
SUSAN GRIFFIN

Wrestling with the Angel of Democracy *On Being an American Citizen*



"Susan Griffin has removed the rhetorical clichés from democracy and revealed a breathing, sentient angel of wisdom now held captive by tyranny, money, and our misplaced faith in authority. This is nothing less than cultural poetry steeped in history and heart."—PAUL HAWKEN, author of *Blessed Unrest*

Susan Griffin's latest work, *Wrestling with the Angel of Democracy: On Being an American Citizen* (Trumpeter) to be published in April 2008, continues what she began in *A Chorus of Stones* (a *New York Times* "Notable Book") as the third volume of what she calls a *social autobiography*, and seems especially relevant as Americans face a presidential election that has the potential to turn our country toward true environmental stewardship, diplomacy untainted by war, and a fairer and more consistent form of democracy.

In *Wrestling with the Angel of Democracy*, Griffin examines her life in the context of larger histories and the way these histories emerge in one's life, and explores the role democracy in America has shaped both her life and her consciousness. As the book progresses, she becomes an active participant in the processes she describes, voicing dilemmas that concern all Americans, with the intent to shape history and democracy herself.

Susan Griffin is an important and gifted writer whose work is well-known among writers, feminists, academics, activists and environmentalists. Her landmark work, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, is a vivid, poetic, sometimes playful, and ultimately powerful book that played a vital role in the eco-feminism movement. Before this, she was known for her pioneering work that helped to define modern feminism, especially her essay in *Ramparts* magazine on rape (written years before any feminist books on the subject) that argued that rape is motivated more by the urge to domination than the desire for sexual pleasure. Published later as a book, for decades this essay was distributed in clinics for survivors of rape.

But her thinking has not been confined to women's issues. In her work (she has published 19 books) she often makes original connections between diverse subjects. In 1983, in lectures she gave for the Schumaker Foundation in Great Britain, she was one of the first to explore the ways that prejudice against women, racism and anti-Semitism, the destruction of the environment and warfare share a psychological orientation, derived from a denial of the preeminence of earthly existence and of mortality. From this insight, she began work on her masterful *A Chorus of Stones: The Private Life of War*, an account of the development of nuclear weapons. Splicing together memoir and intimate stories with historical accounts she created a picture of the causes of modern warfare in which private and public life mix together in a commanding synergy. The first in her trilogy of *social autobiography*, *A Chorus of Stones* was a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

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[Learn more about the author]

SUSAN GRIFFIN, *Continued* . . .

Griffin has been a political activist for most of her adult life, occasionally as an organizer, but more often as an ordinary citizen, joining marches and picket lines, speaking out. Investigated by the FBI during the 1960s, she was active in the movement for civil liberties, civil rights, women's and gay rights, for nuclear disarmament and against the Vietnam and now the Iraq War. In 2003, just before the second war in Iraq began, she was arrested alongside journalist Amy Goodman in an antiwar protest in front of the White House. While resisting dogma of any kind, she has carried her passion for justice into her political essays.

Because of participation in the protests of the Sixties, Griffin was interviewed in the film *Berkeley in the Sixties*, in which she also expresses some critical thinking. And as well as narrating the film, Griffin was the second of two scriptwriters for this Oscar nominated film. She has written in many different genres and her work has been widely studied and admired for her innovative use of form, mixing subjective voice with commentary, poetry with prose, intuitive insight with historical fact. She is an award winning poet and playwright. Her Emmy award-winning play *Voices* has been produced for both radio and stage in the USA, Germany, and in Britain, notably, for the BBC. Her collection of poetry, *Unremembered Country*, published by the esteemed Copper Canyon Press, won the Commonwealth Club's Silver Medal. A prolific writer, she is currently working on several new projects, including "Canto," a play in poetry to be set to music, depicting the massacre and the exhumation of villagers killed by death squads in Latin America in the 1980s. And continuing her life-long concern about the fate of civilians in warfare, she is co-editing the forthcoming *Transforming Terror, Remembering the Soul of the World*, from University of California Press.



Praise for *Wrestling with the Angel of Democracy*:



"Unique . . . fresh and probing. . . strikes at the very heart of America's cruel paradoxes. With a light yet devastating touch, Griffin charts our continued "wrestling" with democratic ideals—her incisive search for the soul of democracy stirs up pride, despair, and hope."—*Booklist*

Photo: Irene Young



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