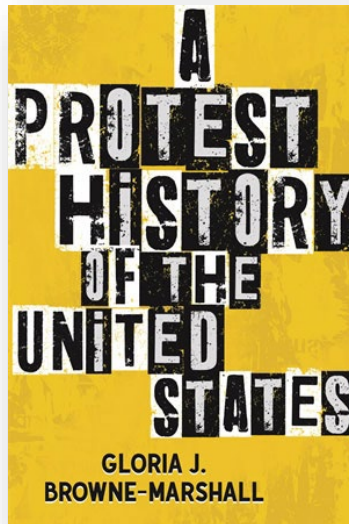


*A Protest History of the United States* by Gloria J. Browne-Marshall

Readers' Guide Discussion Questions



1. On page 10, Browne-Marshall quotes activist Winona LaDuke who states that “greed is an amazing driving force in the history of America.” Do you agree with LaDuke’s statement? Why or why not? If you do, aside from the examples the author provides afterwards, what other historical examples can you think of?
2. What does the story of Pocahontas and James Rolfe show you about the whitewashing of Indigenous American history? (19) Does it surprise you that the real story is so different from the often romanticized version? How do you think Pocahontas might have felt leaving her family for a new, unknown world in England?
3. On page 56, Browne-Marshall notes that some European indentured servants in early colonial America not only protested slavery but, in some cases, escaped together with the enslaved. Does this surprise you? Given the wilderness of early colonial America, do you think survival on the run would have been easier or more challenging than escaping in the 1800s, when slavery was at its peak? How successful might these escapes have been? What could have happened to the seventeenth-century escapees if they had “made it”?
4. After discussing Bacon’s Rebellion, Browne-Marshall states, “Unity is crucial, and identifying common issues of concern will bring together seemingly disparate groups so they can outnumber oppressive forces. The application of this lesson is core to protest, but is often forgotten or dismissed, leaving unrealized the potential for unified power.” (58) Given our current political moment, are we seeing this unity in today’s protests? Or are we forgetting the lesson? Why or why not? How can we make sure the lesson is not forgotten?

5. While it's obvious why pro-slavery Whites opposed emancipation, equal rights, and suffrage for the enslaved, why do you think some White abolitionists were unsure about these freedoms? (77–78) Do you believe it was due to abolitionists' beliefs in the inherent worth of Black people (i.e., they were considered a lesser human class than Whites but not to be harmed), or did they fear Black retribution for the atrocities of slavery if given the same rights? What might abolitionists have thought would happen if emancipated slaves were suddenly equal to Whites?
6. Mary Harris "Mother" Jones was a formidable figure in the workers movement of the nineteenth century. At a time when women were less respected than men, let alone at the forefront of such movements, what do you think caused working-class men to respect her? Was it her tenacity, her alignment of their values, or something else? Browne-Marshall notes, on pages 114–115, that while Mother Jones fiercely fought for working White men, she ignored women's movements and those movements that were against racial discrimination and segregation. Why might that be?
7. On page 144, Browne-Marshall profoundly notes that "in the United States, a war is always imminent." What do you make of this statement? Could this apply to wars in foreign lands as well as domestic "wars," i.e., protests? On page 147, she further notes that "war is our refined art, a unique talent of the United States of America cultivated over centuries." What are your thoughts on this?
8. On page 210, Browne-Marshall discusses the dichotomy of Atlanta, Georgia, being a "rising mecca" for African American intellectualism in the early twentieth century, while also being a place known for violence against that same population. Why do you think that was?
9. Prudence Crandall, a White woman in Connecticut, opened up a school for free women of color in 1833, something that was both unheard of and drew the ire of the White community. (215) How was creating this school her own form of protest? Do you think she knew the risks and dangers associated with doing so?
10. On page 219, Browne-Marshall notes that Booker T. Washington, who rose to prominence as the most famous African American after Frederick Douglass's death, opposed a woman's right to vote. Why do you think that was?
11. "Protest takes a toll, emotionally and physically, with no paid vacation days or sick leave," states Browne-Marshall on page 232. What do you do in order to practice protest self-care? Do you gather with friends? Meditate? Or something else? How do you keep your spirits up in the face of "question[ing] a commitment to a cause that seems doomed"?
12. Why do you suppose the state of Arizona refused to recognize Martin Luther King Jr. Day after it was established? (232–233) Are you surprised that MLK Day has only been a federal holiday since 1983? Why or why not?
13. What are your thoughts on Browne-Marshall's statement "lynching was considered low-class, extrajudicial, and distasteful by the White elite, whereas death at the hands of police provided a

semblance of law and civilized judgment””? (248)

14. Throughout *A Protest History*, Gloria Browne-Marshall interweaves stories of her own family and their protests and resistance throughout the generations. How has protest been a part of your own life or in the history of your family?
15. Can you list a few different ways you could protest something you feel strongly about? Be sure to note both more traditional and more creative ways to protest.
16. Browne-Marshall notes that the battle between the United States vs. America began at conception and is ongoing. What do you think of this viewpoint? If you agree with this assessment, what examples might you have based on your own experiences?