

Preface

IN LATE 2007, A FORMER BOSTON UNIVERSITY student watched *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, the film about the life of historian, professor, and activist Howard Zinn. He recalled attending Professor Zinn's remarkable lectures at BU in the 1970s, and marveled at how Zinn's "people's history" was so much more alive and accurate than the traditional history he'd received in high school.

Now, after a successful career in technology, he wanted to contribute to bringing Zinn's work to a new generation of students. So he contacted Howard Zinn who put him in touch with Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change, both non-profit organizations, each with over 20 years of experience in providing social justice resources and professional development for pre-K-12 classroom teachers and teacher educators.

"I'd prefer to remain anonymous," he told us. "This is not about me; it's about getting Howard Zinn's work into the hands of as many teachers as possible."

So with the generous support of this anonymous donor, Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change have partnered to produce and offer a unique educational packet, which includes the DVD *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, about Howard Zinn's life; Howard Zinn's classic text, *A People's History of the United States*; and a teaching guide, assembled especially for this project. We are promoting and distributing the packets nationally to middle and high school

teachers, while supplies last. A dedicated webpage, www.ZinnEdProject.org, provides additional recommended resources and ongoing updates about the project and its impact. The film and book are also commercially available, and additional copies of the teaching guide can be downloaded for free from the website or ordered from either Rethinking Schools or Teaching for Change.

A note about this teaching guide. As explained in the introduction, the activities included here are designed to offer curriculum ideas to complement Howard Zinn's history. Some of the articles and lessons—most of which first appeared in *Rethinking Schools* magazine or books—are pegged directly to Zinn's work; others deal with themes and episodes that Zinn addresses. This guide is a sampler. Many more "people's history" curriculum books are available from Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change.

Some 30 years after his exposure to Howard Zinn's approach to history, the former Boston University student who triggered this project demonstrates that classroom experience can have a lifelong impact. We believe that through taking a more engaging and more honest look at the past, we can help equip students with the analytical tools to make sense of—and improve—the world today.

—Rethinking Schools and
Teaching for Change