

Fighting Over What We Believe

SSA + SAB youth, piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Fighting Over What We Believe

*Talking left, talking right, talking far into the night,
Splitting hairs, splitting up, splitting off,
Less and more, rich and poor, what to address, what to ignore,
What are we really fighting for?*

*Persuade, coerce, convene, disperse, accept or curse?
Deny, confess, condemn or bless?
Who lives? Who dies?
My truth! Your lies!*

*Bring in, shut out, what's that all about?
Who gives out retribution and grace?
What to keep, what to spend,
What to give and what to lend?
Some have not, some have a lot:
Can we learn to share the things we've got?*

I see us fighting over what we believe; how to love and how to pray.
We begin with hope and resolve and dreams, and end up fighting over what we believe.
I see us fighting over what we believe, leaving spirits poor and lonely.
I want to use my fighting spirit in a different way instead of fighting over what we believe.

I want to wrestle with the angel 'til the light of dawn,
And struggle with my need for pride.
I want to take on my tendency to turn my head,
And grapple with why it feels so hard to gently lay our differences aside.

We all believe in justice. Let's talk about what that looks like.
And we believe in compassion. Let's look at what that really means.
We believe in the holy work of listening, to every voice.
Let's start our conversation there,

Instead of fighting over what we believe; it wears us down and wears us out.
We have eyes to see, we have ears to hear, we have hands that long to give and receive.
I see us fighting over what we believe, leaving spirits poor and lonely.
I want to use my fighting spirit in a different way instead of fighting over what we believe.

Divide, unite, exclude, invite, day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight...

We all believe in justice... Let's talk about what that looks like.

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Fighting Over What We Believe is a compassionate meditation on social and political conflict, with a compelling dialogue of voices and a “call to action” refrain. Dialogue is a key element of this song, with back-and-forth exchanges between singers reflecting the active engagement present in all powerful conversations. In the intergenerational arrangements of this song, a dialogue is created between adult and youth choirs. In the adult choir arrangements, this dialogue is created by multiple short solos scattered throughout.

To download a free bass part, visit
www.elizabethalexander.com/works/fighting-over-what-we-believe

Fighting Over What We Believe

SSA + SAB youth choir, piano

With conviction and compassion (♩ = 126-138)

Elizabeth Alexander

Youth Choir

S

A

B

SSA Choir

S I

S II

A

Piano

p

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

7 Youth Choir

S

A

B

p

Talk - ing left, talk - ing right, talk - ing far in - to the night, split - ting

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

11 Youth Choir

S

A hairs, split-ting up, split-ting off... Opt:

B Less and *p*
Less and

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

15 Youth Choir

S

A more, rich and poor, what to ad - dress, what to ig - nore, _____ What are we real - ly fight - ing for?

B more, rich and poor, what to ad - dress, what to ig - nore, _____ What are we real - ly fight - ing for?

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

19 Youth Choir

S *mp*
Per - suade, co - erce, con - vene, dis - perse, ac - cept or curse?

A *mp*
Per - suade, co - erce, con - vene, dis - perse, ac - cept or curse?

B *mp*
Per - suade, co - erce, con - vene, dis - perse, ac - cept or curse?

mp
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Combined Choirs

37

f

S I Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

S II Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

A Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

B Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

* Ped. * Ped. Ped. Ped.

One or more soloists, either youth or adult: *mp*

40

Solo I see us

Combined Choirs

S I things we've got?

S II things we've got?

A things we've got?

B things we've got?

Ped.

44

Solo

fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, how to love and how to pray, We be - gin

mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

48

Solo

— with hope and re - solve and dreams, and end up fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

52 SSA Choir

S I

S II

A

mp

I see us fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

mp

I see us fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

mp

I see us fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and scrum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Sasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hakan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and scrum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

**A lot of hard work
and creativity went
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music to you...**



**...and some of it
was even mine.**

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69 Combined Choirs *p subito*

S I turn my head, and grapple with why it feels so hard to gently lay our differences a -

S II turn my head, and grapple with why it feels so hard to gently lay our differences a -

A turn my head, and grapple with why it feels so hard to gently lay our differences a -

p subito

Ped. Ped. Ped.

74 Youth Choir *mf*

S Day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight.

A Day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight.

B Day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight.

SSA Choir *p*

S I side, A - - side, A - side. *mf* We all believe in

S II side, a - - side, a - side. *mf* We all believe in

A side, a - - side, a - side. *mf* We all believe in

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. *

C

78 Youth Choir *mf*

A Let's talk a - bout what that looks like, *

SSA Choir

S I jus - tice, And we be -

S II jus - tice, And we be -

A jus - tice, And we be -

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

* Yes, the notes in m.80 are different than those that will occur in mm.142-143. And no, it's not a typo. This phrase is faster, with a little extra attitude. If desired, soprano and baritone youth choir members may sing along with the altos in mm.79-80.

82 Youth Choir *mf*

S Let's look at what that real - ly means,

A Let's look at what that real - ly means,

B Let's look at what that real - ly means,

SSA Choir

S I lieve in com - pas - sion.

S II lieve in com - pas - sion.

A lieve in com - pas - sion.

mf

Ped. Ped. * Ped. Ped.

98 Youth Choir *

S *f* What to

A *mf* Bring in, shut out, what's that all a - bout? *f* What to

B *mf* Who gives out re - tri - bu - tion and grace? *f* What to

SSA Choir *

S I there, _____ let's start there, _____ let's start

S II there, _____ let's start there, start there, let's start

A there, let's start there, _____ let's start there, let's start

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

* If desired, some SSA Choir members may sing with the Youth Choir in measures 98-105.

102 Youth Choir

S
keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend, Who's my neigh - bor, who's my friend?

A
keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend, Who's my neigh - bor, who's my friend?

B
keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend, Who's my neigh - bor, who's my friend?

SSA Choir

S I
there, let's start there, let's start there,

S II
there, let's start there, let's start there,

A
there, let's start there, start there,

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and scrum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Pasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hagan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and scrum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

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113 Combined Choirs

S I We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

S II We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

A We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

B We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

116 Combined Choirs

S I ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

S II ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

A ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

B ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

119 Combined Choirs

S I fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

S II fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

B fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spir - its poor and lone -

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

122 Combined Choirs

S I - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff' - rent way in - stead of

S II - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff' - rent way in - stead of

A - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff' - rent way in - stead of

B - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff' - rent way in - stead of

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

E

125 Combined Choirs

S I fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, *p subito*

S II fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — *mp* I'm tired of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, *p subito*

A fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, *p subito*

B fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

p subito

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

128 Combined Choirs

S I — fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

S II *p* — fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

A — *mp* Just say no — to

B *mp* Don't want no more of fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — *p*

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

131 Combined Choirs *mf*

S I Noth - in' good can come from fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

S II *mp* fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — *mf* fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — *mf* fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

B *mp* fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — *mf* fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

134 Youth Choir

S fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — o - ver what we be - lieve,

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — o - ver what we be - lieve,

B fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — o - ver what we be - lieve,

SSA Choir *mf marcato*

S I Di - vide, u - nite, ex - clude, in - vite, day, night, wrong,

S II *mf marcato* Di - vide, u - nite, ex - clude, in - vite, day, night, wrong,

A *mf marcato* Di - vide, u - nite, ex - clude, in - vite, day, night, wrong,

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

137 *Youth Choir* *f*

S
o - ver what we be - lieve,

A
o - ver what we be - lieve,

B
o - ver what we be - lieve,

SSA Choir *f*

S I
right, no end in sight. We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

S II
right, no end in sight. We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

A
right, no end in sight. We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

Ped. *Ped.* * *Ped.* *Ped.*

140 *Combined Choirs* *pp* *lunga*

All
Let's talk a - bout what that looks like. *lunga*

p *Ped.* *Ped.*

Despite the *ritardando*, the *meno mosso*, and the *pianissimo*, the last vocal note should not be held beyond its written value.
The final vocal line is determined and unsentimental, and its cut off clean and strong.

Nancy Grundahl, who conducted the premiere, asked the singers to slowly close their folders and hold them by their side during measures 140-141, looking straight at the audience while they sang the last two measures. It made the ending quite powerful. Choirs planning to perform this song using music might consider this or another dramatic effect.