

# Fighting Over What We Believe

SSA, soloists, 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.

Copyright 2012 by Elizabeth Alexander

---

*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](http://www.elizabethalexander.com/works/fighting-over-what-we-believe)

# Fighting Over What We Believe

SSAA, soloists, piano

Elizabeth Alexander

With conviction and compassion (♩ = 126-138)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems. The first system includes staves for Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), Alto (A), and Piano. The piano part features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with dynamics marked *p* and *Ped.* (pedal). The second system begins at measure 6 and includes a Soloist staff (Solos) with the lyrics "Talk - ing left, talk - ing right, talk - ing". The piano accompaniment continues. The third system begins at measure 10 and includes a Soloist staff (Solos) with the lyrics "far in - to the night, split - ting hairs, split - ting up, split - ting off." The piano accompaniment continues. The score is marked with *p* (piano) and *Ped.* (pedal) throughout.

\* The distribution of the solos is intentionally flexible, so that ensembles may adapt this song to suit their performance circumstances. Some ensembles may wish to have 2-4 soloists, but some may wish to assign each solo line to a different singer, resulting in up to 20 soloists.

13 Solo 2

Solos

Less and more, rich and poor, what to ad -

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

16

Solos

dress, what to ig - nore, What are we real - ly fight - ing for?

Ped. Ped.

19 Solo 3 *mp* Solo 4 Solo 5

Solos

Per - suade, co - erce, Con - vene, dis - perse, Ac - cept or

*mp* Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

22 Solo 6 Solo 7

Solos

curse? De - ny, con - fess, Con - demn or bless,

5 4 2 Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

25 **Solo 8** *mf* **Solo 9**

Solos

Who lives, who dies, My truth! Your lies!\_\_\_\_\_

*mf*

\* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped.

29 **Solo 10** *mf*

Solos

Bring in, shut out, what's that all a-bout?

*mf*

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

33 **Solo 11** **Solo 12**

Solos

Who gives out re- tri - bu - tion and grace? What to keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend,

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

37 *f*

All

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

\* Ped. \* Ped. Ped. Ped.

Solo 13 OR Tutti *mp*

All

things we've got? I see us

Ped.

**A**

All

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

*mp*

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

Solo 14 OR Tutti

All

We be - gin with hope and re - solve and dreams, and end up

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

All

fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, I see us fight-ing o - ver

*mp*

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

54

S I  
 what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spir - its poor — and lone - ly, I want to

S II  
 what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spir - its poor — and lone - ly, I want what

A  
 what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spir - its poor — and lone - ly, I want to

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

57 *mf*

S I  
 use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup> - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

S II *mf*  
 use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup> - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

A *mf*  
 use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup> - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

*mf*

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

60

S I *mp warmly*  
I want to

S II *mp warmly*  
I want to

A *mp warmly*  
I want to

*mp*

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

**B**

64

S I  
wres - tle with the an - gel 'til the light of dawn, and strug - gle with my need for

S II  
wres - tle with the an - gel 'til the light of dawn, and strug - gle with my need for

A  
wres - tle with the an - gel 'til the light of dawn, and strug - gle with my need for

*mp*

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 serum 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 serum 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  
into bringing this  
music to you...**



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

**This page has been intentionally omitted.  
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be  
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

*Elizabeth Alexander*

*Seafarer Press*

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander

[www.seafarerpress.com](http://www.seafarerpress.com)

74

Solo 15

*mf*

Solos *mf* Day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight.

S I *p* side, A - side, a - side. *mf* We all be - lieve in

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

A side, a - side, a - side. *mf* We all be - lieve in

*mf*

Ped. Ped. Ped. \*

C

78

Solo 16

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

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.

82

Solo 17

Solos

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

S I  
lieve in com - pas - sion.

S II  
lieve in com - pas - sion.

A  
lieve in com - pas - sion.

Ped. Ped. \* Ped. Ped.

86

*p warmly*

S I  
We be-lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing, — to

S II  
We be-lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing, — to

A  
We be-lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing to

*p warmly*  
We be-lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing to

*p subito*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Solo 18

*mp*

90

Solos

S I

S II

A

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.\_\_\_\_\_

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.\_\_\_\_\_

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.\_\_\_\_\_

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.\_\_\_\_\_

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.\_\_\_\_\_

Let's start

Ped.

94

S I

S II

A

Let's start there, Let's start

Let's start there,\_\_\_\_\_ let's start

Let's start there,\_\_\_\_\_ Let's start there, let's start

there,\_\_\_\_\_ Let's start there,\_\_\_\_\_ let's start

Ped.

98 Solo 19\* *mf* Solo 20\* Solo 21\*

Solos  
Bring in, shut out, what's that all a- bout? Who gives out re - tri - bu - tion and grace? What to

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.

102

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

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.

\* If desired, some choir members may be asked to join the soloists in measures 98-105.  
This can be especially valuable if the soloists are not using microphones.

106

*mf* *p*

S I Let's start our con - ver - - sa - tion there, in - stead of

*mf* *p*

S II Let's start our con - ver - - sa - tion there, in - stead of

*mf* *p*

A Let's start our con - ver - - sa - tion there, in - stead of

*p*

in - stead of

*mf*

*Red.* *Red.* \*

**D**

110

S I fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, - it wears us down and wears - us out,

S II fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, - it wears us down and wears - us out,

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, - it wears us down and wears - us out,

fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, - it wears us down and wears - us out,

*mp*

*Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

113

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\_

We have eyes\_\_\_ to see,\_\_\_ we have ears\_\_\_ to hear,\_\_\_ we have hands\_

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

116

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

\_\_\_ that long to give and re - ceive,\_\_\_ I see us

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

119

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

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

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spi - rits poor and lone -

fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, leav - ing spi - rits poor and lone -

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

122

S I - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup>-rent way in - stead of

S II - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup>-rent way in - stead of

A - ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup>-rent way in - stead of

ly, I want to use my fight - ing spir - it in a diff<sup>r</sup>-rent way in - stead of

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

**E**

125

*mp*

S I fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — I'm tired of fight-ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

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

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

*p subito*

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

128

*p*

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

*mp*

S II Don't want no more of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

A — *mp* Just say no — to

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 serum 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 serum 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  
into bringing this  
music to you...**



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

**This page has been intentionally omitted.  
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be  
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

*Elizabeth Alexander*

*Seafarer Press*

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander

[www.seafarerpress.com](http://www.seafarerpress.com)

137

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

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

A *f*  
 — o - ver what we be - lieve, — We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

Ped. Ped. \* Ped. Ped.

140 **ritardando** **meno mosso** *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.

## Selected Choral Music by Elizabeth Alexander

- A Palette To Paint Us As We Are** (Gerald Rich)  
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01  
SSA, piano • SEA-014-02
- Beware the Winter Settin' In** (Alexander)  
SATB, Celtic band, opt. children's choir • SEA-139-00
- Blessed Be the Flower That Triumphs** (Boblett)  
SATB • SEA-078-00
- Cherish Your Doubt** (Alexander)  
SATB, piano • SEA-063-01  
SSAA, piano • SEA-063-02
- Die Gedanken Sind Frei** (German protest song, arr.)  
SATB, piano • SEA-087-00
- Do Not Leave Your Cares at the Door** (Norman Naylor)  
SATB • SEA-071-00
- Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm** (Yehuda Amichai)  
SATB • SEA-026-01
- Faith Is the bird that feels the light** (Tagore)  
SSA • SEA-068-00
- Fighting Over What We Believe** (Alexander)  
SATB, soloists, piano • SEA-099-01
- Finally On My Way To Yes** (Pesha Gertler)  
SSATB, piano • SEA-019-00
- Folks, I'm Telling You** (Langston Hughes)  
SSATB, piano • SEA-027-00
- Glen Song** (Scott Bates)  
SSATB, piano • SEA-025-00
- Handles** (Alexander)  
SSA, piano • SEA-148-00
- How To Sing Like a Planet** (Alexander)  
SATB, piano • SEA-105-01
- If You Can Walk You Can Dance** (Zimbabwean Proverb)  
SAB, piano, claves • SEA-022-03  
TBB, piano, claves • SEA-022-05  
SSA, piano, claves • SEA-022-06  
SATB, piano, claves • SEA-022-07
- Immortal Love** (John Greenleaf Whittier)  
SATB • SEA-017-00
- Infant Holy, Infant Lowly** (Polish carol, arr.)  
SSA • SEA-020-00
- Jump!** (Ray Bradbury)  
SSA, string quartet • SEA-090-00
- Kindling** (Alexander)  
SATB, chamber ensemble • SEA-123-00  
SATB, piano • SEA-123-09
- Let it Matter** (Alexander)  
SSA, piano • SEA-125-03  
SATB, piano • SEA-125-04
- No Other People's Children** (Alexander)  
1-4 part choir, soloist, piano • SEA-141-03
- ...or a musician** (Philip Dacey)  
SATB, orchestra • SEA-007-00
- A Palette To Paint Us As We Are** (Gerald Rich)  
SA, piano • SEA-014-00  
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01
- Praise Wet Snow Falling Early** (Denise Levertov)  
SATB, piano • SEA-015-00
- Reasons for the Perpetuation of Slavery** (Alexander)  
SSAA • SEA-091-00
- Same Birds** (David Allen Evans)  
SATB • SEA-128-00
- Song of Kabir** (Kabir)  
SATB • SEA-119-00
- The Gate is Open** (Sister Peronne Marie Thibert)  
SATB • SEA-097-01
- They Have Freckles Everywhere** (Alexander)  
SSAA, piano • SEA-076-00
- To Make a Prairie** (Emily Dickinson)  
SSA, piano • SEA-016-00
- We Lift Up Our Hearts** (Richard Fewkes)  
Unison children's choir, SATB, piano • SEA-021-00
- We Remember Them** (Sylvan Kamens, Jack Riemer)  
SATB, piano • SEA-083-01
- Where there Is Light in the Soul** (Chinese proverb)  
SAB • SEA-070-00  
SATB • SEA-070-01  
SSA • SEA-070-02  
TBB • SEA-062-03
- When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled** (Thurman)  
SATB • SEA-062-00  
TTBB • SEA-062-02  
SSAA • SEA-062-04  
SATB, flute • SEA-062-05
- Why I Pity the Woman Who Never Spills** (Prefontaine)  
SSAA • SEA-058-00