

THE SOUND OF HISTORY



LYRICS BY
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& ZEEK BURSE**

ARPHILLY
**WHAT
NOW**
2026

ZEEK BURSE

COMMON SENSE

Inspired by Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense”



Intro

A Whisper moving through the room
A question louder than a drum

Verse 1

...They say a crown is heaven-sent
A power none should disobey.
But reason walks another road.
And truth is hard to turn away
How can an island rule a world
So distant from it’s shore
A continent begins to ask
What kings are really for.....

Hook

Common Sense is rising now.
Hear it moving through the crowd
Not a shout but something clear
Something saying... freedom’s near
(Mmmmmmmm)

Verse 2

They told us law was made to guide
Because the hearts of men can stray..
But if the hand that writes the law
Becomes the chain we wear each day
Then every page begins to burn
With questions long ignored....
And quiet minds begin to turn.
Against the written word.

Hook

Common Sense is rising now.
Hear it moving through the crowd
Not a shout but something clear
Something saying... freedom’s near

Bridge

The cause once born belongs to all
Not just the few who stand above.
If freedom speaks for human kind...
Then fear can never rule with love.

Hook

Common Sense is rising now.
Hear it moving through the crowd
Not a shout but something clear
Something saying... freedom’s near

ZEEK BURSE

DECLARATION

Inspired by “United States of American’s Declaration of Independence”



Spoken

Write it down
Verse
No hesitation
No second glance
Ink hits paper
Heavy hand
You took without
You never gave
Spoke for me
But kept me chained

Hook

We the people
Say it clear
No more silence
No more fear
We the people
Draw the line
What was yours
Is no longer mine

Verse

Made your rules
Without my voice
Called it order
Took my choice
Unequal weight
Unequal ground
Now I see
It breaking down

Hook

We the people
Say it clear
No more silence
No more fear
We the people
Draw the line
What was yours
Is no longer mine

[Musical Interlude]

Hook

We the people
Stand apart
Different voice
Different heart
We the people
Let it stand
Written now
By our hand

ZEEK BURSE DOUGLAS

Inspired by Lemuel Haynes “Liberty Further Extended:
Or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-Keeping”

Verse

Flags in the air, colors high
Songs of freedom fill the sky
But just beyond the crowded street
Another truth refuses sleep
Chains don’t break from what you say
They rust slow in hidden places
While you celebrate the sound
Some are buried in its echo

Hook

What is freedom — if it’s not for all?
What is glory — if someone still falls?
What are songs — if they hide the truth?
What is liberty — without the proof?

Verse

You light the sky, you raise the glass
But never question what has passed
A promise made, but not fulfilled
A wound still open, never healed
This is not a distant past
This is something built to last
Every cheer, every flame
Still connected to the same

Break (spoken)

No music
Just drums
Breathe

Bridge (spoken)

You ask me to celebrate
But what I am, is still denied

Hook

What is freedom — say it clear
If it disappears right here
What is truth — if it divides
Who can stand and who must hide
If this nation claims its name
Let it answer to the flame
Not in word — but what is done
Until freedom reaches everyone

ZEEK BURSE INCARCERATED KING

Inspired by Martin Luther King’s Birmingham Jail Letter

Verse

Walls around me hold their ground
But they cannot hold this sound
Ink moves slow across the page
Time is measured, not in rage
You say “wait” but time has shown
Waiting builds a deeper wrong
Justice late is justice gone
And silence writes it into stone

Prehook

This is not disorder (mmmm)
This is not unrest

Hook

There is no peace where wrong is kept
No rest where truth is left
You cannot ask a soul to wait
Outside a closed and guarded gate
What is right will not delay
It does not bend, it does not sway
If justice lives, it must be now
Not promised later, not somehow

Verse

You call for calm, for steady hands
But calm has never freed a man
Tension is the cost of change
It pulls the truth into the frame
Not destruction — but reveal
Making hidden wounds be seen
What you fear is not the break
But what the break will make you face

Break (spoken)

A cage doesn’t change a bird’s nature to fly.
Bars don’t change a man’s nature to be free.

Bridge

I will not hate
I will not run
But I will stand
Until it’s done

Hook

There is no peace where wrong is kept
No rest where truth is left
If justice speaks, it speaks in time
Not buried under quiet lies
What is right will rise again
Through every wall, through every pen
And what is written here tonight
Will echo far beyond this night

ZEEK BURSE

LIBERTY FURTHER EXTENDED

Inspired by Lemuel Haynes “Liberty Further Extended:
Or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-Keeping”



Intro

You said it clear
Verse
You said we're equal
Said it twice
Under one sky
Same breath, same life
But something don't land
When I hear that line
If it's really for all
Why don't it reach mine?

Prehook

Say it louder
Make it true
If it's freedom
Let it move

Hook

Where is freedom?
Where is freedom?
You said it lives here (mmmmm)
I don't see it

Verse

You drew the borders
Called it fair
Wrote it down
Like I was there
If it's for all
Then why the line?
If it's really yours
Why ain't it mine?

Prehook

Say it louder
Make it true
If it's freedom
Let it move

Hook

Where is freedom?
Where is freedom?
You said it lives here
Still don't see it

Bridge

Maybe I heard you wrong
Maybe I read it fast
Maybe the truth you wrote
Was never built to last
Say it again
Let it be clear
If it was ever here
Where is freedom?
Where is freedom?
You said it lives here
Never was here

ZEEK BURSE

WHAT NOW



Intro

We wrote it down in ink and flame
Signed our fears beside our names

Verse

Pages turn but the story stays
Different faces, familiar days
We said “freedom” in borrowed light
Still learning how to hold it right
Some stood tall, some fell behind
Some drew borders across the line
If this dream was a spark in doubt
We lit the match — so what now?

Hook

What now?
When the drums die down
What now?
When the walls come down
What now?
When the truth gets loud
What now?
If we wrote it once before
Can we mean it more?
What now?

Bridge

We can’t inherit courage
We have to choose it
Can’t just quote the words
We have to use it
Every promise costs something
Every change leaves scars
Revolution isn’t finished
It’s wherever we are
If we stand together
Not just when it’s loud
If we hold the mirror up
Instead of pointing out

Hook

What now?
When we rise as one
What now?
When the work’s not done
What now?
When the past still hums
What now?
If we wrote it once before
Can we mean it more?

Hook

What now? (What Now?)
What now? Ohhh (What now)
What now? Ohhh (What now)
What now? Ohhh
What now?
When we choose to see
What now?
Who we’re meant to be
What now?
If we stand as we
What now?
If we wrote it once before
We can write it more
What now?

ZEEK BURSE

ZEEK'S LETTER



Verse

We came this far with open hands
Through broken lines and shifting plans
We held a dream we couldn't prove
But kept it breathing as we moved
Some days it felt just out of reach
Some truths too heavy just to speak
But still we wrote, still we tried
To leave something behind
Not complete
Not undone

Hook

If freedom lives, it lives in you
In what you build, in what you choose
Not in the words we left behind
But what you carry through your time
If hope remains, it's not by chance
It grows in action, not in plans
And every step you choose to take
Becomes the future we could make

Verse

You'll hear our names, you'll read our lines
You'll question how we drew the lines
Some things we got, some things we missed
That's just the weight of all of this
So take the parts that still hold true
And leave behind what doesn't move
The story isn't ours to end
It's yours to understand

Interlude

No answers
Just a path

Bridge

What you inherit isn't fixed
It shifts with every choice you give

FINAL HOOK — fullest moment

If freedom lives, it lives in you
In what you build, in what you choose
Not in the past we tried to frame
But how you carry on the name
If hope remains, then let it grow
Through every doubt you come to know
And every step you choose to take
Becomes the future you will make

Closing

So if you're reading this tonight
The page is yours now... write.....write

LAURIN TALESE

ONA SPEAKS

Inspired by The Life and Testimony of Ona Judge

I left my home.
I left my kin.
I didn't know. How it would end.

It wasn't easy. Nothing was easy
I had to go. I had to flee.

The road was lonely.
Barely survived.
Oh how I've moaned.
Oh how I've cried

The Lord had mercy
He sent me friends
For it's upon them my life depended.

I have known love.
I have met grief.
In fact right now,
it sits with me.

But I am certain
It was all worth it.
Though I have lost,
I am now free.

Spent my life running,
running and hiding.
Never knew rest,
never knew peace.

But through this journey
God in three persons
Trust I Been, made a child of God,
By the means.

I trust been made a child of God
by the means.

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LAURIN TALESE

LOOK!

Inspired by the Audacity of Elizabeth Freeman



A.

Look! Look long, and sit with what you see.
Look! It's the last scar, that you'll ever put on me.
Look! I'm not ashamed. This is your depravity.
Look! I won't hide it, cause it don't belong to me.

B.

You're a liar. You pretend.
That your heart is, full of goodness,
but who are you, when no one's lookin?

A.

Look! At all that I've been able to do.
Look! At how I've thrived ever since I left you.
Look! Freedom is so sweet and you'll never get to taste.
Look! At you living in the cage that you made.

LAURIN TALESE

WHAT'S BETTER

Inspired by the London Coffee House, My Ancestors,
and the luxury of Of whimsy.



Verse 1

What's better than a new place
With no place to be

What's better than being open
To the possibilities

What's better than a café
Full of locals starting their day

Speaking French or Portuguese
or Japanese or Swahili

Chorus

Let's play, let's play
It's like dreaming wide awake
When I think it, I move my feet and
I'm wherever my whims take me

Verse 2

I've landed in Lamu and
An old man who's the captain

Takes my bag and loads it on the
Dhow and then he beckons me
I take his hand and my toes feel the
Warm wooden vessel floor

Then we're sailing to an old town
That I can't wait to explore

Chorus

Let's play, let's play
It's like dreaming wide awake
When I think it, I move my feet and
I'm wherever my whims take me

Verse 3

I'm in Philly in Old City
When time collapses in
A bell rings like a welcome
Now the bidding can begin

Small souls cry for their mothers
In a language no one hears
And the man with all the numbers
Thanks the crowd and disappears

Chorus 3

I pray and pray
God remove me from this place
Take me home now, I want to go now
Take me back from whence I came

Verse 4

I'm sitting with my latte
In the cool morning air
The world has just kept moving
Like I never left my chair

I soak up all the sunshine
And breathe the morning in
I am grateful for this moment
And the luxury of whim

Final Chorus

Let's play, let's play
We are living what they prayed
Let our spirits breathe unbound
May the names we learn resound

LAURIN TALESE

POWDER BOY

Inspired by the Life of James Forten and Black Legacy



Verse 1

I built these sails with my two hands
I know the sea just as well as I know land
Barely fourteen, baptized by war
I was the one that the gunner shouted for.

Chorus

Powder boy...
They called me
Powder Boy
Keep Running
Powder boy
We need more
Powder boy
Hurry.

Verse 2

I built this life brick by brick
Fired the clay in a Pyrex dish.
Funny how “one last time” turns into a life.
This is the name that followed me inside

Chorus

Powder boy...
They called me
Powder Boy
Keep Running
Powder boy
We need more
Powder boy
Hurry.

Bridge

Two men two lives.
Wrote letters across time
To each other
From a cell
One in prison
The other one held captive.

On a ship.
With time to
Envision
What a second chance
At life
Would look like
When we’d get it.

Verse 3

So we both took
That long walk home
Other than with our thoughts
Each journey was our own.

We leave behind
More than what confined us
We leave the light on
For the ones who survive us.

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