I want to thank Dean for giving me the opportunity to introduce Daniel Ellsberg, a man named “the most dangerous man in America” by Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense who presided over the genocidal Vietnam War. Dan has not only long been on the right side of history. He has made many contributions to pushing the proverbial arc of history toward human survival and justice.

Like Sacco and Vanzetti, our heroes are human, they feel, worry and struggle. The companion of their courage is sacrifice. It was at a weekend retreat in Robert Lifton’s Wellfleet home, that I first heard Dan share the traumas that forged his character in response to a speaker’s closing question “When will the sleeping man wake?” Dan began with background about his mother’s ambition that he become a piano virtuoso, centered on how his mother and sister died in a car crash, and concluded with the commitment forged within Dan to ensure that innocents not be sacrificed.

But resolve is not action. I want to stress Dan’s personal and intellectual courage, the latter of which is little understood or respected in our society. As Dan described in his book Secrets, even before risking life in prison by making public the Pentagon Papers, the secret history of decision making for the Indochina China War, he had explored the meanings and potential of nonviolent resistance and had risked his career by joining anti-war demonstration in the streets of our nation’s capital. Since then, Dan’s conscience has led him to be jailed many times since for committing nonviolent civil disobedience to end wars, the nuclear arms race, and to oppose other injustices.

Ironically, it was only a few years ago, long after his father’s death, that Dan learned that he is a chip off his father’s block. Before few besides Teller and
Oppenheimer conceived the possibility of hydrogen bombs, his father turned down the request that he oversee the construction of the Hanford nuclear bomb factory.

While we can all recognize physical courage, Dan’s intellectual courage also needs to be recognized and celebrated. How many people do you know who are willing to describe themselves as a war criminal? And, given the reality that the United States has been at war almost continuously for the past four generations, there are many war criminals among us. Before I read my share of the *Pentagon Papers*, there was Dan’s book *Papers on the War*, a valuable resource for those of us organizing against the war. And, I remember well Dan’s speech in 1991 about the dangers of the approaching First Gulf War, on the Boston Common on a bitterly cold and icy January day. More recently he has revealed a host of other secrets – nuclear secrets – once buried and later lost, publishing them with analysis and prescriptions to prevent nuclear catastrophe in his most recent book *The Doomsday Machine, his “Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner.*

Dan earned McNamara’s moniker when, in 1971, he became and international hero and outlaw for the ostensible crime of trying to end the Indochina War – to stop the killing – by revealing the history of Vietnam War decision making to the U.S. and the world’s people. That was the top secret 7,000 page report commissioned by McNamara titled *U.S. Decision-Making in Vietnam, 1945–68 – The Pentagon Papers*. Dan knew about the report and where to find it because he was one of its primary authors. For his conscientious and courageous action, Dan was indicted under the Espionage Act and sentenced to 109 years in prison. His conviction was thrown out after it was revealed that Nixon’s “plumbers”, the men who the following year broke into the Democratic Party’s Watergate headquarters, had broken into his psychoanalyst’s office and stolen Dan’s records.
Dan was initially trained as an economist. After completing his B.A., he joined the Marines, later returning to RAND and Harvard, where he completed his PhD. on game theory. The Britannica reports, that “In 1964 Ellsberg left RAND to join the Department of Defense, where he was tasked with analyzing the expanding U.S. military effort in Vietnam. The following year he transferred to the State Department. With his headquarters at the U.S. embassy in Saigon” he “accompanied troops on patrol to evaluate the war effort. During that time” he concluded that the war could not be won. As Dan has described, it was near the end of one of those futile day-long patrols that he turned to an equally exhausted G.I. and remarked that they were fighting in the tradition of King George III’s redcoats during our country’s Revolutionary War.

On Dan’s return to the U.S., he worked at RAND on what became the Pentagon Papers. And, along his way, at age 30 Dan drafted the U.S. nuclear warfighting doctrine and served as nuclear weapons advisor to presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon.

Martin Luther King wrote in his Letter from the Birmingham Jail, that civil disobedience is undertaken only after every legal option to right a wrong has been tried and failed. At a time when the Vietnamese death toll was more than 300 children, women and men a day, in his effort to stop the killing, Dan offered the Pentagon Papers to a number of members of Congress. They could have legally published the Papers the Congressional Record. None were willing to take the political risk.

Leaving RAND in 1970, Dan came to MIT, where in 1971, with the help of Gar Alperowitz (the author of the definitive history of Truman’s decision to attack Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atom bombs), MIT graduate students who have yet to come forward for fear of prosecution, Howard Zinn and others, he made portions of the Pentagon Papers available to the New York Times, the Washington Post and other
papers across the country. As the 2017 film **THE POST** taught a new generation, in addition to the *Pentagon Papers* helping to build opposition to the war, the Nixon Administration’s efforts to block publication of our Vietnam history led to a seminal Supreme Court decision. The court affirmed the relative independence of the Fourth Estate, ruling that the federal government had not made the case for prior restraint of publication. It is a precedent we need to continue to build on, in the face of unrelenting right-wing efforts to undermine and eliminate constitutional democracy, in spite of that 230 year-old document’s increasingly apparent, racist and anti-democratic limitations.

Dan’s books include *Papers on the War, Risk, Ambiguity, and Decision, Secrets,* and his recent *The Doomsday Machine.* He received the Right Livelihood Award,” known as the “alternative Nobel Prize” as well as the Olof Palme Prize, named for the Swedish Prime Minister who provided international leadership in opposing the Vietnam War and South African apartheid, as well as giving the world the paradigm of Common Security diplomacy.

If I remember correctly, I first met Dan Ellsberg in the run up to his Pentagon Papers trial. I next met him five years later, when I arranged for him to speak at Arizona State University several years after his sentence had been voided.

Young, curious, and insensitive, I had questions for our esteemed visitor and listened to him closely. As we walked across the ASU campus, I asked him a few: Having read about anti-Semitism in the Marines, I asked Dan what it was like being a Jewish Marine in the 1950s. His answer came as a surprise. Dan was raised as a Christian Scientist. That was when I first heard Dan’s cogent Redcoats analogy. And, I learned that what we call absent mindedness can be a reflection of a brilliant mind hyper focused on what is most important. Consumed by *Newsweek’s* publication that day of
Woodward and Bernstein’s *All the President’s Men*, Dan had left his sports jacket in Los Angeles and wore the only one I owned when he gave his talk. I had to remind him whose jacket he was wearing the next when he walked out of our front door on his way to the airport.

Knowing what he knew, Dan became a leading figure in the nuclear weapons freeze movement of the early 1980s. One detail that has largely been lost to history is the connecting thread between Dan’s decision to risk life in prison by releasing the *Pentagon Papers* and the Freeze movement. The name of the thread is Randy Keheler. As Dan has poignantly described, it was in hearing Randy explain why he was willing to go to prison for five years rather than be drafted and fight in the criminal Vietnam War, that Dan painfully concluded that, if Randy, knowing what he knew as a recent college graduate, was willing to risk those five years, knowing what he knew, Dan should risk everything to stop the mass murder of the war. It was Randy who, almost a decade later, had the inspiration of taking the concept of a nuclear weapons freeze to voters in Western Massachusetts referenda, thus igniting the grassroots political storm that prevented the deployment of Euromissiles and led to the INF Treaty and the end of the Cold War before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The high point of the Freeze movement was the largest peace demonstration in U.S. history. It was an actual million-person march and rally. Many here were probably there. Some of you may remember that there were a series of in-person meetings to plan the event. And, in those meetings a vote was taken. To maximize the number of people who would come to New York and not alienate some liberals, a vote was taken in which it was decided that U.S. foreign military interventions would not be mentioned in the March’s call or at the rally.
Remembering that Henry Kissinger placed nuclear forces on alert at the end of the 1973 October War, to say the least I wasn’t happy about that decision. My concern deepened when, on June 5, Israel invaded Lebanon, and we faced the possibility of Syria intervening to counter Israel. The Soviet nuclear arsenal stood behind Syrian forces, and the U.S. arsenal was fully behind Israel and its aggression. In spite of this, only one speaker had the courage to break ranks and name the potential danger.

In the weeks that followed, my disappointment at our movement’s failing midst its great success led me to want to better understand the history and how the U.S. nuclear arsenal reinforces the U.S. empire. That led me to Dan’s introduction to Protest and Survive, a book edited by E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith of the European Nuclear Disarmament movement. Dan’s title was Call to Mutiny.

That essay and a conversation I later had with Dan transformed my understanding of how nuclear weapons are used and led to Dan speaking at what became the first of thirty “Deadly Connections” conferences across the country. It also laid the foundation for much of my scholarly work and movement framing.

As Dan wrote, “The notion common to nearly all Americans that ‘no nuclear weapons have been used since Nagasaki’ is mistaken. It is not the case that U.S. nuclear weapons have simply piled up over the years...unused and unusable, save for the single function of deterring their use against us by the Soviets [now read Russians]. ...Again and again, generally in secret from the American public, U.S. nuclear weapons have been used for quite different purposes in the precise way that a gun is used when you point it at someone’s head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled.”
Dan cited an interview with William Dyess, a U.S. assistant secretary of state, in which he was asked if the U.S. would ever initiate a nuclear war. Here’s that chilling quotation from Dyess: “...the Soviets know that this terrible weapon has been dropped on human beings twice in history and it was an American president who dropped it both times. Therefore, they have to take this into consideration in their calculus.”

To further demonstrate the truth of his metaphor of the armed robber pointing a gun at the head of his victim, Dan went on to list a number of times since the Nagasaki A-bombing that the U.S. prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war during international crises and wars: Truman during the 1946 Iran crisis, the 1948 Berlin Blockade, and again at an early stage of the Korean War, Eisenhower in 1953 (Korea), 1954 (Vietnam), 1958 (China), Kennedy during the 1961 Berlin Crisis and most dangerously during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Nixon’s 1969 Madman nuclear mobilization, and the Carter Doctrine, which threatened to use all means necessary to preserve what were euphorically termed U.S. interests in the Middle East.

Dan continued that “The current ‘dilemma’ in the Middle East merely highlights the historical legacy of an earlier generation in which strategic nuclear monopoly permitted and encouraged the United States to claim rights to intervention in what amounted to a ‘spheres of predominant influence’ that ran right up to the borders of Soviet or Chinese occupation everywhere in the world.” He continued, “Within that sphere of influence, the incentive to threaten or launch nuclear weapons to protect U.S. interventionary troops is not limited...to prospective confrontations with Russian forces.”

Those threats continue today. Obama threatened to use “all means necessary” to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. Trump brought us closer to nuclear war
with his Fire and Fury threats than most people realize. And with mis-named missile
defense deployments and the $2 trillion program to upgrade the U.S. nuclear arsenal
and its delivery system, the U.S. is again on the path to exercising nuclear supremacy.

Dan concluded that introductory essay with a call that in many ways has defined
his life and others’ since then “Like Americans resisting “symbolic’ draft registrations or
sitting on railroad tracks at Rocky Flats” and comparing the rush to nuclear
Armageddon to the mass suicide at Jonestown, he cried out “No! Not our children! This
is craziness; we won’t be part of it.” “It is none too soon to be saying this to the
President/Prime Minister/Chairman Jim Jones’s of the world: nor is it, yet, too late. It is
mutiny time in Jonestown; the revolt of the hostages.”

Let me conclude this introduction by referencing Dan’s prologue to The
Doomsday Machine. In 1961, on behalf of President Kennedy, Dan posed a question to
the Joint Chiefs at the Pentagon. If the general plan for nuclear war were implemented,
how many people would be killed in the Soviet Union and China? When the answer
came back, the lowest number was 275 million people, and by the end of six months 325
million people. Dan concludes the prologue with these words: “From that day on, I have
had one overriding life purpose: to prevent the execution of any such plan.”

Dan, thank you for all that you have done.