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## The lonesome death of Rachel Corrie

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**Billy Bragg**

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**Guardian**

Rachel Corrie went to Gaza to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinians, whose voice is seldom heard in her country, the US. That she herself should be silenced - first by an Israeli bulldozer, next by a New York theatre cancelling a play created from her words - is a testimony to the power of her message. This song was written on a plane on March 20 and recorded at Big Sky Recordings, Ann Arbor, Michigan on March 22. The tune is borrowed from Bob Dylan.

An Israeli bulldozer killed poor Rachel Corrie  
As she stood in its path in the town of Rafah  
She lost her young life in an act of compassion  
Trying to protect the poor people of Gaza  
Whose homes are destroyed by tank shells and bulldozers  
And whose plight is exploited by suicide bombers  
Who kill in the name of the people of Gaza  
But Rachel Corrie believed in non-violent resistance  
Put herself in harm's way as a shield of the people  
And paid with her life in a manner most brutal

But you who philosophise disgrace and criticise all fears,  
Take the rag away from your face.  
Now ain't the time for your tears.

Rachel Corrie had 23 years  
She was born in the town of Olympia, Washington  
A skinny, messy, list-making chain-smoker  
Who volunteered to protect the Palestinian people  
Who had become non-persons in the eyes of the media  
So that people were suffering and no one was seeing  
Or hearing or talking or caring or acting  
And the horrible math of the awful equation  
That brought Rachel Corrie into this confrontation  
Is that the spilt blood of a single American  
Is worth more than the blood of a hundred Palestinians

But you who philosophise disgrace and criticise all fears,  
Take the rag away from your face.  
Now ain't the time for your tears.

The artistic director of a New York theatre  
Cancelled a play based on Rachel's writings  
But she wasn't a bomber or a killer or fighter  
But one who acted in the spirit of the Freedom Riders  
Is there no place for a voice in America  
That doesn't conform to the Fox News agenda?

Who believes in non-violence instead of brute force  
Who is willing to confront the might of an army  
Whose passionate beliefs were matched by her bravery  
The question she asked rings out round the world  
If America is truly the beacon of freedom  
Then how can it stand by while they bring down the curtain  
And turn Rachel Corrie into a non-person?

Oh, but you who philosophise disgrace and criticise all fears,  
Bury the rag deep in your face  
For now's the time for your tears.

- My Name Is Rachel Corrie, co-edited by Alan Rickman and Guardian features editor Katharine Viner, opens at the Playhouse theatre tonight. Telephone 0870 060 6631. For an exclusive download of the song, go to [guardian.co.uk/arts](http://guardian.co.uk/arts)

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