



*Unfinished Flag of the United States*  
Lawrence Ferlinghetti

# American Voices



CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITY

THIRD EDITION

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**Dolores la Guardia**

**Hans P. Guth**

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COMMUNITY

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**Dolores laGuardia**

*University of San Francisco*

**Hans P. Guth**

*Santa Clara University*



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# American Voices

## USED BOOK

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*To our children*

# TO THE INSTRUCTOR

*American Voices* is a textbook for the courses in writing and critical thinking that are at the core of the student's general education. We aim at helping students become alert readers, more purposeful and effective writers, and thinking members of the larger community. We focus on issues that define our diverse, multicultural society as it charts its future. The book is built around selections by committed writers who demonstrate the power of the written word to record, interpret, and change the social and cultural reality in which we live.

## The Goals of *American Voices*

▪ **REDEFINING AMERICA** This book is part of the search for a new national identity that honors diversity while searching for community. The text explores the promise of a multicultural America, examining the issues that confront us on the way to a richer, pluralistic meeting of majority and minority cultures. The central focus of the book is the challenge of honoring diversity while searching for the common center.

▪ **EXPLORING TODAY'S ISSUES** The book is organized around major concerns in our changing social and cultural awareness. In each chapter, readings cluster around a central theme:

- 1 **INITIATION: Growing Up American**—exploring the diverse experiences of young Americans
- 2 **NEW WORLD: Diversity and Community**—honoring the true richness of American culture
- 3 **CONTESTED HISTORY: Rediscovering America**—heeding revisionist readings of our shared history
- 4 **OUTSIDERS: Unheard Voices**—listening to those marginalized in our affluent society
- 5 **IDENTITY: Rethinking Race**—reexamining race as an unresolved challenge to the American dream
- 6 **CULTURE WARS: Constructing Gender**—exploring the current redefinition of gender roles
- 7 **MEDIA WATCH: Image and Reality**—watching the media mold our perception of reality
- 8 **ROLE MODELS: In Search of Heroes**—looking for sources of inspiration for alienated youth
- 9 **LANGUAGE: Bond or Barrier?**—probing the power of language to unite or divide us

- 10 VIOLENCE: Living at Risk—exploring ways of coping with the epidemic of violence
- 11 ENVIRONMENT: Participating in Nature—renewing our bonds with the world of nature
- 12 UNCERTAIN FUTURE: Dream or Nightmare—envisioning Utopian and dystopian tomorrows

▪ **BALANCED REPRESENTATION** Readers of earlier editions of *American Voices* responded to its selection of authentic American voices representing a “wide and challenging variety of ways to be human and to perceive the world.” Half of the writers in this new edition represent minority backgrounds or alternative lifestyles; half of the writers or more are women. In the words of one reviewer, many of “the writings in *American Voices* are by women who happen to be writers as opposed to writers whose profession it is to be ‘women’ for their readers.” At the same time, to help instructors address the concerns of embattled white males, we include writers like Daniel J. Boorstin on the positives in American history, Carl Bernstein on journalistic standards, and Robert Bly on the search for male role models for a new generation.

▪ **TEACHING INDEPENDENT THINKING** Instruction in critical thinking aims at validating the students’ independent judgment. The goal is to develop our students’ ability to reexamine familiar ideas, to take a serious look at issues, and to make up their own minds. Critical thinking requires the willingness to confront opposing views or plays off differing perspectives on major issues. The readings in this text invite students to participate in the dialogue, introducing them to the dialectic of pro and con. On politically sensitive topics, we guard against presenting the textbook authors’ views as the approved, correct slant on an issue.

▪ **FOSTERING STUDENT PARTICIPATION** The apparatus in *American Voices* promotes students’ involvement in their reading and provokes classroom interaction. Headnotes go beyond routine biography to highlight an author’s experience and commitment. **Thought Starters** focus students’ attention and activate what they bring to a selection. The after-selection apparatus validates the range of reader response by asking questions that do not have a single correct answer. Questions labeled **The Responsive Reader** direct attention to key points. Questions and suggested topics labeled **Talking, Listening, Writing** encourage students to formulate their own personal reactions and to engage in a dialogue with their classmates, often in preparation for both informal and more structured writing assignments. **Collaborative Projects** for group work introduce students to the challenges and rewards of collaborative learning.

▪ **INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING** A writing workshop follows each chapter, with guidelines and activities in each workshop focused on a major writing or thinking strategy. We help teachers move from experience to exposition, providing the bridge from personal-

experience writing to more academic, more public forms of discourse. A rich sampling of student papers helps instructors bridge the gap between professional and student writing and encourages students to find their own voices, to trust their own authority as witnesses and thoughtful observers.

- **ASSURING FLEXIBILITY** The organization of *American Voices* suggests a course outline that many teachers have found workable. However, chapters, reading selections, and writing workshops are self-contained and may be rearranged to suit the needs of different classes or programs. An alternative rhetorical table of contents enables instructors to shift from a thematic, issues-oriented emphasis to an emphasis on rhetorical strategies.

### Features of the Third Edition

The third edition builds on features that have appealed to teachers and students and that set *American Voices* apart from competitors:

- **ENGAGING WITH CURRENT ISSUES** We seek out thought-provoking, discussion-generating writing about current issues. The selections in the third edition explore topics including bad parenting; the resurgence of anti-immigrant sentiment; the forgotten people of America's prison gulag archipelago; role models for alienated youth; gender balance in the media; the black middle class; the attack on affirmative action; the O. J. trials and the racial divide; the media furor over Black English; gay-bashing and the growing acceptance of gays; the soulless modern corporation; and the pornographer as free speech hero.

- **STRENGTHENED THEMATIC FOCUS** We have strengthened the sequence of chapters for clearer focus on key issues. We have moved up the key chapter on diversity and community; now Chapter 2, it integrates Ursula Le Guin on heartland America and Harvey Milk on the city of neighborhoods. Chapter 4 on "Outsiders" includes new materials on those marginalized in our society—students neglected in American schools; Americans buried in our prisons; Americans with disabilities. Separate new chapters on rethinking race (5) and constructing gender (6) deal with major forces affecting the individual's search for identity.

- **READING-BASED AND RESEARCH-BASED WRITING** We encourage the current trend toward giving students help early with papers drawing on their reading (Writing Workshop 3) and toward having them work with investigative papers that provide shorter alternatives—and also trial runs—for longer library papers (Writing Workshop 11). At the same time, we have greatly expanded the treatment of computer searches and of documentation (MLA and APA) for the full-length documented paper in Writing Workshop 12.

### Acknowledgments

It has again been a privilege and a pleasure to work on this book with the dedicated professionals at Mayfield Publishing. We owe a special



debt to the many colleagues in the writing movement who have made the core courses in the general education curriculum more responsive to the needs of today's students. We have again taken to heart excellent advice from our reviewers: Dr. Kathleen Bell, University of Central Florida; Marlene S. Bosanko, Tacoma Community College; Susanne Bounds, Morehead State University; Judy Daniel, University of Minnesota—Morris; Bruce R. Henderson, Fullerton College; Kim Martin Long, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania; Peggy A. Moore, College of the Siskiyous; Ed Moritz, Indiana University—Purdue University; and Roslyn Z. Weedman, Delta College. Above all, we have learned much from our students. Often, struggling against odds, they have maintained their faith in American education. Their candor, intelligence, and idealism have been a marvelous antidote to cynicism, burnout, and apathy.

D. laGuardia  
H. Guth

## TO THE STUDENT

*In reality, society and the individual are not antagonists. Culture provides the raw material of which individuals make their lives. If it is meager, the individual suffers. If it is rich, the individual has a chance to rise to the opportunity.*

—Ruth Benedict

This book asks you to read, think, and write about who you are as a person. Who are you—as an individual and as part of a nation? What makes each of us the people we are? Where do we come from, and where are we headed? What shapes our thinking, our values, our loyalties?

The readings in this book invite you to think about how your sense of self is shaped by sometimes conflicting influences. How important is family or social status? How much does gender matter, and how rigid are gender roles in our society? How important are ethnic or national origin and racial identity? (Is much of who we are already programmed by class, gender, or race?) How have religious influences, work experiences, or health issues shaped your outlook? Where do you stand on issues that fuel the basic controversies in our society—the racial divide, out-of-control violence, “family values,” proliferating prisons, sexual orientation?

Working with this book, you will have a chance to think about what you have in common with others, about shared experiences and commitments. In our diverse, multicultural society, what are the things that provide a common bond? At the same time, you will have a chance to think about what *separates* you from others. How real are the barriers that divide us? What are the forces in our society that make for hostility, suspicion, or even paranoia? What is the outlook for our common future?

Americans have prided themselves on being independent individuals, making their own choices. We each have the right to be our “own person”—not just a cog in the machine or a number in the college computer. As Americans, we have the right to say “No.” We have the right to talk back to government officials, elders in the family, peer groups at school or college, preachers, teachers, advocates of causes, or whoever wants to tell us what we should think and do. Nevertheless, the choices we make are shaped by the culture in which we live. We have the option of conforming to the traditional lifestyles of our families—urban or rural, strict or permissive, liberal or conservative. We choose to adapt or reject our heritage, staying close to or distancing ourselves from a Southern or Mexican or Irish or Italian past. We each in our own way come to terms with

our inherited faiths—Catholic, Baptist, Mormon, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, or other.

A culture is a traditional way of living, of thinking and feeling. A culture, for better or for worse, provides traditional answers to basic questions: How important am I as an individual compared with the survival of society? What are my obligations to family—to parents, to siblings, to relatives in need? What jobs are open to me—to someone of my family background, gender, or social status? How am I expected to love, court, marry, have children? Is it all right to divorce? to have an abortion? What is valued in my culture? Who is judged successful, and why? Who is considered beautiful, and why? What is considered sinful, offensive, or taboo?

In these and similar matters, many people adapt to their own needs the traditions of family, neighborhood, or church. Many swim in a traditional lifestyle the way fish swim in the sea. For many others, however, growing up means deciding to move on, to make their own personal declaration of independence. They find themselves reexamining their roots, their assumptions, their loyalties. They reach a point in their lives where they have to decide. Should they work in the family's hardware store or go to college? Should they convert to Catholicism? Should they marry one of their own kind or someone from a different background or religion? Should they follow in the footsteps of a mother or father—or should they enter a profession where people of their gender, their skin color, or their ethnic background are still a rarity?

American culture is not a single monolithic culture where everybody has to think, talk, and act the same. It is a rich, evolving culture where communities and individuals do not stay the same. America is a multicultural society, with many traditions clashing at times and at other times blending in a rich new synthesis. A commuter might start his day in a mainly Spanish-speaking Texas country town and drive through white suburbs to a predominantly black downtown, interspersed with areas with shop signs in Chinese or Vietnamese. Many Americans have always been bilingual—using another language or a down-home dialect in their families or neighborhoods, in addition to the standard English of school and office.

Americans do not all have names like Harriman or Saltonstall. The *Mayflower*, bringing dissident English Puritans to New England, was a small boat. Many Americans are descended from Irish peasants driven off their land by famine, from orthodox Jews, or from freed slaves. Others are descended from displaced persons—Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians—uprooted by Hitler's war machine. Many Americans trace their ancestry to the refugees from failed revolutions or lost wars (Germany in 1848; Hungary in the first stirrings of revolt against Stalinism; Vietnam). Many (perhaps two million or more) trace their ancestry at least in part to Native Americans living on the fringes of the white society that drove them from

their land. Many Americans have Mexican ancestors who lived in the Southwest before the Americanos came or who came across the border in search of work. Other Americans are descended from Puerto Ricans, or from Chinese laborers who built the railroads of the West, or from Japanese families who were taken to relocation camps in the desert during World War II.

As our country approaches the twenty-first century, Americans face fateful questions: Are the forces that drive us apart becoming stronger? Will racial strife turn our cities into armed camps? Are class distinctions—layers of wealth and privilege—resurfacing that immigrants from traditional societies thought they had left behind? Will the widening gulf between the rich and the poor make us “two nations”? Or can we achieve a richer new synthesis? What would it take to achieve a true pluralism? Can we envision a pluralistic society that values the contributions of many cultural strands, with people of different ties and backgrounds respecting and learning from one another?

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dolores laGuardia teaches at the University of San Francisco, where she developed a humanities sequence titled "American Voices: Ourselves and Each Other," with courses focused on African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, religious minorities, and alternative lifestyles. She has served as the writing specialist for a large federal grant designed to improve writing instruction at the community college level and has done curriculum work for a number of San Francisco Bay Area institutions. She has conducted workshops on computer education at the prestigious Troitsk Institute outside Moscow. She is coauthor with Hans Guth of *American Visions: Multicultural Literature for Writers* (1995) and of *Issues across the Curriculum* (1997).

Hans P. Guth (Santa Clara University) has worked with writing teachers and spoken at professional meetings in most of the fifty states. He has spoken on redefining the canon and using multicultural materials at national and regional conferences. He is coauthor of *Discovering Literature* (second edition, Prentice Hall, 1997) and of *You the Writer* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997) and is the author of numerous other composition texts. He was codirector and program chair of the annual Young Rhetoricians' Conference in Monterey from 1984 to 1994 and has recently organized workshops at Oxford and at Heidelberg University.

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