

Emma Goldman

Anarchist (1869-1940)

Emma Goldman stands as a major figure in the history of American radicalism and feminism. An influential and well-known anarchist of her day, Goldman was an early advocate of free speech, birth control, women's equality and independence, and union organization. Her criticism of mandatory conscription of young men into the military during World War I led to a two-year imprisonment, followed by her deportation to her native Russia in 1919. For the remainder of her life, she continued to participate in the social and political movements of her age, from the Russian Revolution to the Spanish Civil War.

Situated within a long tradition of avant-garde artists and thinkers who challenged convention, Goldman possessed an uncanny ability to express the needs of her own generation and presage those of the next. Both a quick-witted and rousing orator and an eloquent and

searing social critic, Goldman was dubbed by the liberal press "the high priestess of anarchism," whose "gospel" was "eight thousand years ahead of her age." Like an ad hoc professor of the streets, Goldman used every forum she could obtain--parks, public lecture halls, private clubs, even the shafts of coal mines--to impart her message, attempting to prod the public out of complacent acceptance of the prevailing social and political norms.

Goldman defined *anarchism* as:

"the philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary. . . . [Anarchism] stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; . . . a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real

social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations."

Some thoughts from Emma Goldman:

"What I believe is a process rather than finality. Finalities are for gods and governments, not for the human intellect."

- Emma Goldman, "What I Believe," in *The New York World* (1908)

"The free expression of the hopes and aspirations of a people is the greatest and only safety in a sane society."

- Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (1932)

"Some have said that it requires less mental effort to condemn than to think."

- Emma Goldman, title essay, *Anarchism* (1910)

“Jealousy is the very reverse of understanding, of sympathy, and of generous feeling. Never has jealousy added to character, never does it make the individual big and fine.”

- Emma Goldman,
“Jealousy: Causes and a Possible Cure” (1912), in
Alix Kates Schulman, ed.,
Red Emma Speaks (1983)

“Every effort for progress, for enlightenment, for science, for religious, political, and economic liberty, emanates from the minority, and not from the mass.”

- Emma Goldman,
“Minorities versus Majorities,” *Anarchism*
(1910)

“Religion and morality are a much better whip to keep people in submission than even the club and the gun.”

- Emma Goldman, “Victims of Morality,” in *Mother Earth* (1913)

“No real social change has ever come without a revolution.”

- Emma Goldman, title essay, *Anarchism* (1910)

“True emancipation...will have to do away with the absurd notion of the dualism of the sexes, or that a man and woman represent two antagonistic worlds.”

- Emma Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” *Anarchism* (1910)

Emma Goldman’s works include:

The Social Significance of the Modern Drama

Living My Life

Anarchism and Other Essays

If you are interested in learning more about Emma Goldman check these out:

[Emma Goldman: A Guide to Her Life and Documentary Sources](#),
Chadwyck-Healey Inc., 1995.

Whole Woman’s Health
Women’s History Project

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