

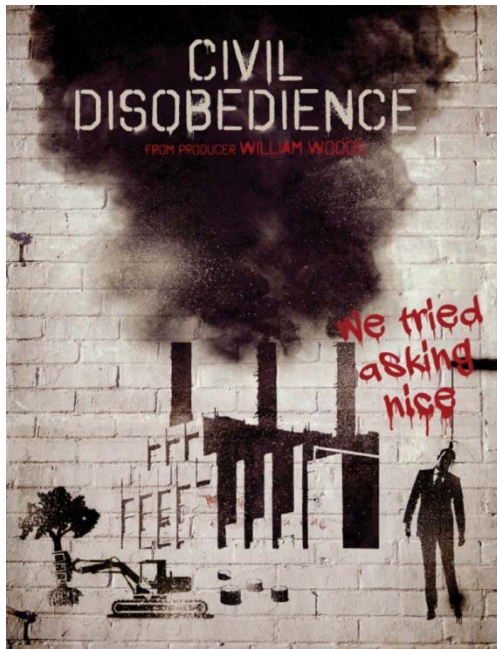
# HENRY DAVID THOREAU AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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- American essayist, poet, and practical philosopher, Henry David Thoreau was a New England Transcendentalist
- Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817, in Concord, Massachusetts. He began writing nature poetry in the 1840s, with poet Ralph Waldo Emerson as a mentor and friend. In 1845 he began his famous two-year stay on Walden Pond, which he wrote about in his master work, *Walden*. He also became known for his beliefs in Transcendentalism and civil disobedience, and was a dedicated abolitionist.

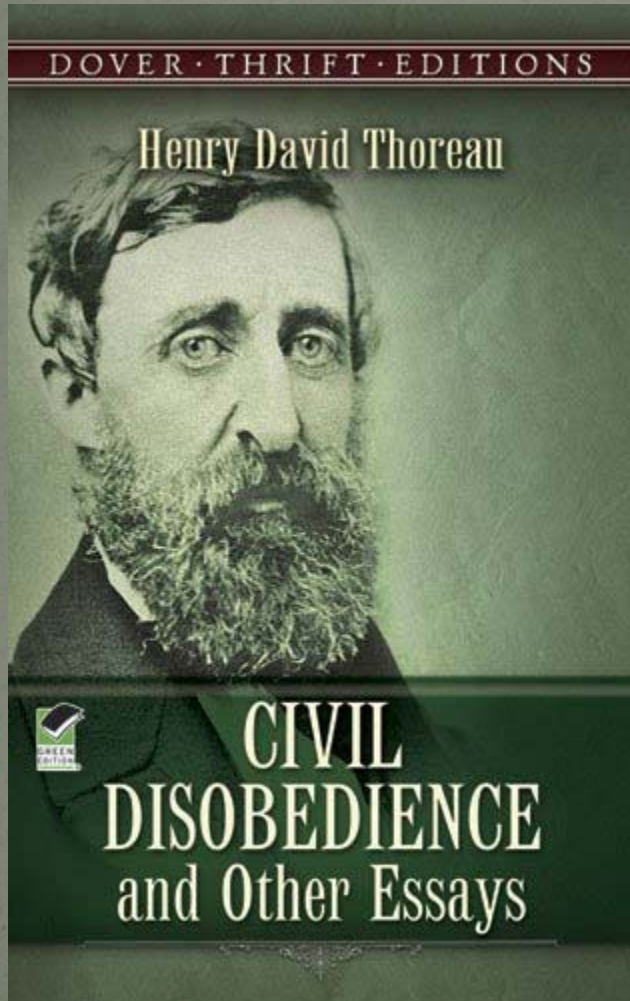


# CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

## MAIN POINTS

Rather than wait for reformers or elected representatives to make changes, citizens should make changes themselves. All people who want an end to slavery, for instance, should "at once ... withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government." This disobedience is not only their right but their responsibility. He reverses traditional notions of citizenship and patriotism. Those who disobey unjust laws, he thinks, are the real "patriots" who "serve the State with their consciences." By contrast, soldiers and legislators serve the State only with their bodies.

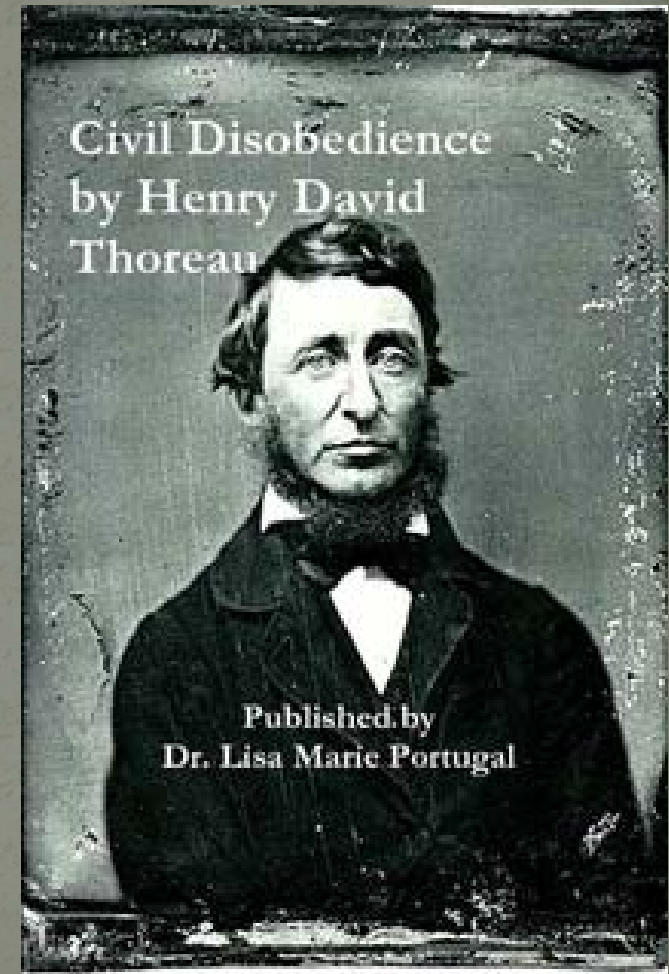
# Law Versus Conscience



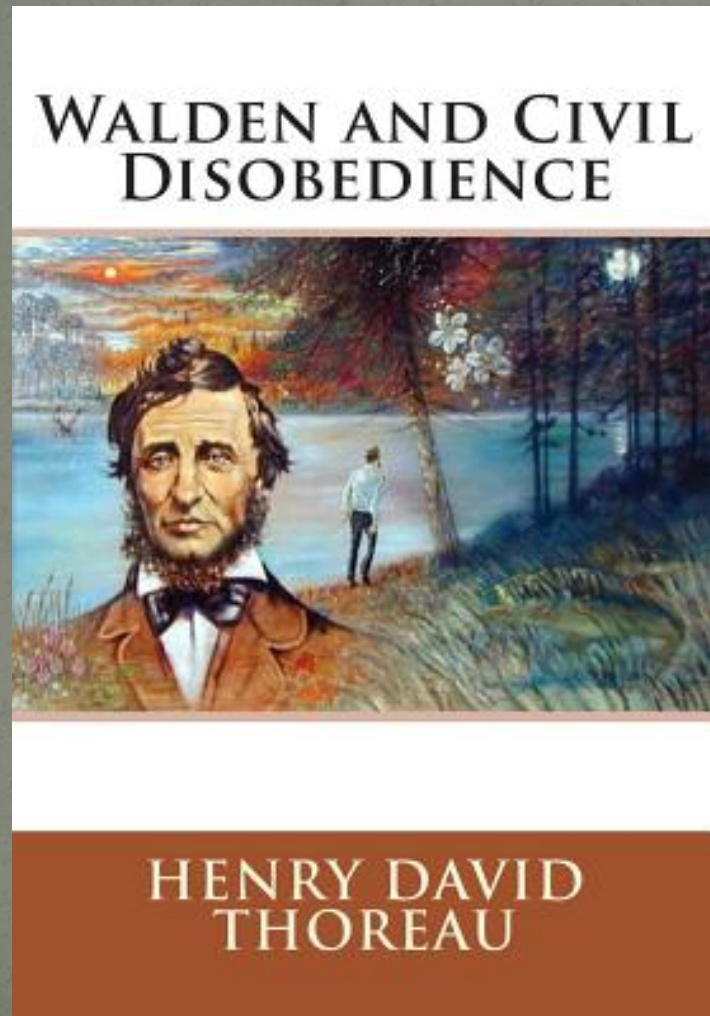
- When law and conscience conflict, Thoreau believes no one should question which to choose. A society in which citizens are driven by their inner moral compasses will be a better place for everyone.
- Laws can change according to the interests of the group in power, a group chosen because it is "physically the strongest."
- Legislators are neither perfect nor considerate of their constituents' best interests. For example, Daniel Webster defends slavery because it is permitted in the Constitution, not because it serves the needs of the people.
- Thoreau has faith that individual citizens can determine the right thing to do; they simply need the courage to do it.

# State Abuse of Power

- Thoreau offers several examples of State-sanctioned violence. Wars lead soldiers to their deaths, make men act against their own consciences, and cripple the invading nation. Enslaved people comprise one sixth of the American population, and the rest allow slavery to continue for the sake of "commerce and agriculture." Anyone who fights for justice is imprisoned and fined. The State is described as a "machine" that values "expediency" or efficiency above all. [
- But Thoreau does not place all the responsibility for immorality with the powerful.
- The government can abuse power only with the approval of the governed: "It can have no pure right over my person or property but what I concede to it." He challenges readers to think the same way.



# The Ideal Government



- According to Thoreau, an ideal governing body honors individual desires and needs and promotes justice .

He quotes Confucius as saying, "Poverty and misery are subjects of shame" in a reasonable government: good leadership cares for its citizens.

# TYPES OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

- Illegal boycotts,
- Refusals to pay taxes,
- Draft dodging,
- Distributed denial-of-service attacks,
- Sit-ins

# CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE-GOOD OR BAD

Civil disobedience is justifiable but dangerous. It is justifiable, where circumstances warrant, by the first principles of the American republic and of free, constitutional government.

It is dangerous in that it poses a threat to the rule of law.



# EXAMPLES OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

- Rosa Parks Bus Boycott-1955
- Mohandas Gandhi's Salt March-1930
- The March For Jobs And Freedom-1963
- The Singing Revolution-1986
- Henry David Thoreau's Tax Delinquency-mid 1800
- Tiananmen Square Protest