With Speech as My Weapon: Emma Goldman and the First Amendment

A Unit of Study for Grades 8-12 by Candace Falk The Emma Goldman Papers Project University of California, Berkeley

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I. UNIT OVERVIEW

Emma Goldman (1869-1940) is a major figure in the history of American radicalism and feminism. In a period when the expression of controversial ideas was itself dangerous, Goldman insisted on her right to challenge convention. Goldman devoted her life to asserting the individual's potential for freedom that otherwise was obscured by a system of social and economic constraints. She was among America's most prominent advocates of labor's right to organize, reproductive rights, sexual freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of the individual.

As passionate in her personal life as in her political life, Goldman left an intriguing body of personal papers, including correspondence and writings; and her activities generated extensive newspaper coverage, government surveillance reports, and legal papers. The documents in this curriculum unit are drawn from a massive archive collected by the Emma Goldman Papers Project, at the University of California, Berkeley.

Goldman was part of a blossoming culture of dissent. Her anarchism was one of many popular political philosophies of her time, including socialism, communism, utopianism, populism, and progressivism, that challenged and influenced the evolution of the dominant social and political culture. As an anarchist, Goldman maintained that social justice and individual freedom could not be legislated by the state. Instead, she argued for a complete transformation of social values and economic relations.

In nationwide lecture tours, Goldman took her message to the people and in the process tested a democratic society's tolerance for dissent. Goldman believed that "the most violent element in society is ignorance." The government and most newspaper reporters responded fearfully to Goldman's iconoclastic ideas as well as to her confrontational style. She was shadowed by police and vigilantes determined to suppress her talks and was arrested frequently. In 1919, after spending a year and a half in prison for her open opposition to conscription and to U.S. entry into World War I, Goldman was deported.

Standard school texts often ignore Goldman and other challenging voices, or only briefly mention them. This absence of an historical record of controversy in the curriculum not only denies students access to a full range of ideas but also ultimately limits their ability to understand and analyze the past. Recent educational reforms encourage classroom use of primary sources as the best way to present opposing points of view. For example, the documents from the Emma Goldman Papers on free speech are compelling because they expose the student to firsthand accounts of a long struggle to affirm the right to disagree. The immediacy of the issues of the period are experienced through newspaper accounts, political cartoons, speeches, pamphlets, and autobiographical narratives rather than through synthesized historical texts.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

The lessons in this unit of study focus on issues relating to freedom of expression and the limitations placed by local, state, and federal governments to control unpopular speech. The unit supplements the study of the American labor movement, anarchist activities, free speech, the Red Scare of the post-World War I era, and the deportation of aliens in 1919. It provides teachers an in-depth study of issues relating to freedom of expression using Emma Goldman as a case study. The lessons are most effective if placed within the context of a study of domestic issues of the 1920s.

"In the Aftermath of War: Cultural Clashes of the Twenties," "Women in the Progressive Era," and "The Constitution in Crisis: The Red Scare of 1919-1920," are other National Center for History Teaching Units that relate to the topics addressed in this unit.

III. CORRELATION TO NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR UNITED STATES HISTORY

With Speech as My Weapon: Emma Goldman and the First Amendment" provides teaching materials to support the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996). Lessons within this unit assist students in attaining Standards 2C and 3A of Era 7, "The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)." Students analyze the impact of public opinion and government policies civil liberties and evaluate government reactions to the growth of radical political movements.

This unit likewise integrates a number of Historical Thinking Standards including: explain historical continuity and change; assess the credibility of historical documents; compare and contrast different sets of ideas; analyze cause-and-effect relationships; support interpretations with historical evidence; and, marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances.

IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

- 1. Distinguish between unsupported expressions of opinion and informed hypotheses ground in historical evidence.
- 2. Draw upon visual sources to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in a historical narrative.
- 3. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas and values.
- 4. Analyze cause and effect relationships.

Public Perceptions of Emma Goldman (two days)

A. Objectives

- 1. Examine multiple perspectives by interpreting differing accounts of Goldman's role in the assassination of President William McKinley.
- 2. Examine political cartoons and explain how symbols and caricatures are used to convey messages.
- 3. Using selected political cartoons, explain how immigration was viewed as a source for anarchism in the United States.

B. Lesson Activities

- 1. Read accounts of the assassination of President William McKinley. Barbara Tuchman gives a brief account of the assassination and background information on Leon Czolgosz in *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War:1890-1914*. Chapter 2, "The Ideal and the Deed: The Anarchists, 1890-1914" is good background reading for placing the McKinley assassination in the context of international anarchist activities of the period.
- 2. Have students read excerpts from Sidney Fine's "Anarchism and the Assassination of McKinley," a secondary account published in *The American Historical Review* (**Document 5**).
- Using an overhead, show the *Chicago Daily Tribune* illustration and headline labeling Emma Goldman the "High Priestess of Anarchy" (**Document** 6). What does the illustration and headline say about Goldman's role in Czolgosz's assault on the President?
- 4. Distribute copies of the article that accompanied the picture and have students, within small groups, chart the evidence presented therein that implicates Goldman in the assault on President McKinley. What does the *Chicago Daily Tribune* report regarding Goldman's comments on violence? Why, according to the article, did Goldman refrain from giving "free rein to her thoughts?" Are there any discrepancies in the article? Do you think this speech, as reported in the *Daily Tribune*, incites violence? Explain.
- Distribute copies of Emma Goldman's account of the assault on President McKinley and the episode regarding her arrest in Chicago (**Document 7**). Students discuss, within their groups, ways in which Goldman's account

differs from that of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. How does Goldman's account of her arrest reflect on law enforcement agencies in Chicago?

- 6. Distribute copies of the editorial from the San Francisco Call, September 29, 1901 (**Document 8**), to each group. Students read and discuss the article within their assigned groups. What is the editor's attitude toward anarchists? How does the editor define anarchism? Contrast the editor's definition of civilization with the anarchist definition as suggested by the cover of *Mother Earth* (**Document 4**). What values are defended in the editorial? How was the anarchist position on the role of government different from other movements of the period that advocated social change?
- 7. Duplicate copies of the political cartoons in **Document 9** and give each group a different cartoon. The cartoons are: "Laws of Our Government," cartoon from the Yiddish Press, "Now He Will Have to Act," "A Menace," "Stop!," "All They Want Is Our Flag," and "Anarchy." Students, working within their assigned group, discuss the cartoon and the message it conveys. Each group, using a transparency of their cartoon, reports to the class and explains the meaning of the cartoon. In a general class discussion investigate the symbols that were used in the cartoons. What is the image of an anarchist presented in the cartoons? How might these images have influenced public opinion? Is there a bias presented in the cartoons? Do the cartoons suggest or imply a remedy for the "problems" created by anarchists? What can be read into the cartoons regarding the issue of free speech? Extend by having individual students develop original cartoons reflecting the viewpoint expressed in the *San Francisco Call* editorial.

Anarchism and the Assassination of McKinley

Secondary Source

Writing in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (July 1955), Sidney Fine examined the role of anarchism in the McKinley assassination. Professor Fine writes the following regarding Emma Goldman's association with the assassin and confirms her assertion that she knew nothing of the attempt on the president's life.

... Although the assassin's connections with anarchism were of the most tenuous sort and although insanity rather than anarchism may have prompted his actions, there was a general disposition among a public conditioned to think of anarchism in terms of Haymarket and Berkman's attack on Frick to hold anarchism itself responsible for the death of the President and to view Czolgosz as but the instrument of an alien and noxious doctrine that regarded assassination as a legitimate weapon to employ against government and constituted authority. It was therefore deemed necessary not merely to try and to execute the assassin, as was promptly done, and to apprehend those who might have conspired with him, but to take action against resident anarchists in general, since they were all, in effect, accessories of the crime.

Buffalo police authorities let it be known soon after Czolgosz was apprehended that they were quite certain that fellow anarchists had aided him in the planning and execution of the crime. Suspicion immediately centered upon Emma Goldman, the high priestess of the communist anarchists, and the group of Chicago anarchists associated with the publication of Free Society, the leading English-language communist-anarchist periodical in the United States. Czolgosz had heard Emma speak in Cleveland on May 5, 1901, and had been so impressed with her that he had sought her out in Chicago and had spoken to her briefly on July 12, 1901, as she was leaving the city. Miss Goldman introduced him to some of her Chicago anarchist friends, including Abe Isaak, Sr., editor of Free Society. Isaak invited Czolgosz to his home and promised to find him lodgings and a job but was unable to comply with his request for funds. Although this was the last either Miss Goldman or Isaak saw of Czolgosz and although Isaak apparently came to suspect Czolgosz as a possible spy and so informed the readers of his journal on September 1, 1901, five days before the attack on McKinley, Buffalo authorities nevertheless suspected them of complicity in the assassination and requested their arrest.

On the night of the assassination Chicago police arrested Abe Isaak, Sr., his wife, his son, and his daughter, and five other Chicago anarchists. All

were charged with conspiracy to kill the President, although only Isaak Sr.'s arrest had been requested by Buffalo. The following day the number of prisoners was raised to twelve with the arrest of three more anarchists then residing in Chicago. The prisoners were arraigned on September 9, 1901; the men were remanded for ten days without bail, and the women, of whom there were three, were first allowed to bail and then later in the day released.

The bag of anarchist prisoners in Chicago was increased by one on September 10 with the arrest of Emma Goldman. Miss Goldman had been in St. Louis when news arrived that McKinley had been slain, that her Chicago friends were under arrest, and that she herself was wanted by the Chicago police for alleged participation in a conspiracy to assassinate the President. Apparently deciding to give herself up, Emma entrained for Chicago, arrived there on September 9, and was apprehended the following morning.

Miss Goldman was arraigned on September 11, but bail was refused her pending a decision on a plea for writs of habeas corpus already initiated by attorneys for the Chicago anarchists. Hearings on the latter matter and on the conspiracy charge were several times postponed, chiefly because of the failure of Buffalo authorities to supply any supporting evidence. Bail was eventually fixed on September 18 at \$5,000 for the Isaak group and at \$10,000 for Emma. The hearings on the conspiracy charge were finally held on September 23, but since the Buffalo police had been unable to produce any evidence of conspiracy or to find any grounds for requesting extradition, the prisoners had to be released . . .

Sidney Fine, "Anarchism and the Assassination of McKinley," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (July 1955), 780-82.

Emma Goldman, High Priestess of Anarchy

On September 6, 1901, anarchist Leon Czolgosz assassinated President William McKinley.¹ Although Emma Goldman did not know Czolgosz and opposed assassination as a political tactic, she was implicated and arrested as a co-conspirator. Because Czolgosz had attended one of Goldman's speeches, the press blamed Goldman for inspiring the assassination of the President. The assassination incident increased the public's belief that anarchism was a philosophy of violence. This demonic portrayal of Goldman appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 8, 1901.



¹ Czolgosz shot President McKinley at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York on September 6; McKinley died eight days later.

SPEECH THAT PROMPTED MURDEROUS ASSAULT ON THE PRESIDENT.

Cleveland. O. Sept. 7 [*Special*] An address, delivered in this city on May 6 by Emma Goldman, the Anarchist, is believed largely responsible for the attempt on the life of President McKinley.

Miss Goldman spoke here twice on that date, and a copy of her address was found in the pocket of LeonCzolgosz when searched by the Buffalo police. In the audience on that occasion was the man who tried to kill the President, and his associates now recall that he was one of he most enthusiastic in his applause of the utterances of Miss Goldman.

The hall in which the lecture was delivered is at 170 Superior street, the same hall in which the Anarchists now meet in this city.

In the course of her address of May 6, Miss Goldman first outlined the principles of anarchy and detailed the methods whereby she hoped to accomplish the ends of anarchy. Her talk was full of forceful passages, and some cases more notable for their strength than for their elegance.

"Men under the present state of society," she said, "are mere products of circumstances. Under the galling yoke of government, ecclesiasticism, and a bond of custom and prejudice, it is impossible for the individual to work out his own career as he could wish. Anarchism aims at a new and complete freedom. It strives to bring about the freedom which is not only the freedom from within but a freedom from without, which will prevent any man from having a desire to interfere in any way with the liberty of his neighbor.

"Vanderbilt says, 'I am a free man within myself, but the others be damned.' This is not the freedom we are striving for. We merely desire complete individual liberty, and this can never be obtained as long as there is an existing government.

"We do not favor the socialistic idea of converting men and women into mere producing machines under the eye of a paternal govenment. We go to the opposite extreme and demand the fullest and most complete liberty for each and every person to work out his own salvation upon any line that he pleases. The degrading notions of men and women as machines is far from our ideals of life.

"Anarchism has nothing to do with future governments or economic arrangements. We do not favor any particular settlement in this line, but merely ask to do away with the present evils. The future will provide these arrangements after our work has been done. Anarchism deals merely with social relations, and not with economic arrangement."

The speaker then deprecated the idea that all Anarchists were

in favor of violence or bomb throwing. She declared that nothing was further from the principles they support. She went on, however, into a detailed explanation of the different crimes committed by Anarchists lately, declaring that the motive was good in each case, and that these acts were merely a matter of temperament.

Some men were so constituted, she said, that they were unable to stand idly by and see the wrong that was being endured by their fellow-mortals. She herself did not believe in these methods, but she did not think they should be condemned in view of the high and noble motives which prompted their perpetration. She continued: "Some believe we should first obtain by force and let the intelligence and education come afterwards."

Miss Goldman did not hesitate to put forward a number of sentiments far more radical and sensational than any ever publicly advanced here. During Miss Goldman's lecture a strong detail of police was in the hall to keep her from uttering sentiments which were regarded as too radical.

This accounts for the fact that the speaker did not give free rein to her thoughts on this occasion. By reason of anarchistic uprisings elsewhere it was thought best by the city officials to curb the utterances of the woman.

Chicago Daily Tribune, September 8, 1901

Emma Goldman's Account of the McKinley Assassination and Her Arrest in Chicago

Writing in her autobiography, *Living My Life*, Emma Goldman explained how she came to hear of the attempt on President McKinley's life while in St. Louis.

Excerpt from *Living My Life* by Emma Goldman (Volume 1, pp. 295-96, 298-300)

As I stood on a street-corner wearily waiting for a car, I heard a newsboy cry: "Extra! Extra! President McKinley shot!" I bought a paper, but the car was so jammed that it was impossible to read. Around me people were talking about the shooting of the President.

Carl [Nold, a friend of Goldman] had arrived at the house before me. He had already read the account. The President had been shot at the Exposition grounds in Buffalo by a young man by the name of Leon Czolgosz. "I never heard the name," Carl said; "have you?" "No, never," I replied. "It is fortunate that you are here and not in Buffalo," he continued. "As usual, the papers will connect you with this act." "Nonsense!" I said, "the American press is fantastic enough, but it would hardly concoct such a crazy story."

The next morning I went to the stationery story to see the owner. After considerable persuasion I succeeded in getting an order amounting to a thousand dollars, the largest I had ever secured. Naturally I was very happy over it. While I was waiting for the man to fill out his order, I caught the headline of the newspaper lying on his desk: "ASSASSIN OF PRESIDENT MCKINLEY AN ANARCHIST. CONFESSES TO HAVING BEEN INCITED BY EMMA GOLDMAN. WOMAN ANARCHIST WANTED."

By great effort I strove to preserve my composure, completed the business, and walked out of the store. At the next corner I bought several papers and went to a restaurant to read them. They were filled with the details of the tragedy, reporting also the police raid of the Isaak house in Chicago and the arrest of everyone found there. The authorities were going to hold the prisoners until Emma Goldman was found, the papers stated. Already two hundred detectives had been sent out throughout the country to track down Emma Goldman.

On the inside page of one of the papers was a picture of McKinley's slayer. "Why, that's Nieman!" I gasped.

Goldman recalled meeting a young man named Nieman at one of her lectures in Cleveland. He had approached her again in Chicago some months later and expressed his eagerness to get in touch with anarchists since he was now working in Chicago. She had not seen him since. Goldman told Nold of her plans to return to Chicago and give herself up. Unable to convince her to change her mind, he escorted Goldman to the train station. Goldman had sent a discrete message to Max Metzkow telling of her return. Metzkow met the train in Chicago.

The only person who knew of my coming was Max, to whom I had sent a cautious wire. I caught sight of him before he saw me. Passing him slowly, I whispered: "Walk towards the next street. I'll do the same." No one seemed to follow me.... Max insisted that it was insanity to have come to Chicago....

I realized that I could not stay at their home, nor with any other foreign comrades. I had, however, American friends who were not known as anarchists. Max notified Mr. and Mrs. N., who I knew were very fond of me, of my presence and they came at once. They also were worried about me, but they thought I would be safe with them. It was to be only two days, as I was planning to give myself up to the police as quickly as possible.

Mr. N., the son of a wealthy preacher, lived in a fashionable neighbourhood. "Imagine anybody believing I would shelter Emma Goldman," he said when we had arrived in his house. Late in the afternoon, on Monday, when Mr. N. returned from his office, he informed me that there was a chance to get five thousand dollars from the Chicago *Tribune* for a scoop on an interview. "Fine!" I replied; "we shall need money to fight my case." We agreed that Mr. N. would bring the newspaper representative to his apartment the next morning, and then the three of us would ride down to police headquarters together....

I spent the greater part of the night tearing up letters and papers and destroying what was likely to involve my friends. All preparations completed, I went to sleep. In the morning Mrs. N. left for her office, while her husband went to the Chicago *Tribune*. We agreed that if anyone called, I was to pretend to be the maid.

About nine o'clock, while taking a bath, I heard a sound as if someone was scratching on the window-sill. I paid no attention to it at first. I finished my bath leisurely and began to dress. Then came a crash of glass. I threw my kimono over me and went into the dining room to investigate.

A man was clutching the window-sill with one hand while holding a gun in the other. We were on the third floor and there was no fire-escape. I called out: "Look out, you'll break your neck!" "Why the hell don't you open the door? Are you deaf?" He swung through the window and was in the room. I walked over to the entrance and unlocked it. Twelve men, led by a giant, crowded into the apartment. The leader grabbed me by the arm, bellowing: "Who are you?" "I not speak English—Swedish servant-girl." He released his hold and ordered his men to search the place. Turning to me, he yelled: "Stand back! We're looking for Emma Goldman." Then he held up a photo to me. "See this? We want this woman. Where is she?" I point my finger at the picture and said: "This woman I not see here. This woman big—you look in those small boxes will not find her—she too big." "Oh, shut up!" he bawled; "you can't tell what them anarchists will do." After they had searched the house, turning everything upside down, the giant walked over to the book-shelves. "Hell, this is a reg'lar preacher's house," he remarked: "look at them books. I don't think Emma Goldman would be here." They were about to leave when one of the detectives suddenly called: "Here, Captain Schuettler, what about this?" It was my fountain-pen, a gift from a friend, with my name on it. I had overlooked it. "By golly, that's a find!" cried the Captain. "She must have been here and she may come back." He ordered two of his men to remain behind.

I saw the game was up. There was no sign of Mr. N or the Tribune man, and it could serve no purpose to keep the farce up longer. "I am Emma Goldman," I announced.

For a moment Schuettler and his men stood there as if petrified. Then the Captain roared: "Well, I'll be damned! You're the shrewdest crook I ever met! Take her, quick!" When I stepped into the cab waiting at the curb, I saw N. approaching in the company of the *Tribune* man. It was too late for the scoop, and I did not want my host recognized. I pretended not to see them.



Police photograph, 1901, Library of Congress

The Spirit₃₄ of Anarchy

Editorial, San Francisco Call

This editorial first appeared in April 28,1898 in response to one of Emma Goldman's visits to San Francisco where she publicly denounced both the Spanish-American War and President William McKinley. The editorial was reprinted on September 29, 1901, following Goldman's implication in the assassination of President McKinley.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CALL, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1901

The - sont	Call.
JOHN D. SPRECKELS, Proprietor SUNDAY	Address Communications to W. S. LEAKE, Manager SEPTEMBER 29, 1901
Publication Office	Market and Tr . S.F.

THE SPIRIT OF ANARCHY.

The record of several anarchists who by bomb-throwing and other forms of assassination have brought themselves into position in which their lives could be laid bare furnishes an interesting study.

They have usually been found to have lived in violation of the moral law which was in force among men before national codes were formed, and is understood to restrain men even when they are beyond the reach of codes and statutes. Their domestic relations are frequently illicit and their ideas of rights of property are not derived from the ten commandments.

As organized society and the laws of states are based upon the rights of person and property and defend the moral foundation of the domestic relations, anarchy hits its hand against society and against government.

When confronted with such records as are revealed by the arrest of anarchists who have been guilty of assassination it is their practice to reply that the moral offenses committed by them are also practiced by others who profess to support organized society and to support government.

That is obviously true. But such violators of the moral code are secret sinners, who realize their offense and conceal it and shrink from making its practice the social rule by the destruction of government and its institutions.

The spirit of anarchy is one that resists moral restraint, that chafes under the discipline of institutions, and strikes impartiality at church and state, because each is in its way the agent of morality and discipline.

It would seem, then, that anarchy is the cult of the abnormal man, of the class of atavists who reject everything that has come into the world with civilization.

Those who publicly propagate it are the apostles of crime, the evangelists of assassination.

Their cry to the laboring man is that he is a slave, and no means are omitted to embitter him and make him an agent in the destruction of civilization and government.

It needs no profound knowledge or exalted intelligence to discern the motives or deny the premises of anarchy. Modern civilization, which it attacks, has lifted the face of labor from the ground and turned it toward the stars. It has taken labor in the mass out of serfdom into independence, out of a hut into a house. It has dotted the nations with schools wherein the sons and daughters of laboring men have been freely offered the opportunity for a better education than was within the reach of princes a thousand years ago.

Government and civilization have put the personal and property rights of labor on exactly the same footing and under the same judicial protection as the rights of the rich, born in the purple.

The improved economic conditions, due to modern civilization, have put over labor a shelter, into its life comforts, and on its table food that were the exclusive possession of royalty and nobility five hundred years ago.

So government and social institutions can point to what they have done for the enfranchisement of man since the dark ages. To what can anarchy point as its achievements for humanity? To the innocent torn to shreds by dynamite; to the President of a republic murdered in his carriage; to the Czar who decreed freedom and ownership of land to 25,000.000 serfs, assassinated in the streets of St. Petersburg; to a score of faithful policemen murdered in Haymarket square while doing their duty as protectors of person and property. What has all this crime and violence done for labor? Has it given wages, shelter, food and schooling? Has it advanced man a step in the path of further progress which civilization has opened for him?

Let it blazon its achievements and inform labor of the mighty things it has wrought for those who toil that the world may strike a balance between murder and civilization as a means for the uplifting of the race.

San Francisco Call, April 28,1898. reprinted Sept. 29,1901

STUDENT RESOURCE: DOCUMENT 9

Political Cartoons

Many Americans drew their images of radicals from cartoons published in newspapers. The press often seized the opportunity to sensationalize not only Goldman's anarchist perspective, but also the particular spectacle of a woman assuming a prominent role in the public arena.



Kansas State Historical Collection



From the Yiddish Press, c. 1901



San Diego Union, May 18, 1912

STOP! Harper, Birmingham Age-Herald



ANARCHY