

# Dangerous times demand courageous voices. Bob Avakian is such a voice.

**B**ob Avakian combines an unsparing critique of the history and current direction of American society with a sweeping view of world history and the potential for humanity. He has brought forth a fresh, relevant and compelling approach to Marxism, deeply analyzing the history of the Communist movement and the socialist revolutions and upholds their achievements. At the same time, he honestly confronts and criticizes what he views as their shortcomings, opening up new paths of inquiry in the process and initiating dialogue with people who hold a wide range of views. He's addressing the burning problems before society from a unique vantage point, and we consider his revolutionary analysis and solutions to be an important and necessary part of the ferment and discourse required in this society and the world in this dark time. While those of us signing this statement do not necessarily agree with all of his views, we have come away from encounters with Avakian provoked and enriched in our own thinking, and we invite others to hear and engage that voice.

**B**ob Avakian is also the leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA; as such he not only theorizes about the world, but plays a special role in organizing and leading that change. He's been called a "long-distance runner in the freedom struggle against imperialism, racism and capitalism" and he draws on deep connections and engagement with people from all walks of life and all corners of the earth. All this informs and animates his work.

**U**nfortunately, such voices in this country are, and have been, all too frequently the objects of suppression and repression. This repressive edge in American society has been particularly brought to bear against those who advocate revolution and especially those who do so effectively. Surveillance, harassment, suppression, political trials, prison terms, exile and even assassination have been the fates of many revolutionaries throughout U.S. history and many of those measures have, in fact, been visited upon Avakian. The current administration has instituted serious repressive measures like the Patriot Act, instituted the use of preventive detention and isolation of those whom the president deems to be "terrorist," and has created a climate where, for example, radical or even liberal professors find their reputations and even their livelihoods under assault; all this makes the ability of Bob Avakian to freely function even more of a concern. The statement by the German pastor Martin Niemoller – which begins, "First they came for the communists, and I did nothing because I was not a communist" and which goes on to describe how Niemoller did nothing while Hitler peeled away the victims of the Nazi regime one at a time, until there was no one left to defend Niemoller when his time came – sounds with particular resonance today.

**T**hus, in addition to calling on people to engage with the thoughts of Bob Avakian, and bring them into what needs to be a rich and diverse dialogue, we are also serving notice to this government that we intend to defend his right to freely advocate and organize for his views, and to engage broadly with people about those views.

**Initial list of signatories:** Charles Aikens, journalist, *Oaktown News*,\* / Jaafar Aksikas, Prof., Cultural Studies, Columbia College\*, / Aladdin, actor, comedian / Bob Anderson, Prof., College of New Mexico\* / Rafael C. Angulo, Assoc. Clinical Field Faculty, USC\* / Bernardo Attias, Prof., CA State Univ., Northridge\* / Fr. Luis Barrios, John Jay College\* / David Best, artist / Robert Bloom, attorney / Herb Boyd, author, journalist / Anne Bray, artist / Michael E. Brown, Prof. of Sociology, Northeastern Univ.\* / Leroy Bryant, Sr., Prof. and Chmn. Emeritus, History, Philosophy, Political Science, African-American Studies, Chicago State Univ.\* / Kevin Burgess, Black Vietnam Vet / Rev. 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## Engage! A Committee to Project and Protect the Voice of Bob Avakian

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