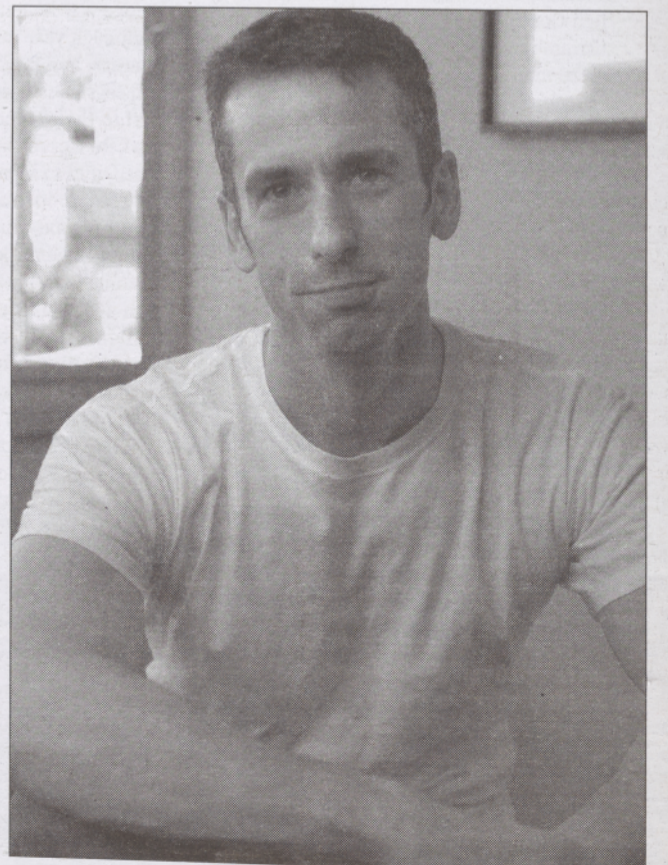
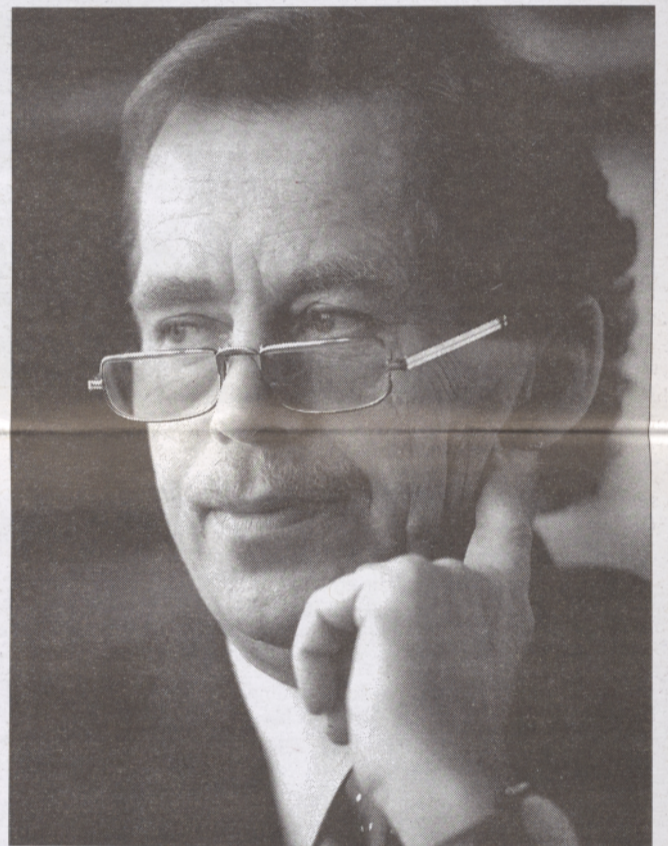


Author and activist Paul Loeb speaking at a recent event at Winona State University.



PHOTO BY ANDREA BAUTCH



Inspiring voices featured in Paul Loeb's new edition of "The Impossible Will Take a Little While," include, top to bottom, poet Maya Angelou, former Czech president Vaclav Havel, and sex advice columnist Dan Savage.

Mission: Possible

With a new edition of "The Impossible Will Take a Little While," Paul Loeb wants people to know change is still on the way

BY ROSETTE ROYALE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In late May, poet, actress and civil rights activist Maya Angelou died. Her death was met with grief, and her life, which began in the Jim Crow South, was seen as an inspiration. Just about everything she wrote touched on how when life (or racism or sexism or poverty or...) knocks you down, the only thing to do is get back up. This sentiment courses through perhaps her most well-known poem, "Still I Rise." Here's the first verse:

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I rise.*

The full poem, with its mix of lyricism and self-determination, shows up almost at the very end of a book edited by Paul Loeb, "The Impossible Will Take a Little While: Perseverance and Hope in Troubled Times" (Basic Books, \$18.99). A collection of writings from more than 50 contemporary figures — liberal writer and academic Cornel West, former New Yorker journalist and current environmental activist Bill McKibben, National Book Award-winning local writer Sherman Alexie — the book is like Angelou's poem, only writ large: It gives readers a sense that even when you're faced with the insurmountable, the potential for success exists. And much like the poem's title, the book also continues to rise. Initially published in 2004, when it was named a top 10 political book by the American Book

Association and the History Channel, the book has been revised for a 2014 edition.

Some book reissues lead to book tours for authors. Such was the case for Loeb, also the author of "Soul of a Citizen." As he prepared for a journey to the East Coast earlier this summer, we chatted over the phone about Obama and hope, McDonald's and Starbucks, pipelines and protests, and the difference between then and now.

Rosette Royale: The first edition of "The Impossible Will Take a Little While" came out in 2004. Why did you decide to put the book together?

Paul Loeb: I think a lot of it had to do with the Iraq War, and the feeling that many people had put so much energy into trying to prevent it and then it just went ahead anyway. Then it sort of turned out to be the disaster that a lot of people predicted. I (wondered), "Does trying to act for change, does it actually do any good? Is it worthwhile? Should we continue?" So I thought: Who do I go to for sustenance? And so I went through all my bookshelves, which I have a lot, and made this huge pile of books on the floor: "Oh, here's Nelson Mandela, here's Alice Walker, here's Howard Zinn, here's Terry Tempest Williams." Here are all these people who have inspired me, who kept me going. So that was the start of the project. Then I

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