Rebel Speak: A Justice Movement Mixtape

Bryonn Rolly Bain
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Rebel Speak records searing, insightful dialogues between Bryonn Rolly Bain and activists dedicated to police abolition and fighting mass incarceration.

Bain speaks with activists at all stages of their careers, from relative newcomers like Jennifer Claypool and Wendy Staggs, to legendary veterans like Dolores Huerta and Harry Belafonte. Each discusses the work they have done; some also describe their own horrific experiences with America’s criminal (in)justice system, which drove them to become activists. The book ends on a personal note: Bain interviews his brother Cheyenne about his unjust imprisonment and plans for rebuilding his life.

Many dialogues suggest means of ensuring that no one else has to suffer behind bars. They extol the power of education, the arts, and political activism, both to improve the lives of those affected by incarceration and to dismantle the prison industrial complex as we know it. Raw, emotional testimonies speak to the topics’ urgency—including the trauma that will continue to befall others if ordinary citizens do not push those in power to abandon cruel, oppressive systems.

Coming at a time when those who benefit from white supremacy are attacking critical race theory and Black perspectives generally, Rebel Speak is an impassioned addition to conversations about how America was designed to harm Black citizens—and how it continues to do so.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2022)

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