

[Audio Describer] Titles: A Traveling Light Production. In association with JustFilms Ford Foundation. Gray raised dots of braille emerge against a black background.

[Helen] It is Helen Keller who salutes you.

[Polly] It is Helen Keller who salutes you.

[Audio Describer] More braille words are typed.

[Helen] You are not with familiar with my voice.

[Polly] You are not familiar with my voice.

[Audio Describer] More braille is typed.

[Helen] I have written from my soul.

[Polly] I have written from my soul.

[Audio Describer] Thin broken white lines emerge from the edges of the screen with the bottom of typed letters along part of the top. Another image has similar lines in a zigzag edge between black and white. A thicker horizontal white line crosses near the bottom. The image fades to black bars across part of a typewritten document headed Special Committee on un-American Activities. More lines of text are blacked out and small slivers of paper peek through. A section without redaction starts: Helen Adams Keller. Phrases include Madison Square Gardens in New York City and cited as a communist front. The word confidential is crossed out. In another section: it was reported that Helen Keller, blind author and educator was one of a group of individuals. The Daily Worker is mentioned with her name. In white, against the black background, title: "Her Socialist Smile". Wind jostles bits of snow from the branches of a tall tree under a bright blue sky where thin clouds pass. In black and white, headphones hang from a music stand.

Did so nicely.

I'll take it. But if you had said, "Well, time to go."

[Audio Describer] Title: A Film by John Gianvito. In a recording studio, a woman puts a script on the music stand. Someone else stands nearby.

There's no way I can have two side-by-sides here. I guess I can, if I take this off.

[Man] All right, but you're gonna have to take this--

Yeah.

[Audio Describer] In color, snow covers the tops of boulders of an old stone wall by a forest. In the studio, the woman sits wearing the headphones with a microphone in front of her.

Socialism, she replies, "I'm a socialist because I believe in fair play."

[Audio Describer] She reviews the script on the music stand.

Socialistic, what active socialistic are you doing now reporter. Talking. Talking .

[Audio Describer] A man walks behind her and sets down a stool by a wall to her right.

To make them see and hear as I do.

[Audio Describer] He leaves. Against a black background, title: Loose Bricks. A New York Times article starts: Helen Keller, the famous blind and deaf girl made her debut as a public speaker in Montclair tonight at the auditorium in the Hillside School, her audience numbering nearly 1,000. Ms. Keller lectured under the auspices of the Montclair branch of the Socialist Party. She is a socialist and she expressed radical political views.

[Narrator] On February 6th, 1913, Helen Keller delivered her first talk before a general audience. She was 32 years old. Though she'd already given occasional addresses at private gatherings in conjunction with her work on behalf of the blind and deaf. Her spoken voice was deemed largely unintelligible, necessitating someone more often than not, her lifelong teacher, Anne Sullivan to repeat sentence by sentence what Helen said. The fact that she could speak at all was regarded to be a Marvel, as much a miracle as were the first reports years earlier, transmitted around the world that a seven-year-old deaf-blind child from Tuscumbia, Alabama had learned to read and write.

[Audio Describer] A childhood photo shows Helen Keller in profile.

[Narrator] Speaking to a group of reporters in her hotel the night before her lecture, Helen is asked what her latest field of interest is. "Socialism," she replies. "I am a socialist because I believe in fair play." "What active socialistic work are you doing now?" follows the reporter. "Talking," Helen quickly responds with a laugh, "but wait, till I get a chance, then I'll be doing. The highest ambition of my life is to help my fellow men.

[Audio Describer] Lightning flashes.

[Narrator] To make them see and hear as I do.

[Audio Describer] Snow lies along the top of a vine.

[Narrator] Despite nearly two years of private vocal training, Helen privately approaches the event with trepidation, regarding her voice as she would for the rest of her life, to be defective and halting. Once the lecture gets underway, stage fright sinks in, "I felt my voice soaring, and I knew that meant falsetto. Frantically, I dragged it down till my words fell about me like loose bricks," Helen later described the experience. At the end of her talk, Helen leaves the stage in tears convinced she has failed, feeling the lecture to have been an ordeal, "A pillory where I stood cold, riveted, trembling, voiceless." For Hattie Schlossberg, a reporter who heard Helen Keller speak in 1913, the experience is altogether different. "I was not prepared for what did come. The effect of her first words was startling. It sounds weird and uncanny at first, but this feeling passes away as soon as one gets accustomed to the tone. Her voice is indescribable. It seems to come from somewhere in the depths of her."

[Audio Describer] Thorns mark the vine.

[Narrator] Thus would begin a nearly 50-year run on the lecture circuit. As is the case with virtually all her political speeches, no film, photographs, or recording survive of the first talk that Helen Keller delivered that night inside the Hillside Elementary School Auditorium. She entitled her talk: The Heart and the Hand or The Right Uses of Our Senses, a speech she would deliver a month later under the title, The Heart and the Hand or True Socialism. These were her words that night.

Text: Dear friends, it is with great joy that I appear before you. I'm going to try to explain that joy. I was blind, now I see. I was deaf, now I hear. I was dumb, now I speak. I'm going to try to make you feel that no one of us can do anything alone: that we are bound together. I do not like the world as it is. I am trying to make it a little more as I would like to have it. Perhaps you are thinking how blind I have been. You have your eyes and you behold the sun and yet you are more blind than I am. It was the hands of others that made this miracle in me. Without my teacher, I should be nothing. We live by and for each other. We are all blind and deaf until our eyes are open to our fellow men. When we look about us with seeing eyes, what do we behold? Men and women at our very doors wrung with hard labor, want or the dread of want, needing help and receiving none, toiling for less than a living wage. If we had had a penetrating vision, I know we could not, we would not, have endured what we saw: cruelty, ignorance, poverty disease, almost all preventable, unnecessary. What is the cause of it? Simply this: that the land, the machinery, the means of life belong to the few while the many are born and live with nothing that they can

call their own except their hands and their brains. Strange that we do not see it, and when we do, we accept the condition in blind contentment. Our blind guides console us by saying that there is much charity, that the rich are generous and give to the poor. We now see that what the rich give is only a small part of the money which is made for them by the labor of the poor. They never stop to think that if the workers received an equitable share of their product, there would be no rich. There would be little need of philanthropy. Charity covers a multitude of sins. It does something worse than that. It covers the facts so they cannot be seen. It covers the fact that the property of the few is made by the labor of the many. The rich are willing to do everything for the poor, but to get off their backs. I must plead guilty to the charge that I am deaf and blind although I forget this fact, most of the time. Occasionally, I come into sharp collision with the stone wall out in my back field. And for a second or two, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that I am blind. When my friends tell me they cannot hear me speak because a freight train is passing, I realize that I'm deaf, but I do not feel so very sorry for it is not pleasant to have one's thoughts disturbed by the noise of a freight train. My blindness does not shut me out from a knowledge of what is happening about me. True, I have never been a captain of industry or a strike breaker or soldier, neither have most people. But I have studied about them and I think I understand their relation to society. At all events, I claim my right to discuss them. Besides the advantages of books and of personal experience, I have the advantage of a mind trained to think. In most people I talk with, thought is infantile. In the well-educated, it is rare. In time, their minds become automatic machines. People do not like to think. If one thinks, one must reach conclusions and conclusions are not always pleasant. They are a thorn in the spirit. But I consider it a priceless gift and a deep responsibility to think. It is only when United with imagination and thought and feeling that the senses acquire full value. Can you see the splendor of the sunset? Can you look up at the stars without emotion? I have never been able to see these wonderful fires in the sky except through my imagination. But the starless night of blindness has its wonders. The wind on my cheek touches my imagination. There is a divinity that can only be felt through the imagination and through courage. Love can rend asunder the iron gates of darkness. We are all bound together in a love for each other. And the success of our movement and our lives depend on this love for each other. Every one of us has a right to make the most of our lives, of the lives which God has given us, that all men may someday be united in one heart. That is my vision. That is my dream. Let us not practice dumb resignation, but rather a proud defiance of fetters. My soul leaps up toward this vision. We need to believe in our powers. I am no pessimist. The pessimist says that man was born in darkness and for death. I believe that man was intended for the light and shall not die. It is a good world and it will be much better when you help me to make it more as I want it. Rain falls heavily on leaves in dim light. A theater program announces: The Most Talked-of Woman in

the World: Helen Keller, Blind, Deaf and Formerly DUMB, dumb in all caps. In a theater, intricate golden filigree decorates a ceiling above a colorfully painted square proscenium. Columns on either side glow under a fixture at the top. The stage is bare except for a light on a stand like a microphone stand. The seats in front are empty. Titles: What is Miss Keller's age. There is no age on the vaudeville stage. Does Miss Keller think of marriage? Yes. Are you proposing to me? Do you close your eyes when you sleep? I guess I do, but I never stayed awake to see. What are the things that count most in life? The little things. Every one of us can be helpful in a hundred little ways. In the studio.

Writing in the Ladies' Home Journal in 1907, Keller takes the bold step for the time of addressing how mothers unknowingly infected with syphilis by their philandering husbands were inducing ophthalmia, the most common cause of blindness upon their newborn infants. While medical science could provide a remedy if promptly and properly administered, Keller writes how poverty, lack of education, unequal access to medicine and overall lack of institutional support hindered such initiatives. In an address before the Massachusetts Association for Promoting the Interests of the Blind, Keller says:

[Audio Describer] Text: To study the diseases and accidents which cause loss of sight and to learn how the surgeon can prevent or alleviate them is not enough. We should strive to put an end to the conditions which produce the diseases and accidents. One case of blindness, the physician says, resulted from ophthalmia. It was really caused by a dark overcrowded room, by the indecent herding together of human beings in unsanitary tenements. We are told that another cause of blindness resulted from the bursting of a wheel. The true cause was an employer's failure to safeguard his machine. Investigations show that there are many ingenious safeguards for machinery which are not adopted because their adoption would diminish the manufacturer's profits. We Americans have been slow, dishonorably slow, in taking measures for the protection of our workmen. Does it occur to any of you that the white lace, which we wear is darkened by the failing eyes of the maker? The trouble is that most of us do not understand the essential relation between poverty and disease. I do not believe there is one in this city of kind hearts who would willingly receive dividends if he knew that they had been paid in part with blinded eyes and broken backs. If you doubt that there is any such connection between our prosperity and the sorrows of others, consult those bare, but illuminating reports of industrial commissions and labor bureaus. They are less eloquent than oratory, less pleasant than fiction, but more convincing than either.

[Narrator] Concurrent with Helen Keller's research into the social causes of blindness in 1908, her teacher, Anne Sullivan, passes along to Helen, a newly published book of essays by British author, HG Wells entitled "New Worlds for Old".

The book is shown.

Depicting in detail, the stories of children and workers, living lives of grinding poverty and incorporating numerous sociological studies, the book argues for what Wells called a constructive socialism as the way to confront these problems. Additionally, as observed by historian Philip Foner, "New Worlds for Old" also pointed out a role Helen herself could play in the movement for a new and better society. Over and above the promoting of its main constructive ideas and their more obvious and practical applications, Wells writes, "An immense amount of intellectual work remains to be done for socialism. The battle for socialism is to be fought, not simply at the polls and in the marketplace, but at the writing desk and in the study." In earnest, Helen begins to educate herself on the issues, remarking to a friend years later, "Something asleep in me woke when I read the radical literature."

A slug crawls on a rock.

Her reading list includes: German socialist periodicals printed in braille, selected articles from a national socialist and international socialist review, Karl Marx's "Value, Price and Profit", as well as "The Communist Manifesto", about which she declares, "If it isn't imposed as tyranny, it is one of the finest pieces of literature ever written." She reads Karl Kautsky classic exposition of the Erfurt Program, "The Class Struggle". Adapted at the Erfurt Party Congress of 1891, the German Workers' Party Program argued that because capitalism by its very nature must collapse, the immediate task for socialists was to work for the improvement of workers' lives rather than for the revolution, which it is believed was inevitable. In an April, 1911 editorial in the Matilda Ziegler Magazine for the Blind, Helen urges the sightless to study the economic problems of the seeing by reading two popular socialist primers, Robert Hunter's "Poverty" and Edmund Kelly's "Twentieth Century Socialism", "Not for theory, as it is scornfully called," she writes, "but for facts about the labor conditions in America."

[Audio Describer] The shiny brown slug curls to the right on the lichen-covered rock. Text: It is no easy and rapid thing to absorb through one's fingers a book of 50,000 words on economics, but it is a pleasure and one which I shall enjoy repeatedly until I have made myself acquainted with all the classic socialist authors.

[Narrator] As Helen's reading list grows, so too, does her intellectual curiosity. At one point, she requests The National Institute for the Blind in London to translate into braille a copy of Michael Bakunin's "God and the State", a book that preaches atheism, destruction of the state and the embrace of anarchism.

[Audio Describer] Another book is opened.

[Narrator] While the Institute has previously offered to do transcripts of books for Helen without charge, its secretary general draws the line at Bakunin.

[Audio Describer] Text: If books are not life, I do not know what they are. In the writings of poets, sages, prophets is recorded all that men have seen, heard, and felt. Having all this in the grasp of my two hands, my means of observing what is going on in the world is not so very limited after all. I have all the keys to the doors of knowledge. I am benefited by every observation made by scientist, philosopher, prophet. The eyes of the mind are stronger, more penetrating and more reliable than our physical eyes. We can see a lot of things with a little common sense light to aid our perceptions.

[Narrator] Despite her status as one of the most revered and renowned figures in the nation, Helen Keller's forays into politics, especially at a time when women were still deprived of the right to vote are frequently met with fierce criticism, willfully ignored or pardoned as being the result of bad influences upon her. States one newspaper editorial, "Helen Keller, struggling to point the way for the deaf, dumb and blind is inspiring. Helen Keller preaching socialism, Helen Keller passing on the merits of the Copper Strike, Helen Keller's sneering at the Constitution of the United States, Helen Keller under these aspects is pitiful. She is beyond her depth. She speaks with the handicap of limitation, which no amount of determination or science can overcome. Her knowledge is and must be almost purely theoretical. And unfortunately, this world and its problems are both very practical."

[Audio Describer] Another book is opened.

When in 1913, Helen Keller publishes her book, "Out of the Dark: Essays, Letters and Addresses on Physical and Social Vision", including articles, such as "How I Became a Socialist", "The Worker's Right", "The Modern Woman", and "A Letter to an English Woman Suffragist", it manages, in the words of her biographer, Dorothy Herrmann to practically destroy her angelic image.

[Audio Describer] Text: So long as I can find my activities to social service and the blind, they compliment me extravagantly, calling me the archpriestess of the sightless, wonder woman and modern miracle. But when it comes to a discussion of a burning social or political issue, especially if I happen to be, as I so often am, on the unpopular side, the tone changes completely. They are grieved because they imagine I am in the hands of unscrupulous persons who take advantage of my affliction to make me a mouthpiece for their own ideas. The theater is viewed from the right, revealing three small levels of balconies in a back corner. Again, the light is on the stand

on stage. Titles: Can you distinguish colors? No, I can not sense color except through my thoughts. Sometimes they are rosy. What is the most important question before the President? How to keep the people from finding out that they have been fooled again? What do you think of capitalism? I think it is outlived its usefulness. Do you believe with Conan Doyle, that spiritualism is the cure for the world's troubles? I think the world's troubles are caused by wrong economic conditions. And the only cure for them is social reorganization. The screen goes black. Bark lies curled in ribbons, and some of it has black veins growing through it. Sunlight flickers on it. Old white paint has dried into broken strips on gray wood. Another curl of bark hangs by broken layers of wood with grain in different directions. More chips of paint surround an old knot of gray wood. The screen goes black. In silent film footage, a man stands on the back of a wagon with a sign on top saying socialism. He speaks to a large crowd of people wearing hats as an IWW flag flutters in the foreground. Flames slowly lick and burn wood.

[Narrator] Founded in 1901, the Socialist Party of America was, by 1912, an exponentially expanding force on the political landscape. According to official records, the party had more than 1,000 of its members elected to political office in 337 towns and cities. This included 56 Socialist mayors, 305 aldermen and councilmen, 22 police officials, 155 school officials and four poundkeepers. The Socialist cause was promoted by 323 papers and periodicals, including five daily newspapers in English, eight in other languages, 262 weeklies in English, 36 in other languages and 12 monthlies, 10 in English and two in other languages. Total circulation of this press was estimated to have been more than two million. The Appeal to Reason published in Kansas and always the most widely-read of the Socialist publications whose motto was Socialism is Not Just a Theory, It is a Destiny, reaches a circulation of nearly 700,000 in that year. And in 1912, as candidate for the Socialist Party of America in the presidential election, Eugene Debs received nearly one million votes. This was before women's suffrage and represents 6% of the popular vote.

[Audio Describer] The screen goes black. Icicles cut diagonally across a view of tree tops and a white cloud drifts by in the distance. Bit of brown and green leaves lie under a translucent layer of ice. Water flows over old leaves and round other stuff together. Patches of Moss cover a low wall of jumbled boulders and forest. Two old gray milkweed seed pods hanging from a stick with vines wrapped around it, open lengthwise. One is empty with a brown lining inside.

[Narrator] A source of tremendous media attention at the time, Helen Keller's graduation in 1904 from Radcliffe College, Harvard's segregated sister institution, establishes her as the first blind-deaf individual to ever graduate from college.

[Audio Describer] Lichen spots dot a statue of a girl.



[Narrator] Even before receiving her degree, Helen's awareness of her class privilege and unique opportunities is growing. She would come to describe Harvard as perhaps the most imposing monument to dead ideas in this country where such monuments are numerous.

[Audio Describer] Wind blows green ivy.

[Narrator] Pressed as to why she came to this opinion, she replied that, "They did not teach me about things as they are today or about the vital problems of the people. They taught me Greek drama and Roman history, the celebrated achievements of war, rather than those of the heroes of peace. For instance, there were a dozen chapters on war where there were a few paragraphs about the inventors and it is the overemphasis on the cruelties of life that breeds the wrong ideal. Education has taught me that it was a finer thing to be a Napoleon, than to create a new potato." Accepting an invitation years later to speak at Radcliffe, Helen tells the attendees, "I have never attached great value to academic fame, and I am not much interested in whether or not people praise Radcliffe scholarship. What I care about is that every thought, every work, every act should be vital with the will to serve mankind."

[Audio Describer] Algae floats on moving water. Text: If we, women, are to learn the fundamental things in life, we must educate ourselves and one another. And we few who are unfairly called educated because we have been to college must learn much and forget much if we are not to appear as useless idlers to the millions of working women in America. Any girl who goes to school can study and find out some of the things that an educated American woman ought to know. For instance, why in this land of great wealth is there great poverty? Any intelligent young woman, like those who write to me, eager to help the sightless or any other unfortunate class can learn why such important work as supplying food, clothing and shelter is ill-rewarded, why children toil in the mills while thousands of men cannot get work, why women who do nothing have thousands of dollars a year to spend. There is an economic cause for these things. It is for the American woman to know why millions are shut out from the full benefits of such education, art and science as the race has thus far achieved. We women have had to face questions that men alone have evidently not been quite able to solve. We must know why a woman who owns property has no voice in selecting the men who make laws that affect her property. We must know why a woman who earns wages has nothing to say about the choice of the men who make laws that govern her wages. We must know why 150 of our sisters were killed in New York in a shirt-waist factory fire the other day, and nobody to blame. We must know why our fathers, brothers and husbands are killed in mines and on railroads. We, women, who are natural conservationists must find out why the sons we bring forth are drawn up in line and shot. A view move slowly among green ferns.

[Narrator] One month after delivering her first public lecture, Helen Keller is invited to speak at the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession, the first suffrage parade to be held in Washington, DC and strategically scheduled for the day prior to the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. Firmly opposed to the idea of women having the right to vote, Wilson, a Democrat, takes office characterizing those women who campaign for suffrage as totally abhorrent. Organized by Alice Paul for the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the procession draws some 8,000 marchers, featuring nine bands, four mounted brigades and over 20 floats who lead their parade before thousands of spectators, many of them, mostly men in town for the inauguration. After proceeding for a few blocks, crowds of spectators move into the street, impeding the ability for many marchers to pass. Women are shoved, tripped, insulted, spat upon while police officers either stand idly by or are seen reveling in the commotion. For the next six hours, ambulances fight their way in and out of the crowd, attempting to retrieve the injured. By day's end, over 200 people are treated at local hospitals. So exhausted and unnerved by the experience and her attempts to reach the grand stand, Helen Keller finds herself unable to later speak at Constitution Hall. The following day, she recounts her impressions for the syndicated press although few transmit the full extent of her report.

[Audio Describer] Text: The Woman Suffrage Pageant yesterday was in some ways more significant than the inauguration today. It symbolized the coming of the new, not the passing of the old. Owing to some misunderstanding, I was caught in the jostling throng and never took the part that was assigned for me in the demonstration. The stupid inefficiency of the Washington police allowed the people to block the streets and the parade was broken, a failure as a spectacle. Today, of course, many of us women are indignant and disappointed. Police and soldiers are very capable when it comes to protecting a factory against striking mill girls. Let us please have no more anti-suffragette arguments based on the superior organizing faculty of men. Some of the women were trampled and hurt. If it were not for that, we should not take this little disaster seriously. For after all, our real parade is not a theatrical affair in the holiday streets of Washington. It is a determined, ceaseless march in the work-a-day world. Nothing can stop it. The idol, the thoughtless, the reactionary may get in the way and our ranks may be apparently disordered, but the women's army is moving on in every nation.

[Narrator] While Helen Keller's recounting of the events of the Woman Suffrage Pageant receives little circulation, her concurrent critique of the swearing in of president Woodrow Wilson does, even leading one newspaper editor to describe it as the most remarkable printed anywhere on the inauguration in Washington yesterday.

[Audio Describer] Text: Dr. Woodrow Wilson, historian, student of

government has said, "Nothing was settled in the election of 1908, but the name of the next president." The same thing is true of the election of 1912. Mr. Wilson stands for no great idea. He has not been swept into power by an aroused people. The great capitalist party broke into two and the other capitalist party, the Democratic walked through the broken ranks of the enemy. Capitalism is still king. The great industrial empire, which is the reality behind our democratic institutions is powerful as ever. And nothing Mr. Wilson can do or will do need give uneasiness to the sovereigns of industry or hope to the subject. Mr Wilson finds something hard, cold, unfeeling in the world of business and labor, and to set himself the task of humanizing every process without impairing the good. But the facts are hard, cold and unfeeling. The world is divided into owners and wagemakers. Mr. Wilson, then, represents the passing of an era. Not the inauguration of a new age. Conditions proclaim the coming of a new wage and conditions are stronger than the president, stronger than the constitution. Mr Wilson is an old-fashioned Democrat, but the future belongs to a much greater class, the new-fashioned Democrat. Behind the bowels of pine needles, a river flows.

[Narrator] When interviewed by the press, Helen underscores that she is not just a suffragist, but a militant suffragist. As she explains to a reporter for The New York Times, "I believe that suffrage will lead to socialism. And to me, socialism is the ideal cause." Mindful of the fact that the right to vote was itself no guarantee of the fostering of fundamental structural change, in her 1911 letter to an English woman suffragist, she expounds further on the nature of the problem.

[Audio Describer] Text: I do not believe that the present government has any intention of giving women a part in national politics or doing justice to Ireland or the workmen of England. So long as the franchise is denied to a large number of those who serve and benefit the public, so long as those who vote are at the beck and call of party machines, the people are not free. And the day of women's freedom seems still to be in the far future. It makes no difference whether the Tories or the Liberals in Great Britain, the Democrats or the Republicans in the United States or any party of the old model in any other country get the upper hand. To ask any such party for women's rights is like asking a czar for democracy. Are not the dominant parties managed by the ruling classes, that is, the propertied classes, solely for the profit and privilege of the few? They use us millions to help them into power. They tell us, like so many children, that our safety lies in voting for them. They toss us crumbs of concession to make us believe that they are working in our interest. Then they exploit the resources of the nation, not for us, but for the interests which they represent and uphold. We, the people, are not free. Our democracy is but a name. We vote? What does that mean? It means that we chose between two bodies of real, though not avowed, autocrats. We choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. We elect expensive masters to do

our work for us and then blame them that they work for themselves and for their class. The enfranchisement of women is part of the vast movement to enfranchise all mankind. You ask for votes for women. What good can votes do for you when 10 elevenths of the land of Great Britain belongs to 200,000 and only one 11th to the rest of the 40 million? Have your men, with their millions of votes, freed themselves from this injustice? When one shows the masters that half the wealth of Great Britain belongs to 25,000 persons, when one says that this is wrong, that this wrong lies at the bottom of all social injustice, including the wrong of women, the highly respectable newspapers cry, Socialist! Agitator! Stirrer of Class Strife." Well, let us keep our eyes on the central fact that a few, a few British men own the majority of British men and all British women. The few own the money because they possess the means of livelihood of all. In our splendid republic, where at election time all are free and equal, a few Americans own the rest. 80% of our people live in rented houses and one half of the rest are mortgaged. The country is governed for the richest, for the corporations, the bankers, the land speculators, and for the exploiters of labor. Surely, we must free men and women together before we can free women. The theater is viewed from behind the light on the stand on stage. Rows of the center balcony rise to the back. Titles: Do you believe this is a free country? That depends on what you want to do. Do you think the voice of the people is heard at the polls? No, I think money talks so loud that the voice of the people is drowned. Do you deplore the rising tide of discontent in this country? No. Discontent is the main motive of progress. A black and brown caterpillar crawl through grass, making its way around a crumpled leaf. Against a black background, title: Tactics. Text: May 6th, 1913. It is unfortunate that the militant suffragettes in England are forced to smash windows in the interest of the movement. As for setting fires and throwing bombs, I cannot say anything because no one knows positively that the suffragettes have done that. I cannot understand why those methods cannot be avoided, but as long as the English authorities fail to concede women the right to vote, militancy will be necessary. Suffrage and socialism go hand in hand. The suffrage movement is a logical and just pathway to socialism. When women obtain universal suffrage in the leading countries in the world, they will use their brains, energy and money to make socialism the success it deserves. June 11th, 1913. I believe the women of England are doing right. Mrs. Pankhurst is a great leader. The women of America should follow her example. They would get the ballot much faster if they did. They cannot hope to get anything unless they are willing to fight and suffer for it. The pangs of hunger during the hunger strikes simply are a sample of the suffering they must expect. June 27th, 1914. Militancy will prevail in England for it is the weapon of patriotism, being the only means left to the advocates of equal suffrage. Snow falls in a forest. Against a black background, Title: The Great War. The forest snow is shown again.

[Narrator] Following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, a small,

vocal and highly influential group of bankers, lawyers and businessmen launches a campaign to persuade the Wilson administration and the country at large that the United States needs to prepare itself for war. Led by General Leonard Wood and former President Theodore Roosevelt, the so-called Preparedness Movement argues for an immediate buildup of naval and land forces and the instituting of compulsory universal military training.

[Audio Describer] The forest view spins in circles.

[Narrator] With the Socialist Party at the forefront of opposition to any such buildup, it is announced that on December 19th, 1915, Helen Keller will publicly present the Socialist interpretation of the causes of the European war and the dangers confronting the United States.

The view points upward.

Sponsored by the Labor Forum and to be held at Washington Irving High School in New York, it is further announced that Ms. Keller will advocate the general strike as the speediest way to end the European conflict.

A waterfall flows.

[Narrator] By the time the event gets underway, there are an estimated 2,000 in attendance and hundreds more who have to be turned away. Her speech is called Menace of the Militarist Program.

[Audio Describer] Text: The burden of war always falls heaviest on the toilers. They are taught that their masters can do no wrong and go out in vast numbers to be killed on the battlefield. And what is their reward? If they escape death, they come back to face heavy taxation and have their burden of poverty doubled. Through all the ages, they have been robbed of the just rewards of their patriotism as they have been of the just reward of their labor. The only moral virtue of war is that it compels the capitalist system to look itself in the face and admit it is a fraud. It compels the present society to admit that it has no morals it will not sacrifice for gain. During a war, the sanctity of a home and even if private property is destroyed. Governments do what it is said the crazy Socialists would do if in power. In spite of the historical proof of the futility of war, the United States is preparing to raise a billion dollars and a million soldiers in preparation for war. Behind the active agitators for defense, you will find JP Morgan and Company and the capitalists who have invested their money in shrapnel plants and others that turn out implements of murder. They want armaments because they beget war, for these capitalists want to develop new markets for their hideous traffic. I look upon the whole world as my fatherland, and every war has to me the horror of a family feud. I look upon true patriotism as

the brotherhood of man and the service of all to all. The only fighting that saves is one that helps the world toward liberty, justice and an abundant life for all. If the democratic measures of preparedness fall before the advance of a world empire, the worker has nothing to fear, no conqueror can beat down his wages more ruthlessly or oppress him more than his own fellow citizens of the capitalist world are doing. The worker has nothing to lose but his chains and he has a world to win. He can win it at one stroke from a world empire. We must form a fully equipped militant international union so that we can take possession of such a world empire. This great Republic is a mockery of freedom as long as you are doomed to dig and sweat to earn a miserable living while the masters enjoy the fruit of your toil. What have you to fight for, national independence? That means the masters' independence. The laws that send you to jail when you demand better living conditions? The flag? Does it wave over a country where you are free and have a home, or does it rather symbolize a country that meets you with clenched fists when you strike for better wages and shorter hours? Will you fight for your master's religion, which teaches you to obey them, even when they tell you to kill one another? Why don't you make a junk heap of your master's religion, his civilization, his kings and his customs that tend to reduce a man a brute and God to a monster. Let there go forth a clarion call for liberty. Let the workers form one great worldwide union and let there be a globe and circling revolt to gain for the workers true liberty and happiness.

[Narrator] At the conclusion of her remarks, the crowd rises to its feet and collectively breaks out into the singing of "La Marseillaise". Exiting the school building, Helen is greeted by a large crowd. According to a report the following day in The New York Times, when Ms. Keller told the throng that she would speak, so great was the rush towards the steps to hear her, that the police reserves of East 22nd Street Station were called out to restore order. Helen repeats her appeal for workers not to serve in the proposed army of defense, again, concluding with a call for a world and circling revolt upon which there is a concerted rush towards her provoking police officers to lift Helen off her feet and carry her to awaiting automobile. In the days immediately following the talk, pro-preparedness groups demand that the New York City Board of Education revoke the Labor Forum's permit to ever again use the Washington Irving High School building for public meetings. Going even further, protesters declare that no organization that lends itself to furthering the propaganda of disloyalty and anarchy, be permitted to occupy public school halls in order to disseminate their doctrines. Helen is quick to issue a response.

[Audio Describer] Text: I am surprised and shocked to know that such a question has been raised by anybody. How much right has anyone to dictate and say what the people shall think or discuss in their own assembly halls. If we are to have free speech, where should its voice

be strongest, if not in the free public school buildings? Free speech certainly will not injure the building. Snow lightly covers trees under a crisp blue sky.

[Narrator] Following her talk at the labor forum, Helen leaves for a lengthy lecture tour throughout the west. Spurred by the impassioned response Helen's speech received from the audience and with its aftermath still swirling about in the press, the Woman's Peace Party and the Labor Forum jointly reach out to Helen requesting she return to New York to deliver a second speech, this time to be held at Carnegie Hall.

[Audio Describer] Wind blows the snow down.

[Narrator] Enthusiastic about the prospect, Helen makes one stipulation, that admission to the talk be free. All of the trade unions in New York City and their members are invited. On January 5th, 1916, a packed audience comprised principally of women assembles in Carnegie Hall to hear Helen Keller again speak on the subject of militarism and resistance. As Helen takes the stage and advances to the front of the platform, she is cheered for 15 minutes before she can deliver her first words. Women rise to their feet, waving their handkerchiefs, shouting and applauding until exhaustion. For the next hour and 10 minutes, Helen lays out the arguments for resisting the move toward increased military buildup and the implementation of conscription. She denounces the tactics of fear-mongering being used to argue for armaments and outlines the connections between the banking industry, foreign investments and the munitions industry. "Behind the preparedness propaganda," Helen says, "is an attempt to divert attention away from the hard realities of economic strife at home."

[Audio Describer] White paint peels.

[Narrator] She denounces the fundamental flaws of the system. She points out that the ballot does not make a free man out of a wage slave. "There has never existed a truly free and democratic nation in the world," she states. "From time immemorial men have followed with blind loyalty, the strong men who had the power of money and of army."

[Audio Describer] Tree bark curls.

[Narrator] "Even while battlefields were piled high with their own dead, they have tilled the lands of the rulers and have been robbed of the fruits of their labor. What workers want," Helen declares, "is nothing short of the reorganization and reconstruction of their whole lives until every individual has a chance to be well born, well-nourished, rightly educated." She urges for a nationwide strike against war and weapons manufacture. She concludes by bidding the audience, "Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction. Be

heroes in an army of construction."

[Audio Describer] Sunlight fluctuates on a forest.

[Narrator] In the audience that night, is poet Anna Strunsky Walling who writes of the impact of the experience.

[Audio Describer] In the recording studio.

[Narrator] You walked forward as if you wanted to run. Eagerness was in your feet, in the lift of your head, in your brilliant smile. You walked forward and took your place at the edge of the platform facing the great audience. Impenetrable night was around you though the light of enthusiasm flashed from thousands of eyes, more brilliant than the brilliant illumination of the hall.

Grasses sway at night.

Impenetrable silence, though music and speaking had proceeded you and now at sight of you, the thousands broke into applause. You stood in the dark of the night, in the silence of the tomb, a spear of light, a star, a voice.

The moon glows.

[Narrator] Oh, unforgettable experience of my soul, when first the effulgence of your courage and your youth laid its spell upon me.

[Audio Describer] Tips of branches are silhouetted in the moonlight. The screen goes black.

[Narrator] Though never averse to the situational use of force when necessary to advance revolutionary aspirations, Helen Keller maintained a lifelong commitment to speaking out against military adventurism. Reflecting back many years later on the period of the 1916 preparedness debate, Helen wrote:

[Audio Describer] Texts: I thought then, and I still think that preparedness tends to provoke war rather than keep it within limits. My work for peace during the past 40 years has been in the form of what may be called freelance efforts. In the great majority of my lectures, people have asked me about my attitude toward world peace and ways that seemed practicable to work for its attainment. I have always insisted on international cooperation and on women taking a leading part in peace movements. Title: Labor Pains. Fish swim in a crowded koi pond.

[Narrator] As Helen Keller's embrace of Socialist ideas grows more fervent, so too, does her dissatisfaction with rising factionalism within the Socialist Party of America. After the 1912 elections and



following much argument, the constitution of the Socialist Party is amended to ban membership by any who would advocate the tactical use of sabotage or violence. In a debate with party president Eugene Debs, syndicalist organizer, Big Bill Haywood, proclaims that no Socialist can be a law-abiding citizen. When we come together and are of a common mind, and the purpose of our minds is to overthrow the capitalist system, we become conspirators against the United States government. While many attack, the anti-sabotage clause, including Walter Lippmann, Max Eastman, Margaret Sanger and others, Helen Keller doesn't sign, instead writing and the socialist daily, The New York Call, she chastises the infighting. "It fills me with amazement to see such a narrow spirit and such ignoble strife between two factions which should be one, and that too, at a most critical period in the struggle of the proletariat. What? Are we to put differences of party tactics before the desperate needs of the workers? While never fully breaking her ties with party affiliation, within a few short years, it becomes manifest where Helen's affinities lie when she aligns herself with the foremost radical labor organization in the country. Known variously as the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW or the Wobblies, it is founded in 1905 in Chicago as an international labor organization united as a social class, aiming to supplant capitalism and wage labor with a program of industrial democracy. Even with general public awareness of Helen Keller's socialist sympathies, her joining forces with the IWW is feared to be a tipping point.

Veins show through a hand.

[Narrator] One week following her Carnegie Hall speech, Helen is interviewed at length by Barbara Bindley for the New-York Tribune.

Veins show through leaves.

[Narrator] If Helen's recent call for one great worldwide union and for globe and circling revolt hadn't made it clear enough, The Tribune article would leave no doubts. Early in the conversation, the interviewer asks Helen how it was that she first gravitated toward being a social Crusader.

[Audio Describer] Quote: It is my nature to fight as soon as I see wrongs to be made right. So after I read Wells and Marx and learned what I did, I joined a Socialist branch. I made up my mind to do something and the best thing seemed to join a fighting party and help their propaganda. That was four years ago. I've been an industrialist since, end quote. "An industrialist?", I asked, surprised out of composure. "You don't mean an IWW, a syndicalist?" "I do!" We all jumped up in amazement. Then began the advisability of including this statement in an interview with Ms. Keller. "It will make a sensation. It will ruin her for further peace work. She might lose her following, which, if rightly conserved, will be labor's mightiest weapon," urged the labor publicist present. "She is second only to Roosevelt in the

influence she wields." And more discussion of this point of view but Ms. Keller, warmed to her task, wanted to explain it further to me. And there came another bomb for the labor publicist. "I became an IWW because I found out that the Socialist Party is too slow. It is sinking in the political bog. It is almost, if not quite impossible, for the party to keep its revolutionary character so long as it occupies a place under the government and seeks office under it. The government does not stand for interests the Socialist Party is supposed to represent. The true task is to unite and organize all workers on an economic basis, and it is the workers themselves who must secure freedom for themselves, who must grow strong," Ms Keller continued. "Nothing can be gained by political action. That is why I became an IWW." "What particular incident led you to become an IWW?", I interrupted. "The Lawrence strike. Why? Because I discovered that the true idea of the IWW is not only to better conditions to get them for all people, but to get them at once. The revolution is bigger than any party and will come when the workers are big and strong enough. I became an IWW just because I could not subscribe to a policy of small, immediate advantage. What we want is a militant union, a world union of workers. Guns are only a last resort. Workmen can do much by folding their arms," and she suited the action to the word, "and stopping the world." Again, the question of censorship of Ms. Keller's speech for publication presented itself. "If Ms. Keller comes out with these ultra-radical views, the newspapers will be closed to her. She will gradually be deserted by 99 of the 100 people who follow her," someone in the room spoke up. And again, Ms. Keller struck the high note of courage. "Very well, then," she counseled. "We must leave the newspapers and the schools and the churches behind and come out and fight." Still the perturbation of the halfway measure advocates, persisted. They were sure that Ms Keller did not realize what she was saying. They were sure she would choose rather the method of social education, which lays its bricks of progress one by one, than the method which would overturn the universe and make things mighty uncomfortable for everyone. Mrs. Macy, Anne Sullivan, presented the point for us: "What are you committed to, education or revolution?" "Revolution," she answered decisively. "We can't have education without revolution. We have tried peace education for 1900 years and it has failed. Let us try revolution and see what it will do now. I am not for peace at all hazards. I regret this war, but I have never regretted the blood of the thousand spilled during the French Revolution." Again, the advisability of printing all this set forth. And this from the patience-exhausted, gentle little woman, "I don't give a damn about semi-radicals!" Gradually through the talk, Helen Keller's whole being had taken on a glow. And it was in keeping with her exalted look on her face and the glory in her sightless blue eyes that she told me, "I feel like Joan of Arc at times. My whole being becomes uplifted. I, too, hear the voices that say 'Come,' and I will follow, no matter what the cost, no matter what trials I am placed under; jail, poverty, calumny, they matter not. Truly He has said, 'Woe unto you that permit the least of mine to suffer.'" There was

nothing more to say. She bent over me, kissed me and I stumbled away dazed by the intense fighting spirituality of the most remarkable woman in our land. In the theater, one of the wall murals depicts a man in a powdered wig, reading over a woman's shoulder as she stands with an open book. In another, a man with a black ribbon in his hair kneels, gently holding a woman's hand. The woman, wearing black ringlets, stands smelling a pink flower she holds. Their faces are turned away from each other. The light stands on stage in the empty theater. Titles: What do you consider the hardest thing in the world? To get Congress to do anything. Can you give a good reason for the Open Shop? There is none. Do you think capital enslaves the workers? It is a lack of organization which keeps the workers enslaved. When they are organized, they will rule the world.

In the recording studio, the woman moves the pages of the script on the music stand.

Whether because of, or in spite of having been born in the south in the 1880s to a father who'd owned slaves before the civil war and who served as a captain in the Confederate Army, Helen Keller emerged as a public advocate against racial injustice. Paying tribute to her in 1931, African-American writer, scholar, and activist, WEB Du Bois described having encountered Helen as a child, when she first attended the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Massachusetts.

[David] When I was studying philosophy under William James, we made an excursion one day out to Roxbury.

[Audio Describer] The school is shown.

We stopped at the blind asylum and saw a young girl who was deaf and dumb and who, yet by infinite pains and loving sympathy had been made to speak without words and to understand without sound.

In an office.

Oh, dear me. My hearing aids began to fail. And so they make a sound and I'm sorry, you may--

[Director] Let's just start again from the beginning.

We stopped at the blind asylum. And saw a young girl who was deaf and dumb and who yet by infinite pains and loving sympathy had been made to speak without words and to understand without sound. She was Helen Keller. Perhaps because she was blind to color difference in this world, I became intensely interested in her and all through my life, I have followed her career.

Du Bois is shown.

Finally, there came the thing that I had somehow sensed would come. Helen was in her own state, Alabama, being feted and made much off by her fellow citizens and yet courageously and frankly, she spoke out on the inequity and foolishness of the color line. It cost her something to speak. They wanted her to retract, but she stayed serene in the consciousness of the truth that she had uttered. And so it was proven, as I knew it would be that this woman who sits in darkness has a spiritual insight, much clearer than that of many wide-eyed people who stare uncomprehendingly at this prejudiced world.

[Audio Describer] An old tree with large branches stands in the forest. The screen goes black. Text: In a 1946 letter to her friend, Nella Braddy Henney, Helen writes: It stabs me to the soul to recall my visits to schools for the colored blind, which were shockingly backward and what a hard struggle it was for them to obtain worthwhile instruction and profitable work because of race prejudice. The continued lynchings and other crimes against Negroes, whether in New England or the South and the unspeakable political exponents of white supremacy, according to all recorded history, auger ill for America's future. In a silent film, men gather at a wrecked storefront. A Fox Newsreel card says: Members of the American Legion demolished the headquarters of the anarchists and destroyed their seditious literature. A photograph of the ransacked office is labeled IWW Headquarters. Another card says, quote, the country must be purged of seditionists and revolutionists. And if this means war, the quicker it is declared, the better, end quote, Representative Johnson, chairman US Immigration Committee. A few men look through the debris outside, picking up and checking bits of paper. In the forest, near dusk, straight trees stand dappled with sunlight as bushes sit in shadow.

[Narrator] On April 7th, 1917, one day following the US Congress's declaration of war on Germany and formal entry into World War I, an emergency meeting of the Socialist Party of America convenes in St. Louis, Missouri. By an overwhelming majority, the party denounces America's entry as a crime against the people. Declares it a war imperialistic on both sides and pledges, continuous, active, and public opposition to the war through demonstrations, mass petitions, and all other means within our power. We will not willingly give a single life or a single dollar. Within two months, President Wilson signs into law the Espionage Act enabling sentences up to 20 years for anyone willfully interfering with military operations or recruitment. Immediately, Socialists throughout the country are indicted, convicted and jailed. A third of Socialist meeting halls are destroyed and dissemination of the majority of Socialist publications are banned from the mails. On June 15th, 1917 in New York, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman are arrested during a raid on their offices, charged with conspiracy to induce persons not to register and sentenced to two years in prison. In July, 1917 in North Dakota, Kate Richards O'Hare is sentenced to five years in prison for making an anti-war speech. On September 5th, 1917, a national dragnet rounds up 166 senior members

of the IWW, raiding the headquarters of the Socialist Party and of the IWW and 20 branch offices of the IWW in different states, among them are many of Helen's close friends and allies, provoking her to send an impassioned appeal directly to President Wilson.

[Audio Describer] Text: Some friends of mine are soon to be arraigned with many others in Chicago for alleged violation of some recently enacted statutes abridging freedom of speech and the press. I cannot plead for them without attempting to make you understand why I sympathize with them and why I feel with them that they are the victims of intolerance and persecution. Rights we had thought ours forever, rights hallowed by the blood and fortunes of our fathers, rights we had been taught were the very bulwarks of our liberties, rights guaranteed to us by the Constitution of the United States are being openly violated every day. The voice of authority commanding silence has downed the voice of justice. Meetings of protest are forcibly broken up. Newspapers expressing the opinions of radicals are debarred from the mails, individuals are threatened and clubbed for speaking their minds. Many of them have been imprisoned and excessive bails demanded. The intolerance of the newspapers amounts to fanaticism. Ministers of the gospel of Christ find humor in the flogging of Herbert Bigelow. A high government official condones the murder of Frank Little by a mob, thereby upholding mob rule and lynching. If such a state of affairs continues, our prisons will become holy shrines where thoughtful men will go and pray.

[Narrator] Helen puts the president on notice.

[Audio Describer] When they hung John Brown, Emerson said, "They have made the gallows as holy as the cross." Beware, lest the avenging hand of remorse be laid upon our generation for the persecution of those who uphold their downtrodden brethren.

[Narrator] She makes the argument squarely.

[Audio Describer] Because the Kaiser is destroying freedom in Europe to preserve autocracy, must we destroy it here to preserve democracy? Is there no democratic way of accomplishing the noble enterprise we have undertaken? We want America safe for democracy, no matter what happens in Europe. We want peace and freedom for the world. And we believe that this can be attained only by substituting an industrial democracy for the present economic system. When we emphasize this phase of the world-struggle, we meet with opposition intolerance and persecution.

[Narrator] She lays her cards fully on the table, valiantly divulging more to the president.

[Audio Describer] It takes courage to uphold opinions opposed by all the forces of a strong government. It may require a Bolsheviki mind to

do that. Perhaps you think it is the sort of mind I have. I have. For me, the Russian Revolutions seems the most wonderful thing that has happened in 2000 years. It is like a conscious sun bursting upon a gloomy disastrous world. In a silent film, Helen sits typing at a typewriter, then rolls the paper out of it. Text in red: The only way we can smash the system is by telling the truth about it, telling the truth in print. Helen stands, turns and steps to a larger desk where she sits again. Text in red: I am no worshiper of cloth of any color, but I love the red flag and what it symbolizes to me and other socialists. I have a red flag hanging in my study. She operates a braille writer. Text in red: Capitalism will inevitably find itself face to face with a starving multitude of unemployed workers demanding either food or the destruction of the social order that has starved them. She uses a Perkins Braille. Text in red: The writing on the wall is plain to read. The old order is passing. The new order is rising. A revolution is always declarative, never creative. It takes place first in the heart of society and is sealed and ratified only by an external outbreak. It is impossible to make a revolution. It is possible only to give outward sanction and effect to a revolution already contained in the actual circumstance of a society. In photographs, she uses a typewriter. Text in red: Any intelligent person can see that peace cannot be left to governments. Governments are founded on force and in order to defend and extend their power, they inevitably resort to militarism. Rights are things that we get when we are strong enough to claim them. I may be a dreamer, but dreamers are necessary to make facts. Her hands type. Text in red: It is perfectly true that my work for the blind is a trust, and in order to fulfill its duties justly, I must keep it as the center of my external activities, but it has never occupied a center in my philosophy or inner relations with mankind. That is because I regard philanthropy as a tragic apology for wrong conditions under which human beings live, losing their sight or hearing or becoming impoverished. And I do not conceal this awkward position from anybody. I do not believe that any sex, class, or race can safely trust its protection in any hands but its own. Helen continues typing with her assistant, Polly Thompson, sitting nearby. Text in red: I do not think America has had a genius people's president since Lincoln's day and the people's party does not yet exist which would command my allegiance. Also, I realize that it is impossible for even the greatest statesman or one nation to steer a frenzied world beating itself against destitution, rabid nationalism and ignorance. This seems to me the most critical period in human history and every bit of courage and decency counts in grappling with it. This crisis grips me with the necessity of helping to quench an all-pervading conflagration. A bucket full of water is small, and so is a vote, yet how mighty the aggregative votes may be to check appalling fascist influences in this country. Helen checks a typewriter ribbon. Polly takes her hand and brings it to her mouth then speaks to her. Text in red: When women in all lands are fully awake to their missions, their efforts will ensure the final triumph of justice. They can do more

than any conference of diplomats to help usher in the dawn of a new era of goodwill and peace and righteousness. Title: The Great Experiment. A brown leaf drifts through an azure sky, slowly turning in circles.

[Narrator] When Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik revolutionary forces seized power in Russia in the fall of 1917 in a nearly bloodless coup d'etat, the enthusiasm it generates among progressive circles worldwide is electric. For Helen Keller, as for many, the establishment of the world's first constitutionally socialist state offers, from afar, the promise that the dream of a more egalitarian and just restructuring of the world could, in fact, be made a reality.

[Audio Describer] The theater is viewed from a corner balcony with the light standing on the empty stage. Titles: Who are the three greatest men of our time? Lenin, Edison and Charlie Chaplin. What do you think of Soviet Russia? Soviet Russia is the first organized attempt of the workers to establish an order of society in which human life and happiness shall be a first importance and not the conservation of property for a privileged class. What is the matter with America? Read "Babbitt" and you will find out. What do you think of war? Read John Dos Passos' "The Three Soldiers" and you will know what I think of war, the most atrocious of human follies. A single hanging icicle melts in sunshine.

[Narrator] By the late 1930s, with the arrival of reports on the wave of political purges, mass executions and incarcerations in the Soviet Union, Helen's support of the Russian experiment becomes tempered albeit somewhat. Belatedly, she would, in time, turn against Stalin though her conviction in the promise of the Soviet dream endured, gaining new traction when the Russian army combats Nazi Germany during World War II. Following a forthright dinner discussion with a staunch critic of the Soviet Union in 1943, Helen decides to follow up with a letter, hoping to clarify any misunderstanding.

[Audio Describer] Text: In a frank intimate talk, one does not watch one's words too closely. And I fear I did not express myself well. Soviet Russia is truly a gigantic, complex, thought-testing phenomenon in human nature. And I suppose the opinions concerning its development, are as countless as the varieties of religious dogma. You were right in saying there can really be no comparison in standards of achievement between Russia and America. I did not intend that at all. It seems to me, the height of presumption to compare our own revolution, covering a small area, fought only 150 years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, with Russia's sevenfold revolution that was fed by innumerable sources of oppression, ignorance and serfdom during 12 centuries. Also, I agreed with you in what you said about America's magnificent progress in many directions. But that does not change the miracle of Russia acquiring 90% literacy in 25 years, does it? Nor does it prevent me from blushing over the horrible stains upon

our own history, chattel slavery, the savageries of brutal industrialism and child labor. A horse's coat.

As Helen confided to a friend about the exchange days later, "Alas, I am incorrigible, but what can one do when one believes that the truth is the highest compliment human beings can pay each other?"

[Audio Describer] Noam Chomsky, March 15th, 1989.

So the question is about the Soviet Union and particularly about Lenin. So what was Leninism? Here, we have to look at the facts. Now, you know, you look at the facts, I think here's what you find, Lenin was a right wing deviation of the Socialist Movement. And he was so regarded. He was regarded as that by the Marxists, by the mainstream Marxists. We've gotten who the mainstream Marxists were because they lost. And you only remember the guys who won, but if you go back to that period, the mainstream Marxists, were people like, for example, Anton Pannekoek, who was head of education for the Marxist Movement and a serious, he's one of the people who Lenin later denounced as an infantile leftist. But he was one of the leading intellectuals of the actual Marxist movement. Rosa Luxemburg was another mainstream Marxist, and there were others. And they were very critical. In fact, Trotsky was one up until 1917. They were all very critical of Leninism because of this, what they regarded as this opportunistic vanguardism, the idea that the radical intelligentsia were gonna exploit popular movements to seize state power, and then to use that state power to whip the population into the society that they chose. After all, the core of socialism was understood to be workers' control over production. That was the core, it's where you begin with then you go on to other things. But the beginning is controlled by the workers over production. That's where it begins. Then Lenin took power in October, 1917, in what's called a revolution, but in my view, it oughta be called a coup and things follow that coup or revolution if you wanna call it that. One of the things that followed it was the immediate moves to destroy the Soviets and the factory councils. Those were some of the first moves of Lenin and Trotsky, Trotsky joined at that point, after they took state power. In fact, if you look at what Lenin wrote after that period or did, you'll find it's a reversion to the earlier position, this sort of left deviation, is that, a deviation, you could ask why? In my view, it was just opportunistic. He knew that in order to gain power, he was gonna have to go along with the popular currents that were developing, which were, in fact, spontaneous and libertarian and socialist, as most popular movements are, have been in fact, since the 17th century and being an astute politician, which he was, he sort of went along with that and talked the line that the people wanted to hear. It's just like when an American politician goes somewhere and his pollsters tell him say so-and-so and he says it, doesn't mean he believes it. And I think Lenin was doing the same thing without polls. Well, after that, it comes to the view that all of this is socialism. And why should the communist



parties take that view? I think the reason is because they wanted to exploit the moral force of socialism, which was quite real. It's hard to remember that today, but at that time, it was very real. This was regarded as a progressive moral force and by associating their own destruction of socialism with the aura of socialism, they hoped to gain credit in the working classes and other progressive sectors. Now the west also identified that with socialism and they did it for the opposite reason. They wanted to associate socialism with the brutality of the Russian state, that undermine socialism so what you had, is that the two major world propaganda agencies, for their own quite different reasons, were claiming that this is socialism, that this destruction of socialism is socialism. And it's very hard to break out of the control of the world's two major propaganda agencies when they agree, they agreed for different reasons, but they basically agreed and that's then became doctrine dogma.

[Audio Describer] I went to Russia a Communist, but contact with those who have no doubts has intensified a thousandfold my own doubts, not us to communism in itself, but as to the wisdom of holding a creed so firmly that for its sake, men are willing to inflict widespread misery, end quote, Bertrand Russell on his meeting with Lenin in 1920. In the forest, many sticks and pieces of logs are propped up around a tree. Title: Three Fires. In black and white, a bonfire burns while a line of people in matching white shirts march in the background. people walk past men in caps. Men with and without caps, throw books and papers into the fire.

[Narrator] Among the 20,000 books hurled into the infamous Berlin Bonfires of 1933, an event organized by the German Student Union accompanying Hitler's rise to power was Helen Keller's "Out of the Dark". In an open letter to the students of Germany, Helen responded.

[Audio Describer] Text: You can burn my books and the books of the best minds in Europe, but the ideas in them have seeped through a million channels and will continue to quicken other minds. Neither bonfires nor the hangman's noose has power to kill ideas. If the ideas are sound, if they're written in sincerity, if they contribute to the liberation of the human mind, they have a power beyond ignorance to appreciate or malice to destroy. The real Germany knows this. None should know it better. The tiny few who light the fires of intolerance perpetuate a monstrous injustice, not to their own country alone, but to the whole race of intelligent men. A dragonfly with a wounded wing perches on a plant.

[Narrator] In 1946, while Helen travels throughout war-torn Europe, visiting with those blinded or otherwise disabled by the war, a malfunctioning furnace in her home in Connecticut burns the entire house to the ground. All of Helen's possessions are destroyed, including all her papers, letters, mementos as well as the manuscript for her long-planned biography of her teacher, Anne Sullivan. Within a

year, through the generosity of friends, the house is rebuilt.

Fireflies flicker.

[Narrator] Regarding the loss, Helen publicly conceals her sorrow, simply remarking that she is happy to be rid of the dangerous old furnace. When eight years later, at age 74, Helen finishes the rewriting of her book, "Teacher", she expresses gratefulness that the earlier manuscript had burned, now convinced that she'd found the proper perspective needed.

[Audio Describer] Wind ruffles the gray feathers of a dead bird. Heavier brown feathers remain still on the rocky ground.

[Narrator] On September 11th, 2001, beyond the catastrophic loss of life resulting from the attacks on the World Trade Center, fiery debris falling from a south tower strikes a building one block away housing, among other businesses, the headquarters of the Helen Keller International. Founded in 1915 by George Kessler and Helen Keller and established initially to treat veterans blinded in World War I, the Helen Keller International has evolved into one of the oldest nonprofit organizations dedicated to preventing blindness and reducing malnutrition worldwide. The building is severely damaged and two workers are killed when they are trapped inside the elevators. Within the offices of the Helen Keller International, fire breaks out. In addition to the loss of the entire institutional archives of the organization, is an irreplaceable collection of photos, letters and books of Helen Keller. While virtually all is destroyed, those sifting through the rubble discover singed but intact, a terracotta bust of Helen bestowed as a gift on her first trip to Japan in 1937.

[Audio Describer] The bust is shown.

[Narrator] Following the end of World War II, Helen returns to Japan in 1948, sent by Douglas MacArthur as America's first goodwill ambassador. With an irony that does not escape her, she tours the country, making an appeal for new laws on behalf of the welfare of the physically-disabled. Accompanied by her secretary, Polly Thompson, she revisits Hiroshima.

[Audio Describer] Text: It exceeds in horror and anguish, the accounts I have read. Its desolation, irreplaceable loss and mourning can be realized only by those who are on the spot. Not one tall building is left, and what has been rebuilt is temporary and put up in haste. Instead of the fair flourishing city we saw 11 years ago, there is only a life struggling daily, hourly, against a bare environment, unsoftened even by nature's wizardry. How the people exist through summer heat and winter cold is a thought not to be borne. Jolting over what had once been paved streets, we visited the one grave, all ashes, where about 8:30 August 6th, 1945, 90,000 men, women and children were

instantly killed and a 150,000 were injured, and the rest of the population did not know at the moment what a disaster was upon them. They thought that the two planes, when they bombed, they always came in numbers, were reconnoitering planes; so they were not prepared for the flash of light that brought mass death. As a result of that inferno, 200,000 persons are now dead and the suffering caused by atomic burns and other wounds is incalculable. Polly saw the burdens of the face of the welfare officer, a shocking sight. He let me touch his face and the rest is silence. And it was to those people that I made the appeal. Yet, despite the consummate barbarity of some military forces of my country and the painful wreckage upon the survivors, they listened quietly to what I had to say. Their affectionate welcome from the moment I arrived until two hours later, when we left by ferry for Miyajima, will remain in my soul, a holy memory and a reproach. In black and white, Helen puts her hands on a flower, then runs her hands over leaves and branches nearby. In color, a blurry view of a pink flower focuses as it moves closer to the long yellow pistil in the center and darker pink around it. Raindrops bead on the end of the pistil and the wide pedals. A small ant crawls between petals. The petals of another flower are deep fuchsia and more numerous. Other flowers have yellow and orange pedals coming to a point and long yellow stamen curling at the ends. The anthers at the end are greenish. More than several flowers bloom together. A plump bee crawls over a spray of small yellow flowers as a smaller insect flies around. A sunflower has thin yellow petals bent in different directions, most of them pointing up. It moves in the wind. In the theater, a wall mural depicts a woman in profile looking up with her arms out. The full white skirt of her dress has a lavender piece in front, matching some of the flowers behind her. In another mural, a man in a powdered wig looks over the shoulder of the woman who stands behind as they both look into a hand mirror she holds. In another, a similar man lounges with his hand, resting over his head. The light stands on the empty stage. Titles: What is the greatest illusion? To imagine we have none. What do you love best in life? I love best of all a walk, especially in the woods. I love to smell the fresh bark and leaves in the air. The sunshine and flowers. Nothing brings me more joy than flowers. I believe they can talk, someday we may learn their language.

[Narrator] Toward the close of "Midstream: My Later Life", Helen Keller's second autobiography is a chapter, part confession, part Testament, part invitation, entitled Thoughts That Will Not Let Me Sleep.

[Audio Describer] Text: I realize that I am apt to be too dogmatic when I write of things that mean much to me. I know it would be an advantage to express disapproval with captivating grace. But delicate banter is not one of my strong points. I ask nothing for myself. I am not among the victims of unjust laws. The struggle that I have gone through is no worse than, indeed, is not so grinding as, that of the

majority of men and women who are enmeshed in economic problems, which they are incapable of solving. A horse blinks. Text: When I look out upon the world, I see society divided into two great elements, and organized around an industrial life, which is selfish, combative and acquisitive, with the result that man's better instincts are threatened while his evil propensities are intensified and protected. My knowledge of the conditions that this system imposes is not vicarious. I have visited mill towns in Massachusetts, Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Rhode Island and New Jersey. I have visited mining towns in Pennsylvania, Utah, Alabama, Tennessee, west, Virginia, and Colorado. I have been in foundry towns when the men were on strike. I have been in packing towns when the men were on strike. I have been in New York when longshoremen were on strike. I've been on the New York Central when the railroad men were on strike and stones went flying through the windows. I have spoken in cities where feeling was so intense because of the conflict between capital and labor that when I was asked questions about the dispute, part of the audience hissed, and the manager came onto the stage to ask me not to answer. Blobs of a yellow fungus grow on a log. I have gone through ugly dark streets, filled with small children whose grimy little faces already look old. Many of them are defective in body, or mind or both. All over America, I have been appalled by the number of young children who spend the greater part of the day in stuffy, overcrowded rooms looked after by old people or by children only a little older than themselves while their parents work in factories or in other people's homes. This seems, to me, the most deplorable tragedy of our modern life. A nation's first and last responsibility is the welfare of its children. Fern sprouts, curled at the top, stick out between dead leaves. "Text: I love my country. To say that is like saying I love my family. I did not choose my country any more than I chose my parents, but I am her daughter just as truly as I am the child of my Southern mother and father. But my love for my country is not blind. Perhaps I am more conscious of her faults because I love her so deeply, nor am I blind to my own faults. I cannot fathom myself. I ask myself questions that I cannot answer. I find my heart aching when I expect to find it rejoicing. Tears flow from my eyes when my lips were formed to smile. I preach love, brotherhood and peace, but I am conscious of antagonisms and lo! I find myself brandishing a sword and making ready for the battle. I think that every honest belief should be treated with fairness yet I cry out against people who uphold the empire of gold. I am perfectly sure that love will bring everything right in the end, but I cannot help sympathizing with the oppressed who feel driven to use force to gain the rights that belong to them. The gray and white rings of a tree stump sits among green bows and long grass. Text: The process of emancipation of mankind from old ideas is very slow. The human race does not take to new ways of living readily, but I do not feel discouraged. It is not possible for civilization to flow backwards while there is youth in the world. Youth may be headstrong, but it will advance its allotted length. Through the ages, in the battle with the powers of evil, with poverty, misery ignorance, war,

ugliness and slavery, youth has steadily gained on the enemy. That is why I never turn away from the new generation impatiently because of its knowingness. Through it alone, shall salvation come. The leaves on top of a tree move in the wind as white clouds curl in the blue sky. The view of the tree slowly moves downward to include the top of the house with a red brick chimney. The house is white with a small attic on top and a deck on top of a porch, which is obscured by bushes at the bottom of the tree. A sidewalk leads to a few steps at the side of the porch. A sign by the front door says: Home of Annie M. Sullivan and Helen A Keller, 1903 to 1917. Elsewhere on the house, white paint peels around a window. A stone bird bath stands crooked. In a photograph, in pointed boots and a long dark skirt, Helen Keller sits in a tree. Long grasses and reeds wave in a field. A long blade of grass bends. The view moves through the field.

[Interviewer] Ms Keller, I shall ask you a few questions and Ms. Thompson will transmit them to you. Tell me, Ms Keller, I know you will realize the question isn't as important as it may sound, are you happy?

[Interviewer] If you could have one wish granted, what would it be?

[Audio Describer] In the recording studio, the woman steps around the mic stand to pick up eyeglasses, then steps away, leaving a water bottle and script pages on a stool. In a field, white tufts of dandelion seeds, stick to each other around their flower despite the wind. One moves to another stuck to a closed flower as the wind tries to break it free. It finally falls. Dozens of the white balls wave with a body of water behind them. The wind blow some of their parachutes away and the seedling scatter up with the air. Titles: Text/Direction/Image: John Gianvito. Editing: John Gianvito & Eric P. Gulliver. Narration: Carolyn Forche. WEB Du Bois recitation: David Levering Lewis. Additional cinematography: Shaun Clarke. Narration recording: Pierre Huberson. Animation: Megan Murphy, Ren Brown. Post facility: Modulus. Sound and color: Eric Masunaga. Assistance: Shannon Magnaldi, Spencer Smith. Centralia Massacre Aftermath, 1919-1920: Fox Newsreel. Noam Chomsky- What was Leninism? March 15th, 1989, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, courtesy of William Singer, pdxjustice Media Productions. Music originally accompanying Helen Keller's vaudeville stage appearances: "Spring Song", Felix Mendelssohn; "The Barefoot Trail", written by Marion Phelps and Elvin S Wiggers. "Star of Happiness", composed by George Alfred Lewis from a theme suggested by Helen Keller. Additional music: "Capital Oppresses Us" performed by the Red Army Choir. "Una Furtiva Lagrima" composed by Gaetano Donizetti, performed by Enrico Caruso. "Bandiera Rossa" performed by Pankrti. Thank you. Susanna Coit, Archives and Research Library, Perkins School for the Blind; American Foundation for the Blind Chi-hui Yang, JustFilms Ford Foundation. Audio description by Valerie Hunter. Traveling Light, Copyright 2020.