TEACHER'S GUIDE
FALL 2020

For more educational learning opportunities
Contact Booking Manager, Marissa Ellison
415-285-1717 or tourmanager@sfmt.org
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HISTORY AND MISSION

HISTORY
Our artistic history has been a series of experiments with popular theater forms. Founding director RG Davis began in 1959 with avant-garde performance events in lofts and basements. When he discovered Commedia dell’Arte (Italian Renaissance marketplace comedy) he began a tradition of free shows in the parks that still thrives today.

Since becoming a collective in 1970, we have done melodramas, spy thrillers, musical comedies, epic histories, sitcoms, cartoon epics. Our trademark style draws from all these genres and is based on their common elements: strong story line, avowed point of view, larger-than-life characters, fantasy, live music.

The SFMT delights in savaging the norms of mainstream American theater, with its naturalistic values, its emphasis on personal (or at most family) psychology, its settings confined to living rooms and patios. We admire the depths reached by 20th-century realism, but we also think it sanctions social inaction. Our characters are individuals but they are also members of social classes: conscious or unconscious participants in the unending wars over land and power and wealth which drive human history.

MISSION
The mission of the San Francisco Mime Troupe is to create and produce theater that presents a working-class analysis of the events that shape our society, that exposes social and economic injustice, that demands revolutionary change on behalf of working people, and to present this analysis before the broadest possible audience with artistry and humor.

The collective of the San Francisco Mime Troupe exists not only to create this activist art but also to embody our ideals of combating the fragmentation of the working class: we are a democratically run, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multi-cultural, gender-balanced theater of social justice that by its very existence sustains a vision of community governance of, by, and for the people.
LEARNING PROGRAMS

TALKBACK GUESTS
After listening to SEEING RED, invite one of our esteemed Collective Members to your class to discuss themes of the show or the process of creating an original political musical.

For more information, email tourmanager@sfmt.org

YOUTH THEATER PROJECT - HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
YTP is an after-school theater program for Bay Area teens which meets every year from February to April. During this internship, students not only learn skills in stage production, acting, and improvisation, but they also collaboratively write and produce their own politically charged play! In addition, dinner is served at every session and a paid stipend is awarded for full participation. YTP culminates in a weekend of fully produced performances of their original plays in mid-April, under the guidance of SFMT teachers, directors and designers.

For more information, email ytp@sfmt.org

YOUNG CALIFORNIA WRITER'S PROJECT
The Young California Writers Project is a 10 week program administered by the San Francisco Mime Troupe in which an established playwright guest teaches the art of playwriting to students in one or several Bay Area high school English classes.

For more information, email michaelsullivan@sfmt.org

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
Our instructors use theater and improvisation games and team-building exercises to break down barriers, encourage collaboration, and facilitate trust and comfort. Then the stock characters and contemporary archetypes are introduced. We move from there into ensemble methods of play creation and burning issue discussions. Time permitting, we then form small groups that create, rehearse, and perform a short play, using five frames to make a scene and essentialize the story.

For more information, email coordinator@sfmt.org

SUMMER INTERNSHIPS
The San Francisco Mime Troupe's Internship program provides exciting opportunities for college students and recent graduates to gain hands-on experience in several areas of theater production. An SFMT internship may be of particular interest to those seeking an intensive experience in the process of producing original new works. In addition, participants will be offered unique insight into a collectively-run organization producing socially-conscious, issue-driven theater.

For more information, email coordinator@sfmt.org
AWARDS AND PHOTOS

1967
SFMT forms a marching band and plays two sold-out weeks in New York, winning its first Obie Award "for uniting theater and revolution and grooving in the parks"

1974
Company wins second Obie, for THE DRAGON LADY’S REVENGE, based on RAMPARTS magazine’s expose of CIA complicity in the Indochina heroin trade.

1987
SFMT wins a Tony Award for Excellence in Regional Theatre.

1990
SEEING DOUBLE, which dramatizes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a mistaken-identity farce, brings the company its third Obie
I was inspired to write Seeing Red after reading an article in Jacobin magazine about the American socialist movement of the early twentieth century. Having been born at the tail end of the Cold War, I had been raised with the idea that socialism was decidedly un-American—an authoritarian philosophy that had been rightly stamped out of such foreign places as Russia and East Germany. As I read the article, I was shocked to learn that this country had witnessed its own robust socialist movement—a multi-racial, multi-gendered coalition that elected over 1200 Socialists to public office and formed the backbone of a successful movement to secure greater rights for workers, women, and people of color.

Today we live in a world in which many are questioning the injustices perpetuated by unbridled capitalism. As young people are saddled with greater and greater student loan debt, and with sick people having to resort to GoFundMe campaigns to pay their medical bills, there is a growing consensus that profit-driven capitalism is leaving far too many people behind. As the recent presidential campaigns of Bernie Sanders have shown, socialism is no longer the dirty word it used to be.

As we continue to dream about a better world, it is essential that we learn from the lessons of the past. In Seeing Red, a present-day worker, who is disillusioned by the obstacles of today, goes on a journey back in time. She sees how workers from various backgrounds came together in solidarity to battle their common enemies. She also sees how the ruling class used war-mongering, racism, and xenophobia to splinter the movement. She learns that rather than waiting around for a hero, regular people can come together in solidarity to build the world they want to live in. She grows from apathy to political engagement.

Socialism, at its heart, is a call for greater democracy—from the ballot box to the workplace, regular people should have a greater say in their destiny and a greater share of the wealth that they create. By learning the people’s history, we see how our cherished rights were won—through grassroots movements that changed the status quo. I hope Seeing Red inspires you to use all the tools at your disposal to make this world better for everyone.

- Rotimi Agbabiaka, SEEING RED playwright and SFMT Collective Member
PLOT SUMMARY

It’s Election Night 2020 and Bob swears she’ll never vote again. In 2016, this former Obama voter took a chance on the new guy promising change—Donald J. Trump. But four years later, the economy’s collapsing, Bob’s losing loved ones to COVID-19, and the other presidential candidate is promising a return to a past that wasn’t so great for working people like Bob. Tonight she’s telling everyone in her small-town bar that the system is rigged, and nothing’s ever gonna change.

Along comes a mysterious stranger with an intriguing offer. He’ll show her an America where working people come together to demand a brighter future, where socialism isn’t a dirty word. He’ll take her all the way ... to 1912.

Bob soon finds herself traveling back to a time when the Socialist Party was winning millions of American votes; uncovering a hidden history and realizing that she may have more in common with those pesky progressives on the coasts. She begins to ask: what will it take to get people to stop voting against their interests? How do we overcome the divide-and-conquer tactics that keep us all down? When did our electoral choices get so limited? And isn’t it time to get off the swinging pendulum that’s left us at our current impasse?
HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1894 - Eugene Debs imprisoned for leading Pullman Strike

1900 - Debs runs for president on the Social Democratic Party of America (SDP) ticket

1901 - American Socialist Party forms when the SDP merges with the SLP (Socialist Labor Party)

1904 - Debs' first presidential bid on the Socialist Party ticket receives 400,000 votes

1905 - Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) founded

1911 - Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire kills 146 workers, mostly immigrant women

1912 - Women and immigrants, organized by the IWW, lead Lawrence Textile strike to victory

1912 - Debs wins 900,000 votes—6 percent of the electorate—in presidential election

1915 - Joe Hill executed by the state of Utah

1916 - Adamson Act establishes 8-hour workday for railroad workers

1917 - America enters WWI

1917 - Espionage Act passed

1918 - Sedition Act passed

1918 - Debs thrown in jail for speaking against the war

1918 - IWW offices raided and 165 IWW leaders arrested

1919 - Left wing faction of Socialist party forms the Communist Labor Party

1919 - Palmer Raids begin. Department of Justice arrests and deports thousands of socialists and anarchists

1920 - Debs receives a million votes while in jail
WHO’S WHO: CHARACTER GUIDE

BOB
*Played by Lisa Hori-Garcia*

Bob is a woman in her thirties who starts the play swearing that she'll never vote again. Bob lost her well-paying job years ago when the local steel mill closed down. After voting for Obama in 2012, she decided to vote for Trump in 2016 because he promised to bring the steel mill back. Four years later, Trump hasn’t kept his promise and Bob is driving for a food delivery service in order to make ends meet. She is disillusioned with the two major political parties and has lost hope that things will get better for people like her.

BUBBA
*Played by Michael Gene Sullivan*

Bubba is a man in his fifties who immigrated to America from Ethiopia. He owns the local bar and credits his hard work for making him successful in America. He supports President Trump because he believes that the country should be run like a business.

JOE HILL
*Played by Andre Amarotico*

Joe Hill, born Joel Emmanuel Hägglund, was a songwriter and labor organizer who wrote many popular working class anthems of the early twentieth century. An immigrant from Sweden, he travelled around the United States as an itinerant laborer and was in San Francisco during the 1906 earthquake. He was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World or the “Wobblies”, a labor union that sought to represent women, minorities, and the unskilled—groups that were often excluded from the traditional unions of the time. In 1915, he was executed after being accused of murdering a grocery store owner—an allegation which his supporters maintain was false and in retaliation for his work as a labor organizer. In *Seeing Red*, Joe returns to take Bob back in time.
RUBY CHEN
*Played by Keiko Shimosato Carreiro*

Ruby Chen is an immigrant from China and a bar owner in 1912. She is a member of the American Socialist Party and a suffragette—fighting to give women the right to vote. As the nation enters World War I, she becomes a victim of the red scare.

HENRY
*Played by Michael Gene Sullivan*

Henry is an African American man from Louisiana who migrated to Ohio in 1912 in search of a better job. He joins the socialist movement after witnessing a co-worker getting fatally injured at the steel mill. When the U.S. enters World War I, Henry enlists in the army, believing that Black men will be treated better if they are seen serving honorably in the war.

MAGARACK
*Played by Andre Amarotico*

Magarack is a fellow worker and member of the Industrial Workers of the World. As the government ramps up its suppression of socialists, Magarack is seduced by the promise of better pay and joins the red squad—becoming an informant on his former comrades.
EUGENE DEBS
Born in 1855, Eugene Debs got his start working on railroads. Activated by the 1893 economic crisis, Debs helped found the American Railway Union. Debs supported integrating unions, allowing Black workers to join, but was often outvoted. In 1894, Debs helped organize the ARU in solidarity with workers striking against the Pullman Palace Car Company. This resulted in a nationwide boycott of all trains, which was then violently broken by police and federal troops. Debs was sentenced to six months in prison for his involvement in the strike, which is where he was introduced to Socialism. In 1905, Debs was a prominent speaker as the leader of the Socialist Party at the “Continental Congress of the Working Class,” a convention which led to the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW. He supported the notion that rather than divide workers by having competing craft unions, they should unite by having “One Big Union.” Debs ran for president as leader of the Socialist Party in 1912. However, his criticism of the United States’ involvement in World War I led to his arrest and being sentenced to prison for ten years in 1918 under the Espionage Act. In 1920, Debs ran for president again and received almost a million votes while still in prison. He was pardoned by President Warren G. Harding in 1921. Eugene Debs died in 1926.

LUCY PARSONS
“What do anarchists mean when they speak of anarchy? Webster gives the term two definitions chaos and the state of being without political rule. We cling to the latter definition. Our enemies hold that we believe only in the former. “

Lucy Parsons helped found the IWW, and was an outspoken activist for workers, women, and against racist oppression. Born into slavery, with Black, Native-American, and Mexican heritage, she married Albert Parsons in 1870. Since Albert was white, they had to flee to Chicago in 1871 to avoid prosecution under anti-miscegenation laws. There, they became heavily involved in labor organizing, and the anarchist movement. In 1886, the Parsons helped lead a strike in support of an eight-hour work day. One protest against police brutality against strikers turned into the infamous “Haymarket Riot.” Someone threw a bomb, killing seven police officers. Though there was no direct evidence, Albert and others were arrested. Lucy jumped into action, defending her husband’s innocence, and raising money for legal defense. Nevertheless, Albert was found guilty and executed. This gave Lucy lifelong loyalty to the Anarchist cause, though later her political beliefs evolved. In 1905, Lucy was one of only two female delegates present at the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. There, she advocated for greater inclusion of women in the union. Until her death in 1942, Parsons continued to dedicate her life to labor struggles, anti-racist organizing, and women’s liberation.

JOE HILL
Joe Hill was an IWW organizer and songwriter. Born in 1879 in Sweden, Hill immigrated to the United States in 1902. The dozens of songs he wrote appeared in IWW publications and the accompanying “Little Red Songbook,” and were critical of the state of workers, the church, and espoused Marxist ideals. In 1915, he was accused of killing a grocer in Salt Lake City in a robbery. There was only circumstantial evidence, but the jury was convinced of his guilt. His conviction was widely viewed as being politically motivated, and there was an international outcry. Nevertheless, Hill was executed by firing squad. His last communication goes down in history: “Don’t waste any time in mourning. Organize.”
Would you have freedom from wage slavery,
Then join in the grand Industrial band;
Would you from mis’ry and hunger be free,
Then come! Do your share, like a man.

There is pow’r, there is pow’r
In a band of workingmen,
When they stand hand in hand,
That’s a pow’r, that’s a pow’r
That must rule in every land.

One Industrial Union Grand.
“Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. In the Middle Ages when the feudal lords who inhabited the castles whose towers may still be seen along the Rhine concluded to enlarge their domains, to increase their power, their prestige and their wealth they declared war upon one another. But they themselves did not go to war any more than the modern feudal lords, the barons of Wall Street go to war. The feudal barons of the Middle Ages, the economic predecessors of the capitalists of our day, declared all wars. And their miserable serfs fought all the battles. The poor, ignorant serfs had been taught to revere their masters; to believe that when their masters declared war upon one another, it was their patriotic duty to fall upon one another and to cut one another's throats for the profit and glory of the lords and barons who held them in contempt. And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has had all to gain and nothing to lose, while the subject class has had nothing to gain and all to lose—especially their lives.

They have always taught and trained you to believe it to be your patriotic duty to go to war and to have yourselves slaughtered at their command. But in all the history of the world you, the people, have never had a voice in declaring war, and strange as it certainly appears, no war by any nation in any age has ever been declared by the people.

And here let me emphasize the fact—and it cannot be repeated too often—that the working class who fight all the battles, the working class who make the supreme sacrifices, the working class who freely shed their blood and furnish the corpses, have never yet had a voice in either declaring war or making peace. It is the ruling class that invariably does both. They alone declare war and they alone make peace.”

- Eugene Debs
CONNECTIONS: ALTERNATIVE PARTIES

HISTORY

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

★ “Socialism, as defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary, is “any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods. A system of society or group living in which there is no private property and the means of production are owned and controlled by the state.”

★ The goal of socialism is to spread wealth more evenly and to treat all people fairly. People have had different ideas about how to create a socialist society.

★ Socialism is best defined in contrast with capitalism, as socialism has arisen both as a critical challenge to capitalism, and as a proposal for overcoming and replacing it.

★ The United States should promote the mass unionization of its workforce, increase legal protections against arbitrary termination and allow workers to control some of the seats on the corporate boards of the companies they work in.

WHAT IS ANARCHISM?

★ Anarchism is belief in the abolition of all government and the organization of society on a voluntary, cooperative basis without recourse to force or compulsion.

★ The chief tenet of anarchism is that government should be abolished in order to allow human communities to flourish without government coercion. Also part of anarchism is the concept that the people should be allowed to live in free associations, sharing work and its products.

★ In place of the present capitalistic economic order Anarchists would have a free association of all productive forces based upon co-operative labour, which would have as its sole purpose the satisfying of the necessary requirements of every member of society, and would no longer have in view the special interest of privileged minorities within the social union.

★ Beyond opposing formal government, most anarchists also reject capitalism in favor of a cooperative or communal method of allocating goods and land.

WHAT IS ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM?

★ Anarcho-syndicalism is a form of anarchism that focuses on the labour movement

★ Syndicalism, also called Anarcho-syndicalism, or Revolutionary Syndicalism, a movement that advocates direct action by the working class to abolish the capitalist order, including the state, and to establish in its place a social order based on workers organized in production units.

★ Anarcho-syndicalists seek to abolish the wage system, regarding it as "wage slavery," and state or private ownership of the means of production, which they believe lead to class divisions.

**Note:** These concepts have numerous theories and internal debates within themselves, but a basic comprehension of these ideas can provide a broader understanding of the topics introduced in SEEING RED.
PRIMARY RESOURCES

NEWSPAPERS
November 15, 1911 issue of The Agitator
December 11, 1911 issue of The Agitator
Index of Socialist Publications
The International Socialist Review, 1912
Commonwealth Publications, 1912
Other Commonwealth Publications

OTHER
Eugene Debs Specific Documents
Eugene Debs Internet Archives
Smithsonian Magazine with Sources
IWW History
Little Red Songbook
American Socialist: Transcripts
Strikebreaking Article

www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1919-1920-w-membership-card-443520184
WHY TEACH PEOPLE’S HISTORY?

“The premise that the lives of ordinary people matter — that history ought to focus on those who too often receive only token attention (workers, women, people of color), and also on how people’s actions, individually and collectively, shaped our society. And it’s a people’s history in that it’s a perspective on the past that is usable today, that can instruct and inspire and caution as we try to make the world a better place.”

- Bill Bigelow, *A People’s History: A People’s Pedagogy*, Zinn Education Project

“We must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.”

- Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*

“In the telling of history, however, the genesis of leadership is easily forgotten. Textbook authors and popular history writers fail to portray the great masses of humanity as active players, agents on their own behalf.”

- Ray Raphael, from the teaching activity “Re-examining the Revolution,” author of *A People’s History of the American Revolution*
THE POWER OF THE VOTE

Why is voting important?
★ In the 2016 presidential election, 138 million Americans voted for president, representing only 58.1% of eligible voters.
★ Despite winning the popular vote by almost 2.9 million votes, Hillary Clinton still lost the Electoral College to Donald Trump.
★ However, in the swing states of Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, Donald Trump won by 0.7% of the vote. In Michigan, that number was only 0.2%. If these three states had voted differently, Hilary Clinton would have won the Electoral College!
★ In places like Wayne County, Mich., home to Detroit, and Milwaukee, Wis., Clinton’s vote total was significantly lower than Obama's vote total in 2012. In fact, had she met Obama's vote total, it would have been more than enough to make up the statewide differences in both states.
★ A study by Portland University found that fewer than 15 percent of eligible voters turn out for local elections for mayor, city council, and other local positions.
★ According to the 2008 US Census Bureau, only 63% of all people who are registered to vote actually did.

I can’t vote because I’m not a US Citizen or 18 years old. What can I do to make my voice heard?
★ Volunteer: If you want to show your support for a candidate or proposition, you can help other people learn about them by working for their campaign, phone banking, writing postcards, or doing door-to-door outreach!
★ Talk to your friends and family: Have conversations with your friends and family about who they are voting for and why voting is important. If you want to reach more people, see about writing an opinion article for your school newspaper!
★ Be Informed: Find more information about local and national issues. Know where you stand and who you would vote for!
RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

FILM
America’s Socialist Experiment, Documentary
American Socialist: The Life and Times of Eugene Victor Debs
Joe Hill, Biopic
Meet Five Union Women
Howard Zinn: A People’s History of the United States Part I, Documentary

BOOKS
Rocking the Boat By Brigid O’Farrell, Joyce L. Kornbluh
There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America by Philip Dray
A People’s History of the United States: 1492 – Present by Howard Zinn
Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture by Franklin Rosemont

INTERNET
Zinn Education Project - https://www.zinnedproject.org/
A Brief History of Socialism in America - https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/spusa/1900/0100-sdp-briefhistorysoc.pdf
The Socialist Party of America History - https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/eam/spa/socialistparty.html
Index of Socialist Publications - https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/
Antiar and Radical History Project - http://depts.washington.edu/antiwar/
Voices of a People’s History - https://peopleshistory.us
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SOCIALISM?

DIRECTIONS: Fill in the chart below before and after listening to SEEING RED. Write down notes about what you already know about socialism, what you wonder about socialism, and what you learned after hearing SEEING RED.

“Socialism, as defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary, is “any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods. A system of society or group living in which there is no private property and the means of production are owned and controlled by the state.”

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<tr>
<th>Know</th>
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<td><strong>BEFORE LISTENING TO THE PLAY:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>★ What do you already know about socialism?</td>
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<td>★ What comes to mind when you hear the word socialism?</td>
<td>★ What do you want to know about socialism?</td>
<td>★ What do you want other people to know?</td>
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MAKE YOUR OWN PROTEST SIGNS

Directions: Think about something in the world that you would like to change. Design the protest signs below using a persuasive phrase to get people to join your fight!
DEAR DIARY

DIRECTIONS: Imagine that you were one of the characters in SEEING RED! Write a diary entry from their point of view. What would their daily life look like? What challenges would they face? What are some issues that are important to them? What social change could improve their standard of living?

Dear Diary,

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Sincerely,

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

DIRECTIONS: If you could travel to any time in history or the future, where would you go? Write a short essay explaining what time period you would travel to and why? What would be different about that time period? What would you do during your visit to that time period?

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BE OUR CRITIC

DIRECTIONS: Write a critique of SEEING RED. Include answers to the following questions in your analysis:

1. What was the overall theme of SEEING RED?
2. Describe the main characters in SEEING RED. What were their goals and obstacles?
3. Describe how the characters were portrayed. How did that affect your opinion of them?
4. Describe the relationships between the characters and how the relationships were portrayed.
5. Would you recommend this radio play to a friend? Why or why not?
6. How many stars would you rate SEEING RED from 1-5 with five being outstanding?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-LISTENING QUESTIONS
★ There have been many social movements throughout history led by young adults. What would you like to change about the world today? How would you get others to join your fight for justice?
★ Do you think that voting in elections really makes a difference?

POST-LISTENING QUESTIONS
★ At the end of the play, Bob takes time to read more about things that she wasn’t taught in school. What do you think should be taught in school that you have yet to learn? Whose stories are told in our history books?
★ Some of the issues brought to light throughout SEEING RED address workers’ rights. Do you think that workers have enough rights in the present? What needs to change for workers to have a safe and healthy work life? How can workers take action to change these issues?
★ What are some barriers to voting that remain in our election system today? What should our country change to make sure that everyone’s voices are heard?
★ In the play, the character of Joe Hill doesn’t seem to think that voting makes much of a difference. Why does he argue that?
★ On the other hand, Ruby and Henry are both adamant about the importance of voting. In 1912, women did not have the right to vote, and people of color were systematically prevented from voting in various ways. How does Henry point out that voting is in fact powerful?
★ In the 1912 election, Eugene Debs only won a small percentage of the vote. To the characters, this is still significant. Why?
★ In addition to voting, what are some other ways of creating social change?


"Fellow Worker Eugene V Debs." Fellow Worker Eugene V Debs | Industrial Workers of the World, archive.iww.org/history/biography/EugeneDebs/1/.


History, history.uchicago.edu/content/social-history.


"IWW Documents Library." IWW Documents Library | Industrial Workers of the World, archive.iww.org/history/library/.

Lucy Parsons Biography, pzcad.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/lparsons/lparsonsbio.html.


