



33 Democrats

Oil painting by
Catarina Chietti

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Texts:

Franz Mechsner & Catarina Chietti

Photos of the painting "33 Democrats":

Catarina Chietti & Christine Boock

Photo of the fresco "The School of Athens" (Raphael):

PD-Art (free to use, from Wikimedia Commons)

Film about the painting "33 Democrats":

Christine Boock; www.youtube.com/watch?v=63RrQZvzNoA

Website of the artist (also with further works):

<https://catarina-chietti.de/>



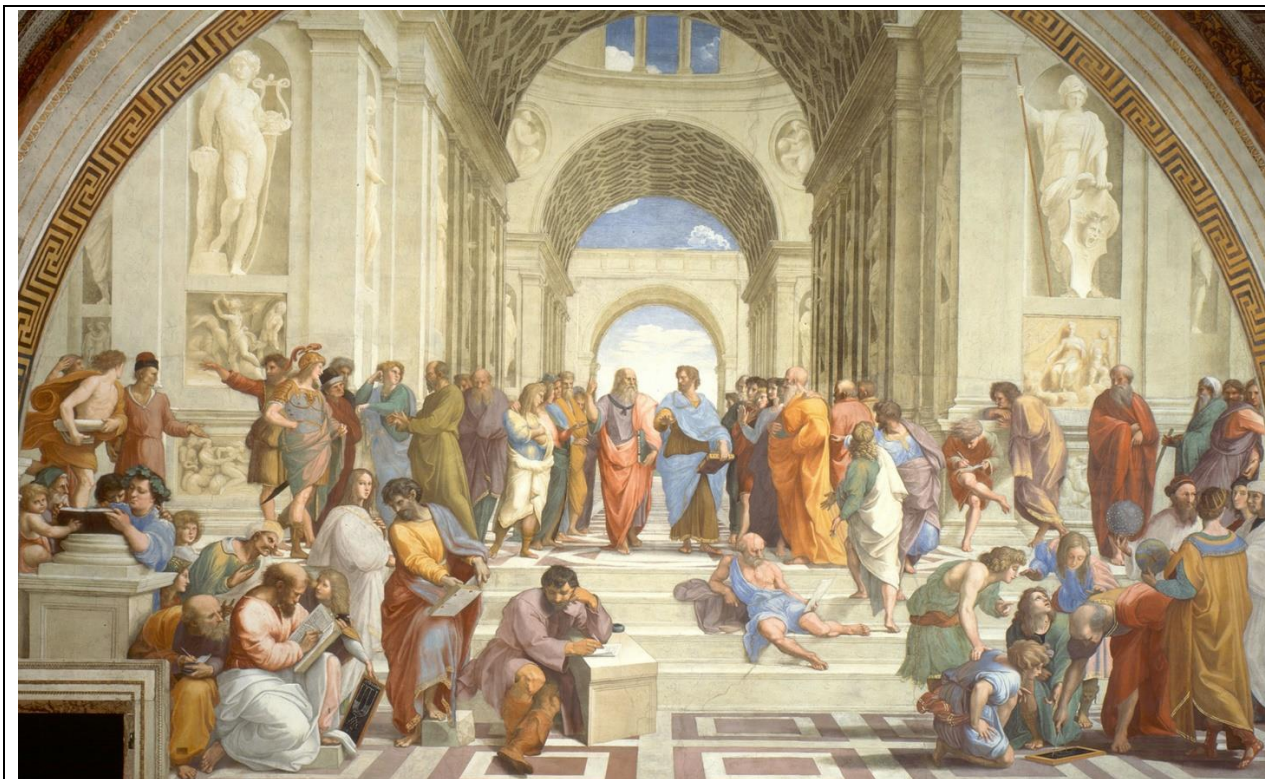
33 Democrats (Catarina Chietti)



Catarina Chietti

"33 Democrats", a large-format oil painting (2024; 2.00 x 1.60 m²) by Catarina Chietti shows important people from the past and present who have made and continue to make outstanding contributions to the development and preservation of democracy, human rights and peace: Freedom fighters, visionary philosophers, scientists, humanitarian role models, courageous journalists. The painting is inspired by Raphael's Renaissance fresco "The School of Athens" (7.70 x 5.50 m², painted between 1508 and

1511), showing famous philosophers and scientists of antiquity in a fantasy architecture. As a modern commentary on Raphael's creation, Catarina Chietti's work "33 Democrats" celebrates not only intellectual brilliance, but also active, courageous commitment. Her painting invites us to reflect on our own possibilities to promote and shape democracy, human rights and peace. This booklet presents individual portraits of the people depicted with explanatory texts.



The School of Athens (excerpt)
(Raphael of Urbino)

Raphael's fresco "The School of Athens" (painted 1508-1511) is located in the Vatican Palace in Rome. Ancient philosophers and scientists are gathered here, engrossed in thought and discussion. Plato and Aristotle are placed in the center as the main figures, in a discussion. Plato points to the heavens, seeing the source of knowledge and wisdom

in the realm of eternal ideas. Aristotle points to the world, as knowledge is primarily based on observation and experience. Only a few of the other figures can be identified with certainty. The fresco can be read as a celebration of intellectual freedom, free research and discussion, against authoritarianism, for diversity and mutual respect.



Idea and process



Raphael's famous Renaissance fresco brings together men of antiquity for whose creative and ingenious thoughts and theories we can still be

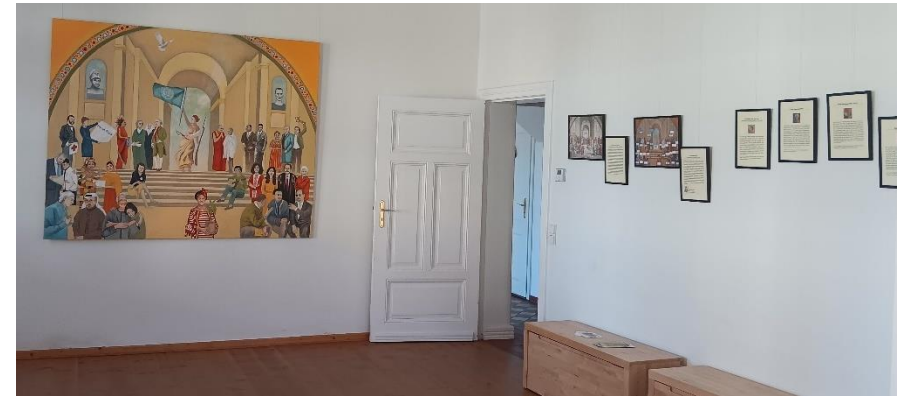
grateful today. However, the absence of women here initially motivated Catarina Chietti to respond to Raphael by painting a picture of important women whose impulses had a positive and beneficial influence on scientific and social developments. This work hung in the Frauenmuseum Bonn for a year and is now being shown in other museums. Catarina Chietti's new painting "33 Democrats" follows on from this picture, it is its twin, so to speak. It depicts important people from the past and present who have rendered and continue to render outstanding services to the development and preservation of democracy, human rights and peace: Freedom fighters, visionary philosophers, politicians, humanitarian role models, courageous journalists.



The predecessor painting "33 Women" (2023)

As in her previous picture, the allegory of freedom from the French Revolution stands in the middle. After extensive research into the history and present of democracy, Catarina Chietti took a long time to decide which exemplary figures should ultimately be depicted. The painter was also keen to bring conversation and encounters into the

picture. Like the philosophers and researchers in Raphael's fresco, the democrats are arranged in groups from the fields of politics, philosophy, justice, journalism, civic activism and the struggle for freedom. These people, with their creativity, courage and willingness to make sacrifices, exemplify far-sighted humane imagination and personal commitment, the tremendous achievements and accomplishments for freedom, democracy and human rights.



First solo exhibition "33 Democrats" at the Alte Schule Wiesenburg (June 2024). The front wall presents the main picture. The individual portraits of the people depicted hang on the other walls with explanatory texts.



33 Democrats:
Who is who?



Freedom leads the people

(Painting by Eugène Delacroix, 1798–1863)

As an allegory of freedom, equality and fraternity, the woman in the 3.25 x 2.60 m² oil painting of a barricade battle symbolizes the ideals of the French Revolution. She is the oversized main figure in the work painted by Eugène Delacroix in 1830, which is now on display in the Louvre in Paris. To note, the painting was not prompted by the French Revolution of 1789, but by the so-called July Revolution of 1830. Within just three days (July 27 to 29, 1830), the rebels succeeded in forcing King Charles X, who had violated the freedoms of 1789, to abdicate. Delacroix witnessed the fighting but did not take part himself.

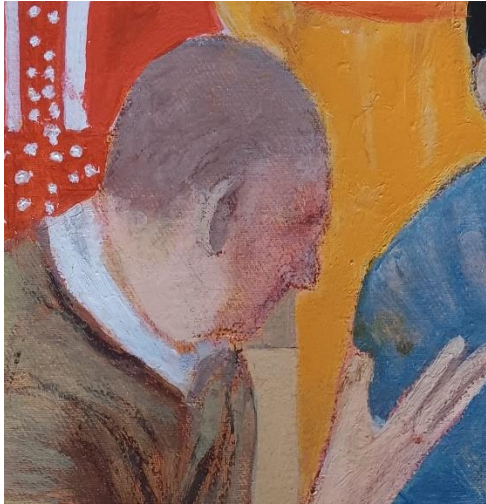
"...although I may not have fought for my country, at least I will have painted for it. It has restored my good mind." (Eugène Delacroix)



Julian Assange (*1971)

Australian Julian Paul Assange founded the online platform WikiLeaks in 2006. It published secret government and military documents that revealed US corruption, war crimes and human rights violations. The "Collateral Murder" videos show US soldiers killing civilians in Iraq. Afghanistan war logs, Iraq war logs and US diplomatic dispatches reveal explosive details. From 2012, he spent 7 years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. He was arrested by British authorities in 2019 and has been fighting extradition to the USA ever since. In June 2024, he reached an agreement with the US justice system: he pleaded guilty, was sentenced to the time he had already spent in prison and then traveled to Australia as a free man.

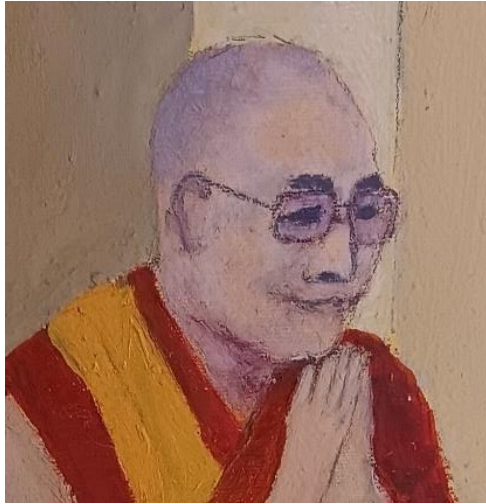
"If journalism is good, then it is naturally controversial." (Julian Assange)



Peter Benenson (1921-2005)

The British lawyer and Labour politician Peter Benenson (originally Peter James Henry Solomon) campaigned for human rights worldwide. In 1961, he published an article about political prisoners, which led to the founding of Amnesty International. The organization campaigns for the release of political prisoners, fair trials and the abolition of the death penalty. Benenson's vision and leadership were instrumental in making Amnesty International one of the most influential human rights organizations in the world, mobilizing millions of people to stand up for the dignity and freedom of all.

"It is better to light a light than to complain about the darkness." (Peter Benenson)



Dalai Lama (*1935)

The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was appointed spiritual leader of Tibet as a child as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama and was educated in the Potala Palace in Lhasa, particularly in Buddhist philosophy. After the invasion of China in 1950, he took over the political leadership of Tibet at the age of 15. In 1959, he fled to India and founded a government in exile there. He campaigned non-violently for an autonomous Tibet and for Tibetan culture. In 2011, he renounced his political offices in favor of democratic development. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, he remains a spiritual teacher who promotes humanity, peace and interreligious dialog.

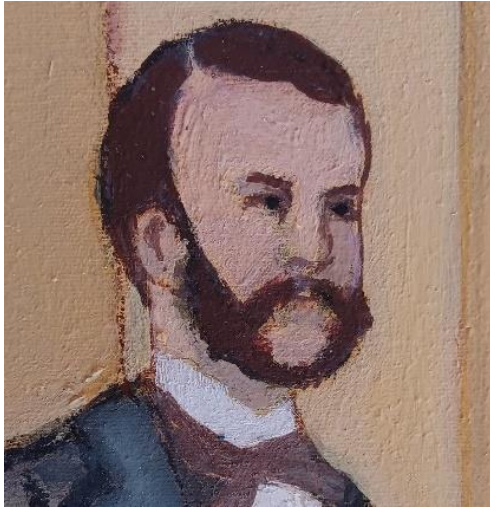
"Love and compassion are the foundations for world peace - at all levels." (Dalai Lama)



Carla Del Ponte (*1947)

Swiss lawyer Carla Del Ponte brought mafia bosses and war criminals to justice, including from 1999 to 2007 as chief prosecutor of the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague for the former Yugoslavia. It was proven that genocide had taken place in Srebrenica. Many of those responsible were convicted. In her fight for justice, she was exposed to obstacles, a lack of support and dangers to her life. During a visit to Palermo, for example, she narrowly escaped a bomb attack. From 2008 to 2011, Carla del Ponte was the Swiss ambassador to Argentina.

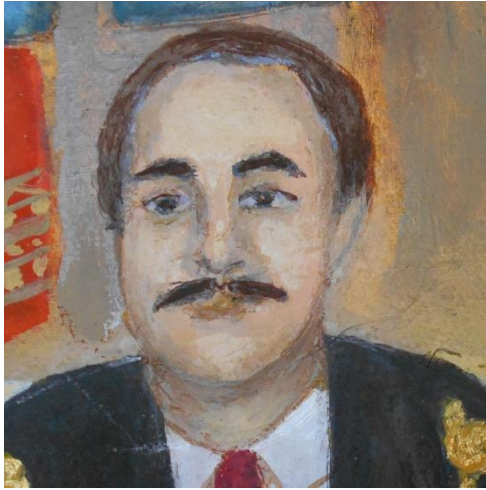
"You always try to understand the perpetrators. Anyone who does something wrong is allowed to say how broken their childhood was ... I never understood that. These guys are adults now and have to answer for their actions." (Carla Del Ponte)



Henry Dunant (1828–1910)

The Swiss businessman Jean Henri ("Henry") Dunant became involved in helping the needy at an early age. After seeing the battlefield of Solferino with countless untreated wounded and dying, he wrote a book about these atrocities in 1862. This inspired the founding of the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention. The Red Cross was initially intended to provide impartial aid for victims of war and disasters. It is now also active in civilian medical aid. Dunant advocated humanitarian principles, including the neutrality of medical and aid organizations in conflicts. For his commitment, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1901 together with the pacifist Frédéric Passy.

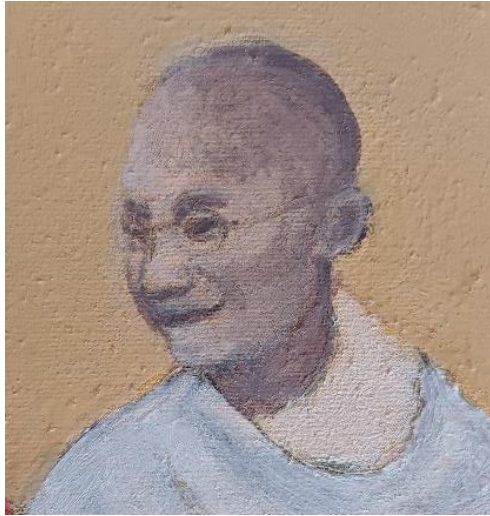
"Help without asking whom" (Henry Dunant)



Giovanni Falcone (1939–1992)

The Italian judge and investigator Giovanni Falcone, born and raised in Palermo, Sicily, dedicated his life to the legal fight against the Mafia. He achieved unusual successes with innovative investigative methods. In the "Maxi trial" of 1986/87 with several hundred defendants, he was able to convict many of them as mafiosi. Living and working in highly secure premises, he was considered the best protected person in Italy. Nevertheless, he was killed in 1992 in a bomb attack on his car together with his wife Francesca Morvillo and three bodyguards near Palermo.

*"It is not so important whether you are more or less afraid, but that you learn not to let it control you."
(Giovanni Falcone)*



Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, born in India, initially worked as a lawyer in South Africa, where he campaigned against discrimination against Indians. Back in India, he became a campaigner against British colonial rule. Gandhi developed the philosophy of non-violent civil disobedience. He was soon called "Mahatma", "great soul". Actions such as the 1930 salt march against the British salt monopoly challenged the colonial power. Peaceful coexistence between Hindus and Muslims was important to him, as were social reforms. India became free in 1947, but was divided to Gandhi's pain. A Hindu nationalist extremist shot him dead on his way to communal prayer.

"Be the change you wish to see in this world." (Mahatma Gandhi)



Leymah Gbowee (*1972)

Leymah Roberta Gbowee is a peace activist from Liberia who played a decisive role in ending the second civil war in her country. In 2002, she founded the "Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace", a broad coalition of Liberian women against the cruel war. An iconic moment: during talks between the opposing parties, Leymah Gbowee threatened to undress in front of the men - which was seen as a curse - if the negotiations failed. Together with other non-violent actions by the movement, this contributed significantly to the end of the war. Leymah Gbowee was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 together with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkul Karman.

"The women in Liberia were ready to do anything to end the war." (Leymah Gbowee)



Mikhail Gorbachev (1931–2022)

Mikhail Gorbachev grew up in a Russian farming family and studied law and agricultural sciences. As General Secretary of the CPSU since 1985, he introduced perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (political openness) to reform the stagnating Soviet Union. His policy of détente made German reunification possible in 1990 and helped to end the Cold War. He had not intended for the Eastern Bloc to disintegrate. This and economic difficulties led to increasing dissatisfaction in his own country. The 1990 Nobel Peace Prize recognized Gorbachev's efforts for disarmament and peace. His role in a military coup in Lithuania shortly afterwards is unclear.

"We need democracy as much as we need air to breathe." (Mikhail Gorbachev)



Nikolai F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872)

As a clergyman, historian, politician, poet and philosopher, the Dane Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig was active in many areas of life reform. In the course of his life, he became increasingly liberal-minded and supported democratic efforts, including working on the first Danish constitution of 1849. Guided by his idea of an alternative "school of life" and the free communal "living word", he founded folk high schools, inspired free elementary school as well as schools for life education, culture, community and democratic education, in which young adults live together with teachers for a few months and develop the skills to live together in conversation. Grundtvig's ideas still shape education today, particularly in Scandinavian countries, but also have an impact worldwide.

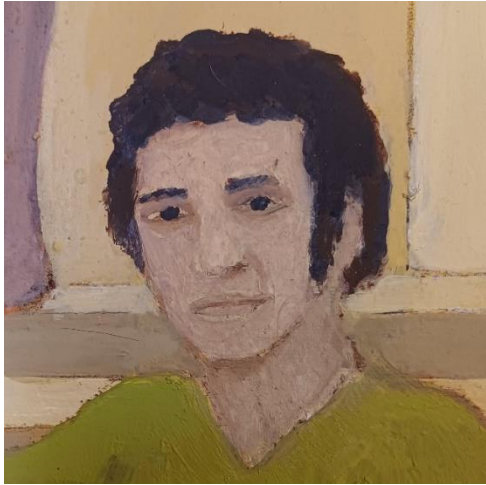
"Man first and then Christian." (N.F.S. Grundtvig)



Iroquois

The "Great Law of Peace" is the complex democratic statute of a centuries-old confederation of North American Iroquois nations (Iroquois League), with rights for men and women. Architects of the US Constitution such as Benjamin Franklin and James Madison studied the Iroquois League and this statute and probably incorporated ideas from it. For example, the provisions on individual freedom, the federal structure, representative democracy and the separation of powers are said to have been inspired by the Iroquois. In 1988, the US Senate recognized the influence of the Iroquois League and its constitution on the US Constitution.

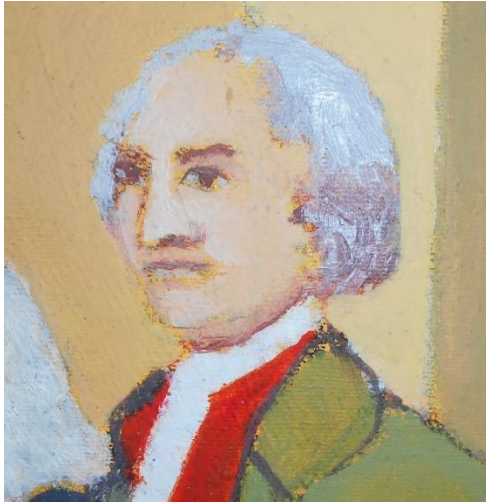
"If a particularly important matter ... concerns the entirety of the nations and threatens great harm, then the deputies of the Confederation must submit the matter to the decision of their people" (Great Law of Peace)



Victor Jara (1932-1973)

Victor Jara was a Chilean singer, theater director and political activist who became an icon of Latin American song and resistance against the dictatorial Pinochet regime. His songs for guitar embodied his love of nature and people, his longing for social justice and democracy. He collected and researched Chilean folklore. He supported the elected socialist president Salvador Allende. After the military coup of 1973, Pinochet's troops captured him, tortured him in the stadium in Santiago and finally murdered him. The brutal dictatorship only ended in 1990. Since 2003, the stadium in Santiago has been called Estadio Víctor Jara.

*"Lords of misery / The star of hope / Remains ours."
(Victor Jara)*



Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

Thomas Jefferson was one of the founding fathers of the USA and a main author of the Declaration of Independence. As the third president (1801–1809), he doubled the size of the country with the Louisiana Purchase and promoted the ideals of freedom and the right to individual development. He advocated democracy, human rights and the abolition of slavery, even though he himself held slaves. He defended the right to free speech and a free press against all attempts to restrict them. He was also active as an architect, archaeologist and inventor.

"The surrender of liberty in favor of security is the result of an insidious temptation, which must be constantly reconsidered." (Thomas Jefferson)



Jamal Khashoggi (1958–2018)

Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist, columnist for the Washington Post and director of the independent but quickly state-censored and closed Al-Arab News Channel. Known for his critical reporting on the Saudi government, particularly Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, he was a prominent advocate for freedom of expression and reform in the Middle East. Khashoggi lived in self-imposed exile in the USA from 2017 and continued to work from there. On October 2, 2018, he was murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, sparking global outrage against Saudi Arabia's autocratic rulers.

*"Absolute power is a mistake, no matter how much a country may be in danger and in need of rescue."
(Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi)*



Martin Luther King (1929–1968)

Martin Luther King Jr, born in Atlanta, was a prominent US civil rights activist and pastor, known for his non-violent resistance to racial discrimination. He led the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott against racial segregation on buses. In 1963, he delivered his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington, a powerful plea for freedom and equality. In 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize. The Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) were important steps towards ending legal racial discrimination. Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis in 1968.

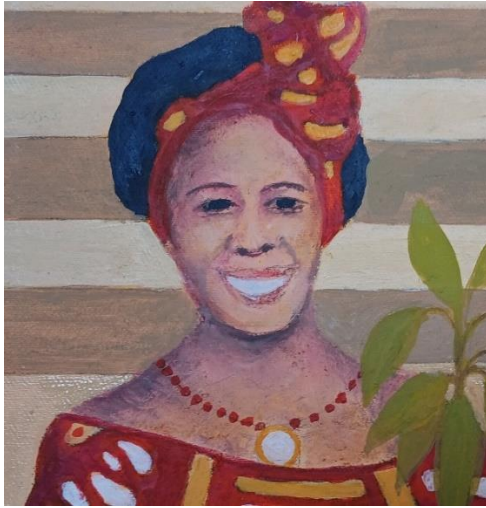
"True peace means not only that there is no discord, but that justice prevails." (Martin Luther King)



John Locke (1632–1704)

The English philosopher and physician John Locke was an important thinker of the Enlightenment. Against the idea of innate knowledge, he argued that human knowledge is based on experience and reflection. According to his "Two Treatises of Government", people have natural rights such as life, liberty and property. A government should be based on popular sovereignty and the separation of powers. If rulers violate natural rights, citizens may and should replace them with better ones. John Locke's ideas have significantly influenced the development of modern democratic states.

"Nothing makes a more delicate and profound impression on the mind of man than example." (John Locke)



Wangari Muta Maathai (1940–2011)

The Kenyan biologist Wangari Muta Maathai was a professor of veterinary anatomy and deputy minister for environmental protection. She fought for women's rights and saw a healthy environment as the basis for a healthy society. In response to the plight of Kenyan women farmers caused by environmental damage, she founded the "Green Belt Movement": women planted trees to curb environmental damage and also received a small fee. Over time, the movement planted millions of trees and expanded its scope through social and political commitment. In 2004, Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her diverse activities for democracy, human rights and the environment.

"Using our natural resources sustainably will promote peace." (Wangari Maathai)



Nelson Mandela (1918–2013)

Nelson Mandela was a South African anti-apartheid campaigner and became the first black president of his country in 1994. His life was characterized by resistance against racial segregation and social injustice. Mandela spent 27 years in prison before being released in 1990. His achievements lie in his commitment to reconciliation and national unity, and in the ultimately successful peaceful transition to democracy for all in negotiations with the last apartheid government under Willem de Klerk. Mandela and de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

"Courage is not the absence of fear, but the victory over it" (Nelson Mandela)



Narges Mohammadi (*1972)

The physicist and journalist Narges Mohammadi is an Iranian human rights activist and former Vice President of the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. She courageously stands up for political prisoners, especially women and children, against sexual abuse in prison, torture and executions. Sentenced time and again to long prison terms and lashes, she has continued her work undeterred. Narges Mohammadi was awarded international prizes for her commitment to human rights, including the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize, while she was in prison.

"The more they punish me, the more they take away from me, the more I will fight until we achieve democracy and freedom." (Narges Mohammadi)



Nadia Murad (*1993)

Nadia Murad, born in 1993 in the Iraqi village of Kocho, belongs to the Yazidi community, an ethnic-religious minority. In August 2014, IS fighters attacked the village and murdered most of the men, including her brothers. They abducted Nadia Murad and many other girls and women and enslaved, tortured and raped them. After her escape in November 2014, Nadia Murad campaigned internationally for Yazidi and other victims of genocide and sexual violence and for the perpetrators to be punished. In 2016, she became a UN Special Envoy for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. In 2018 she received the Nobel Peace Prize. Her autobiography "I am your voice" tells the story of her fate and her path to becoming an activist.

"I want to speak for those who cannot raise their voices." (Nadia Murad)



Dmitri Muratov (*1961)

Dmitri Andreyevich Muratov is a renowned Russian journalist. In 1993, together with colleagues, he founded the independent pro-Kremlin newspaper "Novaya Gazeta" (co-editor: Mikhail Gorbachev). Under his leadership, the newspaper uncovered corruption, human rights violations and abuse of power, despite constant threats and immense pressure from the government. Several of his colleagues paid for their courage with their lives, including the reporter Anna Politkovskaya. In 2021, Dmitri Muratov received the Nobel Peace Prize together with Maria Ressa from the Philippines. He donated the prize money to charity and auctioned off his medal to support Ukrainian orphans.

"Journalism should help to make the world a better place." (Dmitri Muratov)



Pyotr Andreyevich Pavlensky (*1984)

Pyotr Andreyevich Pavlensky, born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), is a Russian action artist who provokes the apparatus of power through drastic, often self-harming performances in public places. He uses his body to denounce political and social grievances. In 2012, for example, he sewed his lips shut in protest against the imprisonment of Pussy Riot. In 2013, he nailed his scrotum to Red Square in Moscow to criticize the political apathy in Russia in the face of repression. In exile in France since 2017, Pavlensky continues to fight for freedom and human rights with extreme actions.

"The reason for my works is the state's desire to frighten people by using fear as an instrument of power." (Pyotr Pavlensky)



Pericles (ca. 490–429 AC)

Pericles came from a respected family in ancient Athens. He initially made a name for himself as a defender of democracy against aristocratic tendencies. As a skillful orator, he campaigned for the rights of citizens and equality before the law – also in his own interests. Political offices became more accessible to citizens. Many positions were filled by lot to prevent corruption. The People's Assembly elected Pericles as strategist every year for more than a decade. In foreign policy, he pursued a policy of increasing Athens' power, including by military means. The city experienced a heyday of art, architecture, philosophy and literature, the Greek classical period that is still admired today.

"For happiness you need freedom, for freedom you need courage." (Pericles)



Maria Ressa (*1963)

Biologist and English graduate Maria Ressa is a Filipino investigative journalist and co-founder of the online news site Rappler. She has written on terrorist networks and President Rodrigo Duterte's murderous drug war. Her reporting on human rights, corruption and disinformation has repeatedly brought her into the sights of the Philippine authorities and also before the courts. She is particularly committed to the fight for press freedom and democracy. In 2021, she received the Nobel Prize for Peace, together with the Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov.

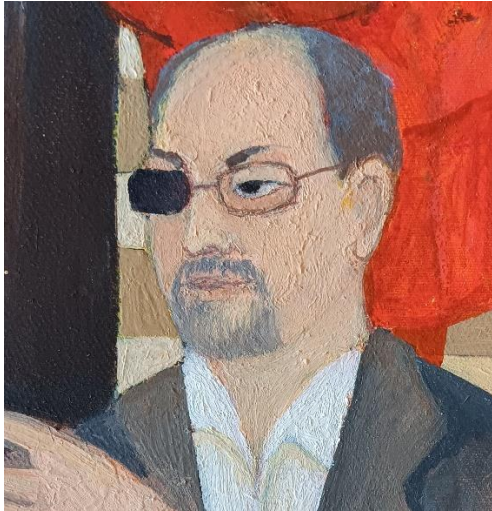
"If you can make people believe that lies are facts, you can control them." (Maria Ressa)



Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)

Eleanor Roosevelt was not only First Lady of the USA as the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt, she was also a politician and activist for social justice, women's emancipation and the fight against poverty. Her columns, speeches and tireless travels made her an influential voice in the public sphere. After the Second World War, Eleanor Roosevelt became a leading figure at the United Nations. She chaired the commission that drafted and adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Her work at the UN was groundbreaking for the international human rights movement.

"Those who have suffered much necessarily develop more compassion and understanding for the problems of mankind." (Eleanor Roosevelt)



Salman Rushdie (*1947)

Salman Rushdie is an Indian-British writer. His novels, characterized by "magical-realistic" narrative art, often refer to historical and political themes. In 1988, the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa condemning Rushdie to death for his depiction of the Prophet Mohammed in the novel "The Satanic Verses". He lived underground for years. Several of his translators and publishers were murdered or wounded. He himself barely survived a knife attack in 2022. In essays and lectures, he fights vehemently for the freedom of the word. Rushdie has received many honors, including the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2023.

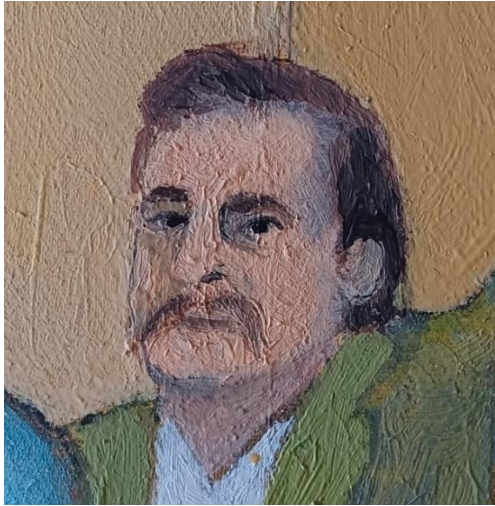
"The authoritarian spirit is necessarily afraid of the free spirit." (Salman Rushdie)



Sophie Scholl (1921-1943)

As a student of biology and philosophy, Sophia Magdalena Scholl, together with her brother Hans and friends, became involved in the "White Rose" resistance group against the National Socialist dictatorship. A love of nature and Christian religiosity shaped the young woman. The janitor caught her distributing resistance leaflets at Munich University and reported her to the police. Sophie Scholl, her brother Hans and the White Rose member Christoph Probst were sentenced to death in a show trial of the "People's Court" on February 22, 1943 under Roland Freisler and executed on the same day.

"You have to do something so that you yourself are not to blame. For this we need a hard spirit and a soft heart." (Sophie Scholl)



Lech Wałęsa (*1943)

Lech Wałęsa is a Polish politician and former trade union leader. As an electrician at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, he campaigned for workers' rights, from 1980 as leader of the independent trade union Solidarność (Solidarity). The movement played a decisive role in the fight against the communist regime in Poland. Wałęsa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. After the fall of communism, he became Poland's first democratically elected president in 1990. Despite controversies surrounding him, Wałęsa remains unforgettable as a symbolic figure for the non-violent struggle for freedom and democratization in Eastern Europe.

"When a Pole became Pope, I had ten million supporters because the people had awakened." (Lech Wałęsa)



Liu Xiaobo (1955–2017)

Liu Xiaobo was a Chinese literary scholar, writer and human rights activist. He became known for his commitment to democracy and human rights in China. In 1989, he played a significant role in the Tiananmen Square protests, for which he was imprisoned. Liu was co-author of "Charter 08", a manifesto for political reform and more freedom in China. In 2009, he was sentenced to eleven years in prison for "inciting subversion of state power". In 2010, he received the Nobel Peace Prize in absentia. Liu died of liver cancer in prison in 2017 and remains a symbol of the struggle for freedom in China.

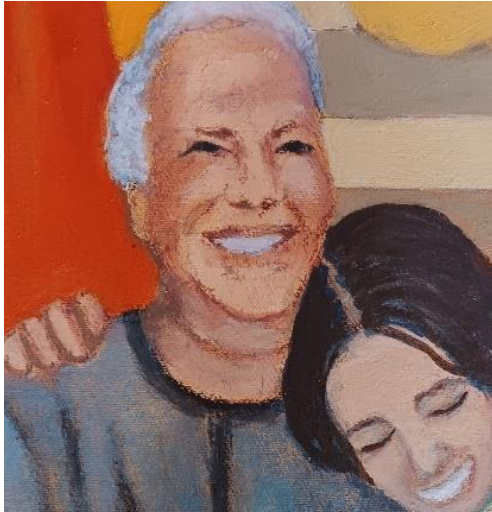
"Freedom of expression is the foundation of human rights, the root of human nature and the mother of truth." (Liu Xiaobo)



Malala Yousafzai (*1997)

At the age of eleven, the Pakistani girl was already campaigning for girls' education in writing and orally, supported by her father. At that time, Taliban terrorized her home region and wanted to ban girls from going to school. In 2012, a Taliban shot the young activist in the head. She survived and fought all the more vehemently from her new home in England for the right to education for all around the world. Rhetorically brilliant and with a sense of effectiveness, she gained attention for her cause from the public and governments, and even gave a controversial speech at the United Nations in 2013, on her 16th birthday. Malala Yousafzai has received numerous awards for her commitment, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 as the youngest ever laureate.

*"If people remain silent, nothing will change."
(Malala Yousafzai)*



Muhammad Yunus (*1940)

Muhammad Yunus is an economist in Bangladesh. His concept of microcredit supports poor people without access to traditional banks. In 2006, he and the Grameen Bank, which he founded for this purpose, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to promote economic and social development from below. Critics argue that microcredit does not always have the desired effect and does not change the structural causes of poverty. However, Yunus' work has undoubtedly helped many people, especially women, and enabled them to achieve economic independence.

"Poverty is the absence of all human rights. Frustration, hostility and anger caused by abject poverty endanger the peace of society."

(Muhammad Yunus)