

State of the Union and Howard Zinn's Death

Demetria Martinez | Jan. 28, 2010 NCR Today

I was getting ready to listen to President Obama's State of the Union Speech when I came across the heartbreaking news on the Huffington Post that historian Howard Zinn died of a heart attack at age 87. [Howard Zinn Dies: Historian, Activist Was Early Opponent Of U.S. Involvement In Vietnam War](#) [1].

The man who gave us *A People's History of the United States* will not be here to mentor us as we seek ways to end two wars and urge our leaders to stand up for a social justice agenda.

Now, he speaks to us from the grave, prophetic as always.

According to the Huffington Post article, one of Zinn's last public writings was an essay that appeared last week in *The Nation*. It was about the first year of the Obama administration:

"I've been searching hard for a highlight," he wrote, adding that he wasn't disappointed because he never expected a lot from Obama.

"I think people are dazzled by Obama's rhetoric, and that people ought to begin to understand that Obama is going to be a mediocre president -- which means, in our time, a dangerous president -- unless there is some national movement to push him in a better direction."

Zinn expresses the demoralization many progressives are feeling. We don't understand how a Nobel Peace president can be prosecuting two wars, diverting resources away from efforts that sustain humanity, such as ameliorating hunger and AIDS, slowing climate warming and really helping Haiti emerge from the rubble.

So let's honor Zinn's memory by taking up his challenge, to push President Obama "in a better direction."

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[1] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/27/howard-zinn-dead-author-o_n_439350.html