

# Introduction

**W***isdom of Progressive Voices* celebrates the words and lives of those who have articulated a “forward thinking” view of political, social, and environmental issues of their times. Through the sampling of the progressives featured in this book, we have illustrated that progressive wisdom has been spoken by Democrats, Republicans, and men and women not affiliated with any political party. Nor can one religious affiliation claim a monopoly on progressive wisdom. Each generation from the advent of the “American Progressive Movement” (a period of reform that flourished from the 1890s to the 1920s) onward has produced magnificent examples of those who speak with vision and courage.

For me, the key elements of how we “progress” through life include the following basic principles:

- The sacredness and inter-connectedness of us all. All living things – no exceptions – must be honored as hallowed.

- Voices that look for common ground while acknowledging the differences among us, but do not speak of hate, can be considered progressive because they move us forward with the belief that hate tears at the fabric of the human soul. Common ground is what holds us all together. One needs to look no further than the “Commonwealth” that names some of our founding states (Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania).
- Education for education’s sake is a commodity to be treasured. That ignorance does no one any good. That we are all ignorant of many things. To profess to have all the answers is a lie. Life is a journey...we learn at every stage. We progress through life learning and rejoicing in learning.
- That peace is far more profitable – in every sense of the word – than war.

This is what I have tried to portray by the lives and words of those featured in *Wisdom of Progressive Voices*.

As Rabbi Michael Lerner told Bill Moyers in an interview:

*“We want corporations, government institutions and social practices in our society to be judged ‘efficient, rational, or productive’ not only to the extent that they accumulate money and power (the Old Bottom Line), but also to the extent that they encourage and support us to be loving and caring human beings, people who are ethically and ecologically sensitive, people who build loving relationships, people who treat others with generosity and kindness, people who can recognize each other as embodiments of the sacred and who respond to the grandeur and mystery of the universe, consciousness and our very existence with awe, wonder and radical amazement.”*

It’s a time to focus on the fact that a progressive movement has always been with us – and always will be. Although it may seem as though we are being overwhelmed with hate speech, regressive movements and a drive to keep education and learned thinking out of the conversation, we

can't lose sight of the fact that the progressive voice has brought wisdom, inspiration, and hope whenever it has spoken. I believe that putting this book together served as a way to help me keep my sanity in a time when it appears all around us is whirling totally out of control. I hope this book can provide insight and hope to those who read it.

Never in my life did I think it would be difficult to defend peace. Or education. Or tolerance over hate. I was raised in a middle class family by a father who worked two jobs, one as a high school chemistry teacher by day, the other as a foundry worker by night making frames for General Motors cars. Orphaned when he was six at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he didn't receive his high school diploma until he was in his 20s, started and stopped college as the Great Depression followed. He eventually graduated with a B.S. from Marquette University in 1938. "Education for education sake," he said time and again. It rings in my ears today. "Education is something no one can ever take from you." To provide educational opportunities for his children was his most ardent dream. Not so that we would earn high salaries, but so that we could contribute wise decisions for the small amount of time we occupy space on Earth.

While I was digging through files doing research for this book, I smiled when I stumbled on a yellowing page of loose-leaf paper, scribbled in my father's elaborate handwriting with a fountain pen that still required filling from a bottle of ink, the following note:

*"A Way of Life – Wisdom For Living: Philosophical reflection connects with experience to direct human activity to life-giving ends."*

This book features quotes and beliefs from many generations, faiths, and races – all of whom tried to progress us forward with these ideals. I have concentrated on American voices from the Progressive Movement onward. Future volumes in the Wisdom Voices series will include an international perspective.

Many of those featured on the following pages have had much written about them. No pretense is made that we have captured all of who they were in these samplings of their voices. Every

effort has been made to verify that the quotes used in this book are authentic. Our goal was not to pronounce judgment on their lives or pretend that these quotes represent a person's total view on any topic. Rather, our aim was to present examples of what they represented and as a reminder that progressive voices:

- Have been heard throughout generations
- Provide hope for the future
- Should be celebrated for their wisdom and courage

We strongly encourage you to check out *For More Insights* for a list of book references and materials on these profiled individuals. Educating yourself about the lives and wisdom of these marvelous voices provides a great opportunity to keep their spirit and thoughts alive.

Our hope is that *Wisdom of Progressive Voices* can take a step toward breaking down the fear, ignorance, prejudices, greed, selfishness and desire to dominate others that are the forces at work dividing peoples and nations. As a way to encourage others who think progressively, to reflect back on those who have walked before us and to inspire the next set of voices, we give you... *Wisdom of Progressive Voices*.

*Dedicated to my father, Henry C. Boyer,  
whose wisdom can be heard today  
in the voices of his children and grandchildren.*

## Rachel Carson

Born: May 27, 1907, Springdale, Pennsylvania

Died: April 14, 1964, Silver Spring, Maryland

Rachel Carson, renowned author, marine biologist, ecologist and environmentalist, is best known for her book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. The book is credited for providing the impetus for the modern environmental movement. She was passionate about her love of the natural world and her commitment to its wholeness. Embedded within all of Carson's writing was the view that human beings were but one part of nature distinguished primarily by their power to alter it, in some cases irreversibly.



She earned a Masters in Zoology from Johns Hopkins University in 1932, but it was her great gift of writing that ultimately marked her career. During the Depression, she wrote radio scripts for the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries and supplemented her income by writing feature articles on natural history for the Baltimore Sun. She served as a scientist and editor before becoming editor-in-chief of all publications for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition to *Silent Spring*, her other books – all of which appeared on the New York Times' Best Sellers list – include:

- *Under the Sea-wind* (1941)
- *The Sea Around Us* (1952)
- *The Edge of the Sea* (1955)

Disturbed by the increased and continued use of synthetic chemical pesticides after World War II, Carson turned her writing focus to warn the public about the long-term effects of misusing pesticides. In *Silent Spring* she challenged the practices of agricultural scientists and the government, and called for a change in the way humankind viewed the natural world. Testifying

before Congress in 1963, Carson called for new policies to protect human health and the environment.

*Silent Spring* and Carson's testimony before government panels played a major role in the banning of DDT in the United States. The establishment of the Environmental Defense Fund was the first major milestone in the campaign against DDT. The organization brought lawsuits against the government to "establish a citizen's right to a clean environment," and the agency's arguments employed against DDT largely mirrored those made by Carson.

Rachel Carson died in 1964 after a long battle against breast cancer. Known for having a meticulous eye toward research, it was said of her:

*"Carson's field observations were never so narrow or self-absorbing that she missed the wider angle of vision or failed to relate her specific environment to the larger evolution of life. She was always an immediate participant intimately in touch with the life of her fellow creatures. Her notebooks testify to her compassion, her capacity for wonder, and her humility in the face of creation."*

The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1966 in cooperation with the State of Maine, is a lasting tribute to her environmental passion. The park protects valuable salt marshes and estuaries for migratory birds. Major habitat types present on the refuge include forested upland, barrier beach/dune, coastal meadows, tidal salt marsh, and the distinctive rocky coast.

**Rachel Carson**

*“We live in a scientific age; yet we assume that knowledge of science is the prerogative of only a small number of human beings, isolated and priest-like in their laboratories. This is not true. The materials of science are the materials of life itself. Science is part of the reality of living; it is the what, the how, and the why of everything in our experience. It is impossible to understand man without understanding his environment and the forces that have molded him physically and mentally. The aim of science is to discover and illuminate truth.”*



*“We have looked first at man with his vanities and greed and his problems of a day or a year; and then only, and from this biased point of view, we have looked outward at the earth he has inhabited so briefly and at the universe in which our earth is so minute a part. Yet these are the great realities,*

**Rachel Carson**

*and against them we see our human problems in a different perspective. Perhaps if we reversed the telescope and looked at man down these long vistas, we should find less time and inclination to plan for our own destruction.”*

*“The real wealth of the Nation lies in the resources of the earth – soil, water, forests minerals, and wildlife. To utilize them for present needs while insuring their preservation for future generations requires a delicately balanced and continuing program, based on the most extensive research. Their administration is not properly, and cannot be, a matter of politics. It is one of the ironies of our time that, while concentrating on the defense of our country against enemies from without, we should be so heedless of those who would destroy it from within.”*



**Rachel Carson**

*“I have been thinking about the relations of one animal to another animal, of animals to plants, and of the animal or plant to the physical world about it. Always in such reflections one is made aware of the complex pattern of life. No thread is found to be complete in itself, nor does it have meaning alone. Each is but a small part of the intricately woven design of the whole.”*



*“I am not afraid of being thought a sentimentalist when I stand here tonight and tell you that I believe natural beauty has a necessary place in the spiritual development of any individual or any society. I believe that whenever we destroy beauty, or whenever we substitute something man-made and artificial for a natural feature of the earth, we have retarded some part of man’s spiritual growth.”*

## Dennis Kucinich

Born: October 8, 1946, Cleveland, Ohio

Dennis Kucinich, U.S. Representative from Ohio's 10<sup>th</sup> district, has a long and storied career of more than 30 years of public service at the local, state, and national level. It includes:

- U.S. Representative from Ohio (1997-present)
- Ohio State Senator (1995-1997)
- Cleveland City Council Member (1983-1986 and 1970-1976)
- Mayor, City of Cleveland (1977-1979)
- Clerk of Courts, Cleveland Municipal Courts (1976-1977)



Kucinich, who ran for president in 2004 and 2008, was the youngest person to lead a major American city when he was elected mayor of Cleveland in 1977. His time in Congress has been marked by unwavering commitments to worker rights, civil rights and human rights. He remains a “voice of conscience” for the Democratic Party and he has provided a dissenting voice and vote on many issues including voting against U.S. military involvement in Iraq. He continues to vote against further funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He has never forgotten his blue-collar roots. His presidential platform in 2008 reflected much of the legislation he has authored or co-sponsored in Congress. He has advocated legislation on issues such as:

- Creating a national health care system
- Preserving Social Security
- Lowering the costs of prescription drugs

- Providing economic development through infrastructure improvements
- Abolishing the death penalty
- Creating a Department of Peace
- Regulating genetically engineered foods
- Repealing the USA Patriot Act
- Providing tax relief to working class families

Kucinich advocates U.S. withdrawal from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) because, in his view, it causes the loss of more American jobs than it creates, and does not provide adequate protections for worker rights and safety and environmental safeguards. He is against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) for the same reason.

A staunch advocate of environmental concerns, Kucinich has been honored by Public Citizen, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth and the League of Conservation Voters as a champion of clean air, clean water and an unspoiled earth. In 2003, Kucinich was the recipient of the Ghandi Peace Award, an annual award bestowed by the Religious Society of Friends-affiliated organization Promoting Enduring Peace.

**Dennis Kucinich**

*“We have weapons of mass destruction we have to address here at home. Poverty is a weapon of mass destruction. Homelessness is a weapon of mass destruction. Unemployment is a weapon of mass destruction.”*

*“This is a struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party, which in too many cases has become so corporate and identified with corporate interests that you can’t tell the difference between Democrats and Republicans.”*

*“I was raised poor; so I can relate to the working-class. I was a sickly child; so I can relate to people who need healthcare. I worked hard to get ahead, so I can relate to providing opportunities to all.”*

*“Neither individuals nor nations exist in a vacuum, which is why we have a serious responsibility for each other in this*

**Dennis Kucinich**

*world. It is also urgent that we find those places of war in our lives and begin healing the world through healing ourselves. Each of us is a citizen of a common planet, bound to a common destiny. So connected are we that each of us has the power to be the eyes of the world, the voice of the world, the conscience of the world, or the end of the world. And as each of us chooses, so becomes the world.”*

*“When peace is not on the agenda of our political parties or our governments, then it must be the work and the duty of each citizen of the world. This is the time to organize for peace. This is the time to conceive of peace as not simply being the absence of violence, but the active presence of the capacity for a higher evolution of human awareness.”*

**Dennis Kucinich**

*“Workers’ rights embody spiritual principles that sustain families, nourish the soul, and create peace. Workers’ rights are human rights.”*

*“The restoration of the rights of workers in America and throughout the North American continent will begin when we repeal the North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA promised new manufacturing jobs, but it has instead been devastating to the American worker. NAFTA has spurred a \$360 billion trade deficit and has cost three million jobs, many of them in manufacturing. Each job lost represents dreams deferred or shattered, or a home that was threatened, health insurance that was lost, retirement benefits evaporated.”*

*“It is time to create new possibilities in human relations, in economics, in governance, in politics and in all areas of endeavor. We can make war and poverty archaic and usher in*

**Dennis Kucinich**

*a new era of human dignity by making peace and prosperity our daily work.”*

*“Whenever there is an organizing campaign, a picket line to walk, jobs to save, working conditions to improve, laws to champion, I’m there. This is my purpose: to stand up and speak out on behalf of those who have built this country and on behalf of those who want to rebuild this country. This is my passion, since I believe that workers’ rights are the key to protecting our democracy.”*

*“When death (not life) becomes inevitable, we are presented with an opportunity for great clarity, for a great awakening to rescue the human spirit from the arms of Morpheus (Greek god of sleep) through love, through compassion, and through integrating spiritual vision and active citizenship to restore peace to our world...We need to remember where we came from. Because the path home is also the way to the future.”*