

1987 Refuse & Resist! Founding Statement

REFUSE & RESIST!

"Tonight we look out on a rising America— firm of heart, united in spirit, powerful in pride and patriotism. America is on the move!"
— Ronald W. Reagan, 1986 State of the Union Address

"Somehow Adolph Hitler was imbuing them with a new hope, a new confidence and an astonishing renewed faith in the future of their country."
— William L. Shirer, *The Nightmare Years*

Let us not mince words. A political and ideological program of "Resurgent America" is being cultivated and guided from the highest offices in the land. Its prominent themes—a "moral awakening of the nation" and the drive for America to be Number One in the world by force of arms—have a distinctly fascist aura and raise the specter of a police state.

Some of us strongly believe in the principles and values to which this country has historically aspired; others of us find oppression and injustice to be rooted in these same principles. But ALL of us agree on the need to repudiate this new course of "Resurgent America." The transformation now taking place is not some periodic swing of the pendulum from "left" to "right," but a departure directly connected to preparations for war, repression of dissent, and promotion of U.S. global dominance and superiority over other people.

"America on the move" is nothing to be proud of. It has meant the "rehabilitation" of the Vietnam war and the glorification of war in general through the promotion of mindless Ramboism. It prepares and sponsors an invasion of Nicaragua, props up the Apartheid regime in South Africa, bombs Libya, seizes Grenada, labels any who resist as "terrorists," and prepares the doctrines and weapons for nuclear warfighting—with the Soviet Union identified as the "evil empire."

Domestically we see subway vigilantes made media heroes and a record of sympathy for white supremacy become the passport to high judicial office. Against women there is escalating violence, with compulsory child bearing and domestic servitude elevated as ideals. Xenophobic attacks are made on anything foreign, combined with calls for the compulsory use of English. A compassionless market economy is glorified, and for those who can't make it—tough. A new crack-pot biology champions creationism and a reactionary "sociobiology." And a new religious ideology preaches America as God's chosen people who will be "saved" in a nuclear Armageddon.

Under the call for a "war on drugs" there is a naked

grab for new police and military powers. More jails and quicker executions are posed as the solution to "society's problems." While concern for the "rights of the accused" is deemed passe, the ability of people to defend themselves against the state is being systematically stripped away. Thought—and bedroom—police insinuate themselves. A pogromist atmosphere is whipped up around AIDS, with open calls for registration and internment. Firings, drug tests and polygraph tests stamp the message "get in line and keep your mouth shut."

In short, this "Resurgent America" seeks a fundamentalist right-wing morality imposed by the state as the vehicle to crush nonconformist behavior— political, social and cultural.

No one can afford to close their eyes to where this "Resurgent America" is heading— and thousands have already stepped forward to resist. Standing with them, we call on those who have remained silent until now to step forward before it is too late.

Twenty-seven years ago, a courageous group of 121 French intellectuals and cultural figures published a manifesto ending their adherence to the French government and its brutal colonial war in Algeria. They asked: "Are there not times when refusing to serve is a sacred duty, when treason signifies courageous respect for the truth?"

Likewise, we now declare that we renounce all allegiance to this hateful "Resurgent America" program, and encourage all others in its vociferous and determined renunciation. There can be no communality of purpose, healing of divisions, or coming together as one nation behind this new course. To acquiesce further in silence is to be complicit. It is not enough to hope that all of this will simply go away. There must be massive resistance.

To the Reaganites, racists, misogynists, televangelists, would-be Rambos, war planners, and America-firsters, we say the future is not yours. Because we see the potential for a different future, we *will* Refuse and Resist.

This statement, which has now been signed by over 3000 people was initiated in early 1987 by:

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Emile de Antonio New York, NY | Michael Brown New York, NY | John Gerassi New York, NY | Claudia Koonz Worcester, MA | Charles Meconis Seattle, WA | Sonia Sanchez Philadelphia, PA |
| Dore Ashton New York, NY | Dennis Brutus Pittsburgh, PA | Abbie Hoffman New York, NY | William Kunstler, Esq. New York, NY | Pat Norman San Francisco, CA | Rev. Fernando Santillana Los Angeles, CA |
| | Doug Cassel, Esq. Chicago, IL | C. Clark Kissinger Washington, DC | Conrad Lynn, Esq. Nanuet, NY | Karen Ryer, Esq. Oakland, CA | Leonard Weinglass, Esq. New York, NY |

"First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that tie no one was left to speak up."

—Pastor Martin Niemoller

REFUSE & RESIST! 305 Madison Ave. Suite 1166, New York, NY 10165 (212)713-5657

The following people are a few of over 3000 who have signed the REFUSE & RESIST! Statement:

Mumia Abu-Jamal
Emile de Antonio
Dore Ashton
Ti-grace Atkinson
Russell Banks
Phil Berrigan
Lizzie Borden
Roy Bourgeois, M.M.
Lester Bowie
Dennis Brutus
Haywood Burns
Coosjie van Brueggen
Phylis Chesler
Robert Christgau
Barbara Christian
Barry Crimmins
Carl Dix
Jack Elder
Carraig de Forest
Renny Golden
Leon Gump
Larry Heinemann
Lister Hewan-Lowe
Lawrence Hill
Abbie Hoffman
Stuart Hutchinson
Flo Kennedy
Larry Klein
William Kunstler
Tuli Kupferberg
Corliss Lamont
Richard Lewontin
Lucy Lippard
Salvadore Luna
Conrad Lynn
Pablo Moses
Mutabaruka
Holly Near
John Nichols
Pat Norman
Claes Oldenburg
Linus Pauling
Michael Ratner
Margaret Randall
Abby A. Rockefeller
Michael Rose
Ricardo Sanchez
Sonia Sanchez
Pete Seeger
Martin Sheen
Nancy Spero
Dr. Benjamin Spock
Peter Tosh
Kurt Vonnegut
Alice Walker
Leonard Weinglass
Donald Woods
Howard Zinn