

TEXTS FOR SING OUT STRONG/EMANCIPATED VOICES, "VOTING AS FREEDOM"

"Your Vote, Your Power", music by Del'Shawn Tayler, text by Samiir Muhamed

"In the shadow of the past a new anecdote unfolds. Neocolonialism is a story yet untold. It whispers of power, governance, and greed, as a nation's destinies are sown like a seed.

Cast your vote; let your voice appear for leaders and laws. You have a say. Shape your future in your own way. In democracy's dance, stand tall and true. Your voice, your power, it's up to you!

Invisible chains of days of old, now reemerge a different story to be told. Former colonies, their voices still suppressed, as puppet strings of influence are subtly caressed. Economic dominance in the subtlest form where foreign

interests reshape the norm. Resources plundered, wealth extracted away, leaving the people's dreams in disarray.

Yet in new struggles a resistance grows. The spirit of freedom in every heart bestows. Nation rising, seeking to reclaim their fate. Cast your vote. Your voice, your power, it's up to you!"

"A Very Special Day", music by Jamie Klenetsky Fay, text by Ivete Souza

"I was six years old when I realized that one day I could vote. I will never forget that day, November first, when I watched my parents get ready to go vote. They said, "Election day is a very special day. It's when each one of us, each ordinary person can express the desire to make our country better". When I came to America I

missed the right to vote. I didn't feel like a part of this great country without the right to vote. I finally became a citizen of America. As I took the citizenship oath, my heart, bursting with pride and joy, felt like a part of this great country. I had the right to vote. Election day is a very special day. It's when each one of us, each ordinary person can do our part to forge the destiny of our country."

"Maria's Dream", music by Joel Balzun, text by Maria Luz

"I came to America from El Salvador, dreaming dreams of freedom. Freedom from violence like the time the gangs chased my son and broke his feet. Freedom from hunger. Freedom from the despair of a futureless future. It was hard at first. I worked any job I could get. I managed to

save to buy a car. I opened a business cleaning houses.

On November 20, '22 I went for my citizenship interview. That was one of the most important days of my life. I am now an American citizen. I can continue to build my dreams without fear of deportation. I will make a business with my husband and son, doing construction.

November 20, '24 will be the first time I can vote in America. I will vote for freedom. I will vote for peace. I will vote to make this country the best that it can be!”

“Shout”, music by Xavier Bueno, text by Gustavo Dos Santos Sousa

“I want my voice. I need my voice. I need to speak; they need to hear. They can judge or oppose, I don't care 'cause I will thrive! Please listen.”

“A Perfect Democracy”, music by Carlos Carrillo, text by Lanae’hannai Weaver

“We are told we’re all represented, but they can’t erase all the years we have been tormented by harsh expectations and fake images, impossible to forget. I dream that, for once, they will give us a story we can embrace. We’ll cast our ballots ‘cause we have a say. I vote for my people to have a better life one day. No, you can’t keep this crowd quiet for all the times they put us down. Let’s be loud for all the times we have endured in silence. Let’s sound off with your vote for every tear we’ve ever cried. We’ve always said ‘at least we tried’. But I’m so sick of trying, and I’m so sick of crying. So often I’ve felt like dying; living is so terrifying. I march in the street and smile for those too afraid to wear their colors or be hurt

with no aid, 'cause we're just as good as anyone else, and I need no one to prove that to myself.

But if I know I can do something, I'll keep fighting. Let the fires blaze right now, right here. One day the smoke will clear. We can write our own stories. Speak up; let your voices be heard. For all the times we have endured in silence, sound off with your vote!"

"The Day When I Can", music by Marieke de Koker, text by Chiruza Peter

"Here, I cannot vote yet. I wait for the day when I can. There, they know the power of voting. There, they cannot vote because they are afraid of corruption, nepotism, abuse of power.

I was born in a land where we can't tell the real meaning of freedom and democracy. I was born

in a land where we don't know freedom and democracy. Everyone who speaks the truth is the number one enemy! Many have died speaking up for the truth. Many continue to die.

America! The freedom to vote is a cherished right. But you who can vote, will you exercise this precious right?"

"Can You Hear Me Now", music by Kangyi Zhang, text by Marideza Manigat

"I want my voice to be loud, but I wonder if my voice can be heard in a world where many speak, but many are left unheard. I know I can make a change in the democracy I live in, in a world full of millions of souls waiting to see how it'll all unfold. We are encouraged to vote. We feel encouraged to vote. The joy that comes from knowing our voices matter can

quickly turn into gloom and sadness when we realize that it was all for how, and what we say don't really matter.”

“Vote”, music by Cole Reyes, text by Maria De Sousa Abreu

“I want to speak my thoughts to the world. I want to change this reality. I want to vote to change us. So vote, vote now! Speaking your thoughts is important. We can change the world. Everyone has the right to talk to change the world. So vote, vote now! I want to change the world around me. I want to feel free. I want to speak, to shout, to change. I want to be free. So vote, vote now!”

“A No. 2 Pencil”, music by Ethan Soledad, text by Cerise Lim Jacobs

“I walk into the fire station, take a ballot, enter a makeshift booth, pick up a yellow pencil. It’s a number 2 pencil. The kind I used to take multiple choice tests, a humble and familiar friend. On the ballot I see egg-shaped blanks beside names. I grasp my number 2 pencil tightly, and carefully color in the right eggs, my choices. A surge of emotions overwhelms me. I did it! I am voting for the first time in my life! It took me 15 years, but I made it to this booth. The right to joyfully clutch my pencil and take it home, a momento of what it means to be a citizen of this great country.”

“Prayers For Democracy”, music by Kitty Brazelton, text by J. Andres Ballesteros

“In a quiet booth, a sacred space, I put pen to paper, choosing names. Not just names: hoped for futures. Prayers for my country, for my

children, for myself. The ritual repeats across the land, a thousand chapels of democracy, a million paper prayers, each a silent plea for something yet to be. Night comes. Is it? Night comes. Hope . . . or? Fear I feel, as we wait? Night comes. Which prayers will be answered? Prayers for my country, my children, for myself.”