one is willing to take the risk. So there's just dead silence on that subject. It's very, very frightening. And that's what I said in my affidavit. A judicial dictatorship is as bad as any other kind of dictatorship. [Applause]

**Zinn:** We have a situation where the Supreme Court does make decisions which are important but not usually on *the* most important things. And by that I mean on issues of war and peace. That is, when it comes to issues of war and peace, the Supreme Court may just as well not exist.

**Roy:** Well, that's true...

**Zinn:** They just defer to the power of the President, just as Congress defers to the power of the President. There's no democracy in foreign policy. You brought up the issue...you said democracy in India is very complicated. Well, democracy in the United States is very complicated because we have democracy and we don't have democracy. It's here and it's not here.

**Roy:** And it's gone.

**Zinn:** Yes. And you have democracy once in four years, for a moment. [Laughter]



**Roy:** Yes.

**Zinn:** And even there you don't have democracy. [Applause]

You are supposed to have political democracy with elected representatives and so on, but you certainly don't have economic democracy. You don't have democracy in the work place. You don't have democracy in every day life. There is a pretense that you have democracy in political life but...

**Roy:** You have elections.

**Zinn:** Yes.

**Roy:** Elections are democracy.

**Zinn:** Yes, elections. Imagine, you go into the voting booth and you pull the chain, [laughter] and you have fulfilled your duty. And that's it. And then you can sit back and let the President do what he wants. During the Vietnam war... there are Americans who are naive enough to believe the constitution of the United States, to believe what they learned in junior high school about American democracy and they learned that we have three branches - everybody learns the same thing, you must have some things that everybody learns - and here what we learn is that we have three branches of government. The teacher always makes a diagram on the board [laughter] which is very... because you can't imagine it in you head.[laughter] You can keep two things but not three things in your head. [Laughter]

And so you have three branches of government: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. And what you learn is that there are checks and balances [laughter] and that each branch is there to check the other. And when you sit there, as a young person, you say this is marvelous. Nothing bad can happen. [Laughter] And then you grow up and you see nothing but bad things happen.

During the Vietnam War, the President decides on war or I should say the President and the people around him, some of them unknown to the public, others not known to the public. The President and the people around him decide on war. He goes to Congress. To me it's absurd that liberal people today... the most courage that some Congressmen can muster up against the war in Iraq is to say let Congress vote on it. As if we don't know the history of Congressional obsequiousness. That we don't know the history of Congress approving every war that has ever been fought in one way or another. What happened during the Vietnam War is that a number of G.Is, and this is ?one of the glorious things about the Vietnam war was the uprising of soldiers against the war and the organization of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, wonderful dramatic scenes of that kind of resistance. There were these G.Is who refused to go to Vietnam. They said the Constitution says Congress must declare war. Congress has not declared war.

And they had learned in junior high school that the job of the Supreme Court is to it that things are constitutional. So they appealed to the Supreme Court. And what did the Supreme Court do? It said, we can't handle this. The Supreme Court - they have black robes, you think they have power, and they shrink into the distance as war appears. So it's left then to the people, which happened during the Vietnam War. And I think what you're talking about in India, it's left to the people of India.

I saw that film - a wonderful film was made about Arundhati's little tiff with the Supreme Court. I didn't know how to describe it. [Laughter] I didn't want to say a war with the Supreme Court.

**Roy:** Flirtation. [Laughter]

**Zinn:** A little encounter with... there's a wonderful film made about it which you should see and it was great to see the huge crowds of people supporting you during that. I'm sure it was because of those huge crowds that the Supreme Court went easy on you, didn't sentence you to life imprisonment. [Laughter]

**Roy** No, life was not on the cards, fortunately.

**Zinn:** But I liked what you said about the...that in India there's a kind of inherent anarchism which will save India.

**Roy:** We hope. I think it's like... trying to corporatize India is like trying to put an iron grid on the ocean. I just think even though Fascists are not disciplined, they're...hopefully they'll mess it up.

**Zinn:** I think we can count on them to mess it up.

**Roy:** I hope so.

**Zinn:** We need that. We'll try our best. We'll accomplish a lot, but we do really need them to mess it up.

**Roy:** Absolutely.

**Zinn:** But I think we can count on it. [Laughter]

**Roy:** Yes.

**Zinn:** Because they do it.

**Roy:** They do it. The only trouble Howard, is that in India right now, I think few Americans know about this, but in March this year, the BJP which is the Bharatiya Janata Party is part of what they call the Sangh Parivar, a whole sort of family of Hindu right wing organizations. The BJP is the political end of it and what's called the RSS - the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh - is the cultural guild. Now the Prime Minister, the Home Minister, the disinvestment minister, all these people belong to the RSS. The RSS has been preparing the ground for this kind of right wing - India is only for the Hindus thing - since the late '20s and they are open admirers of Hitler and his methods and so on, and in March this year there was a massacre of Muslims in Gujarat. As soon as the massacre was over, the Gujarat government, headed by the BJP, wanted to hold elections because they felt that they would win the election because they'd polarized the vote.

All over India they have what are called (untranslatable) which are branches where young people, 10-year-old children, are being

indoctrinated into religious bigotry and hatred, and how to create communal trouble, and how to rewrite history books, and all this is happening. So the Fascists will definitely mess it up. In fact the reason they're so desperate is because in State after State they were losing the election. But you see, now, whether they're in power or not, they've injected this poison into the veins of a very complex country and that's very frightening, very, very frightening, to have to deal with on a daily basis.

You cannot imagine the things that happened in Gujarat - little children were... 2,000 people were killed, women were raped, women had their stomachs slit open and their fetuses pulled out. Not one or two but many, many. Little children were forced to drink petrol then matches were put down their throats and they just blew up like bombs. It's a very, very frightening situation just now. This government in India keeps saying, we're natural allies of the U.S. So there hasn't...it's not just a coincidence that this was not reported or that it's being suppressed. The whole nuclear flashpoint with Pakistan was mostly due to the fact that the Indian government wanted to distract attention from - the world's attention from - Gujarat to this, and it was very, very successful in doing that.

**Zinn:** Well, if I hadn't read what you wrote about Gujarat and what happened there, I would never have known, because people in the United States do not know what's happening in India. People in the United States generally know very little about what is happening in the rest of the world.

**Roy:** Thanks to the "free press".

**Zinn:** Yes. [Laughter] It's clear that what we need more and more is this interchange across boundaries.

**Roy:** Yes. Real globalization.

**Zinn:** People's globalization. [Applause] I see the world with chalk lines dividing everybody. And I see us as having the job of, little by little, walking across those?

**Roy:** And rubbing them off.

**Zinn:** ..and rubbing those chalk lines out.

**Roy:** That's why I keep saying that I think that literature is the opposite of a nuclear bomb. When I wrote *The God of Small Things* I would go to Estonia, and Finland, and hear from China, people would say, oh, but this was my childhood. One of the reasons why I never wanted it to be made into a film was because I thought there are six or seven million films going on in people's heads and this one filmmaker will come and take it away. Let it be the world's childhood. [Applause]

The idea that there is that; that there is... that human beings across the world do share love, and terror, and gentleness, and these things which literature links up and which nuclear bombs just build the walls and separate.

**ZINN:** I think your coming here does that. Not only your writing does that but your coming here and us listening to you and knowing that we are part of a 'carass'. Have any you have read Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*? Kurt Vonnegut is remarkable?this remarkable, interesting, odd mind. In *Cat's Cradle* he talks about a 'carass'. A carass is when people feel an affinity with one another. They don't know exactly why but it crosses all lines. It crosses national, racial, sexual... it crosses all lines. That's what we depend on.

**Roy:** Yes. It's like I'd never been to Pakistan. Delhi and Pakistan - I mean Lahore - are maybe a one-hour flight away from each other. I went to Pakistan last month. I had to go from Delhi to Dubai to Islamabad to Lahore. It took me 18 hours. There is so much in the Indian press and equally in the Pakistan press about anti-Indian demonstrations and anti-Pakistan demonstrations and we're all going to kill each other and everybody hates everybody and so on. I landed in Lahore and within seconds we were all sitting at this dining table and I felt like I was in Delhi. It was just so sad and the audience that came... people were just in tears, not because of me or what I said or anything, just because it's such a relief not to always be subjected to this media's representation of government positions. I really feel that the media, the corporate media, has played a terrible part in all this and people are just going to have to blow holes in this dam between them and insist on listening to independent real voices, real human beings. [Applause]

**Zinn:** We were saying to one another, when you were not listening, that it's very hard to end a conversation on stage.[Laughter] And so the thought was that we would finish by Arundhati reading something that you would like to read to all of us.

**Roy:** OK. It'll just be two minutes and I just want to leave you with a thought, with a way of seeing. This is part of the essay that I wrote when India tested nuclear weapons in 1998. It's quite a long essay so this is just a very small extract, a very personal part of it.

"In early May 1988, I left home for three weeks. While I was away, I met a friend of mine whom I've always loved for, among other things, her ability to combine deep affection with a frankness bordering on savagery. [Laughter]

"I've been thinking about you", she said..."about *The God of Small Things* -- what's in it, what's over it, under it, around it, above it?"

She fell silent for a while. I was uneasy and not at all sure that I wanted to hear the rest of what she had to say. She, however, was sure that she was going to say it. "In this last year - less than a year actually - you've had too much of everything - fame, money, prizes, adulation, criticism, condemnation, ridicule, love, hate, anger, envy, generosity - everything. In some ways it's a perfect story. Perfectly baroque in its excess. The trouble is that it has, or can have, only one perfect ending." Her eyes were on me, bright, with a slanting, probing brilliance. She knew that I knew what she was going to say. She was insane.

She was going to say that nothing that happened to me in the future could ever match the buzz of this. That the whole of the rest of my life was going to be vaguely dissatisfying. And, therefore, the only perfect ending to the story would be death. [Laughter] My death.

[Laughter]

You've lived too long in New York, I told her. There are other worlds. Other kinds of dreams. Dreams in which failure is feasible. Honorable. Sometimes even worth striving for. Worlds in which recognition is not the only barometer of brilliance or human worth. There are plenty of warriors that I know and love, people far more valuable than myself, who go to war each day, knowing in advance that they will fail. True, they're less successful in the most vulgar sense of the word, but by no means less fulfilled.

The only dream worth having, I told her, is to dream that you will live while you're alive and die only when you're dead.

"Which means exactly what", she said, looking a little annoyed.

[Laughter]

I tried to explain, but didn't do a very good job of it because sometimes I need to write to think. So I wrote it down for her on a paper napkin and this is what I wrote:

*To love. To be loved. To never forget your own insignificance. To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you. To seek joy in the saddest places. To pursue beauty to its lair. To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple. To respect strength, never power. Above all, to watch. To try and understand. To never look away. And never, never, to forget.*

**Roy:** Thank you. [Applause]

Thank you.