

**I WANT A PRESIDENT  
TRANSCRIPT OF A RALLY**

*November 6, 2016*

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## SHARON HAYES

### *Foreword*

*I want a president* was written in 1992, in the midst of a presidential election and the early years of the AIDS crisis. Zoe Leonard's work is a personal lament, a ferocious accounting, and a call to action. It is a call to a public that wants more from politicians and from political narratives; it is a call to a public that is enraged and fed up. It is a call to a public that needs the complexity of desire insisted on in the work. And it is a call to a public that is ready to mobilize their political desire and ready to make political demands.

On the afternoon of November 6, 2016, one-hundred-plus people came together in New York City to watch and listen to an afternoon of performances and readings in response to *I want a president*. Speakers *and* audience, in a chilly, wind-swept corridor on the High Line, two days before the 2016 US presidential election and in the midst of the violent opposition leveled at the protesters at Standing Rock stood together in an intensely needed response to Zoe's text. We were a group of friends and strangers, lovers, former lovers, colleagues, and comrades. Many of us had been together many times before in public gatherings to act or to witness, and some of us did not know each other at all. We composed a collective, singularly, for that day, that moment, that event.

Zoe wrote *I want a president* the same year the poet Eileen Myles ran for president. Eileen's run, in its brilliant and rebellious simplicity, demanded regard. "Why not?," the campaign seemed to ask, why can't they be president? To ask that question of Eileen's candidacy or of Shirley Chisholm's 1972 candidacy (perhaps in an even more pointed manner) inspired a critical speculation on what our political realities might or could be.

Zoe wrote the piece as she was making art, working with fierce pussy, and protesting the national, state, and city government's deadly political failures to adequately respond to the AIDS epidemic. The political rhetoric coming from the Reagan and, later, Bush administrations was preoccupied with fear-based, alarmist hatred. This rhetorical power promulgated and sustained an active right-wing coalition of local, state, and national leaders who took to partisan TV and radio platforms (as well as to the floor of the

US Senate) in racially infused attacks on abortion, homosexuality, drug addiction, crime, feminism, Black activism, as well as performers and artists who supposedly abused the money of tax-paying Americans. Zoe was one of many activists in fierce pussy and Gran Fury and ACT UP and WHAM and WAC and Queer Nation and Lesbian Avengers who were organizing countless actions, events, meetings, and public responses on multiple fronts. These activists, organizers, health-care workers, lawyers, teachers, journalists, artists, poets, and performers devoted their time, intelligence, energy, and passion to creating intersecting resistance movements. The rapidly escalating AIDS epidemic catalyzed a ferocious widespread response that over years of hard collective work fought the government's stories with inspired counternarratives that grounded multiple threads of action and activism around antiracism, gay, queer, transgender rights, women's health, patients' rights, and freedom of expression.

One of the things I learned immediately after moving to the city in 1991 was the power, potency, and force of that coming together and being together, of publicity and publicness, in moments of overwhelming political crisis. In the decades that have followed, I have come to understand that political crisis is a persistent condition, perpetuated by those invested in sustaining and maintaining political power. Nonetheless, I have personally grown more, not less, reliant on the moments in which we come together to process, share, respond, mourn, resist, strategize, sing, read, act, and scream.

In the catalogue essay *Postcards from America: X Rays from Hell*, written in 1989 for the Artists Space show *Witnesses: Against our Vanishing*, David Wojnarowicz writes:

To make the *private* into something *public* is an action that has terrific repercussions in the preinvented world. The government has the job of maintaining the day-to-day illusion of the ONE-TRIBE NATION. Each public disclosure of a private reality becomes something of a magnet that can attract others with a similar frame of reference; thus each public disclosure of a fragment of private reality serves as a dismantling tool against the illusion of ONE-TRIBE NATION; it lifts the curtains for a brief peek and reveals the probable existence of literally millions of tribes, the term GENERAL PUBLIC disintegrates. If GENERAL PUBLIC disintegrates, what happens next is the possibility of an X-RAY OF CIVILIZATION, an examination of its foundations.

*I want a president* was one of these X-rays, exposing, among other things, the structural exclusions on which mainstream politics operates. Some combination of the potency of its articulations and the tenacity of political and economic marginalization conspired to make the piece deeply and continuously relevant across its twenty-plus years of life.

In an acknowledgment of its timely demands, Zoe was asked to exhibit the work from mid-October 2016 to March 2017 on the High Line. The work has been enlarged from its original size and wheat-pasted on the western pillar of the Standard Hotel. I wish the piece would remain there for the next four years.

At thirty-feet tall on the High Line, the text resurfaces in public space, as it has, dynamically and unpredictably, countless times since Zoe originally made the work in 1992 for the back cover of a queer magazine that abruptly shut down before the intended issue went out. Zoe shared it with a few friends. Years before Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and YouTube, the text moved intimately and slowly from friend to friend or lover or girlfriend or boyfriend or date or stranger or other.

In 2006, Zoe found the original manuscript in a batch of old papers and put it up on her own refrigerator. I saw it there. As did a member of LTTR who copied it and used it in a work that the collective made for a show curated by Andrea Geyer and Christian Rattemeyer, *When Artists Say We*, at Artists Space. LTTR's room in the exhibition was designed like a bedroom with Xerox printouts of photos and pages from essays, poems, and texts that composed a discursive home or genealogy of a sort for feminist, queer, trans communities intersecting in political, social, and aesthetic ways.

Shortly after the Artists Space exhibition, LTTR invited Zoe to contribute to their journal. In response, she printed the text as a postcard, which was inserted in the fifth issue. She wanted it to be tethered to the journal but also to be able to detach and circulate freely again, through the mail or from hand to hand.

From that publication forward, the distribution of the text expanded and diverged. It has been printed on T-shirts, tote bags, posters, and handouts as part of a queer film and art festival in Stockholm; it has been rewritten and publicly read in Sweden, Estonia, Denmark, France, and Spain as a collective project initiated by a group of feminist artists and activists from Sweden. It has been performed by rapper and performance artist Mykki Blanco and set

to music and sung by Taylor Mac in *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. Sometimes Zoe is informed of its use, and sometimes she is not.

Walking by the piece on November 6, 2016, on my way to the event on the High Line, I saw people stopped in front of the wheat-pasted text, reading to themselves, reading aloud to each other, and, of course, taking pictures of the work. These pictures circulate in e-mails and on social media, and the text finds its way to countless others who will never see it posted thirty-feet tall on the High Line in New York but who print it out and tape it to their wall or their locker or hang it on their refrigerator. These people also pass it along to other friends and family and strangers who do the same or who do something different, like animating it in performed readings that they film and circulate again. I would imagine *I want a president* has been read or heard by hundreds of thousands of people. Its public grows larger everyday.

Thus the readings, performances, and responses of November 6, documented in this publication, join a mass of responses. The ten readers and performers who took the stage on the High Line on November 6th are artists and poets and activists and thinkers who each come out of intersecting webs of intellectual, aesthetic, political, spatial, temporal communities. Their words offered, to those of us gathered that day, a way of moving with and beyond the anxiety, exhaustion, and anticipation of that very specific moment in time. The event proposed concrete, grounded, generous, and thoughtful paths out of the vexing triad of rhetorical questions that were and had been spinning around with every updated cycle of news: What is happening? How did we get here? And what can be done? It seems so hard to recover the nuance of our collective emotions that day. Was it anxiety? Relief? Exhaustion? Incredulity? Terror? Anticipation? Promise? Perhaps all of those in divergent measures.

In the time between the November event and this publication, the election and the conflict at Standing Rock both resolved themselves in ways that, while not wholly surprising, are nonetheless shocking.

In early December, the US Army Corps of Engineers denied an easement for the construction of the pipeline under Lake Oahe. This was a hard-won victory achieved by the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and committed, intelligent, and passionate activists from inside and outside the Nation. The success, while precarious, affirms the power of protest and the strength of organized and persistent action.

In contrast, on November 8, 2016, Donald Trump—despite losing the popular vote by more than two million votes—was elected president of the United States. It is now our clear and present reality that this “win” was secured through spiteful, malicious, and sustained appeals to white nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and misogyny. It is now our clear and present reality that we are about to live in a country whose president despises, misunderstands, ignores, and actively defies the more just forms of governance that we have been precariously negotiating, navigating, and pushing toward. And with that reality has come a cascade of urgencies, which many are already immersed in addressing.

We woke up on November 9 not to a changed world but, rather, to a shattered one. The steep increase in public aggression and hate crimes since the election demonstrates an emboldened violence—rhetorical and physical—asserting itself in public life and public space.

While much of Trump’s reach is backward, the threat we face from his administration, his policies, and his rhetoric is a new one. The opportunists he has selected to join his administration and his cabinet represent an always-possible but not-yet-realized coalition that is on the precipice of wielding a specific power that they have not yet been able to exert. Our new reality requires sharp and incisive response and a whole field of defensive tactics to protect those of us most immediately and urgently threatened. And, it is equally necessary to think, imagine, organize, and act toward new political horizons and possibilities. For those of us who were present at the High Line on November 6, the energetic, compassionate, and intelligent work we were engaged in that day appears now even more vital. There is not one correct action or program needed but a million of them.

Wojnarowicz concludes *Postcards from America: X Rays from Hell*:

There is a tendency for people affected by this epidemic to police each other or prescribe what the most important gestures for dealing with this experience of loss would be. I resent that, and at the same time worry that friends will slowly become professional pallbearers, waiting for each death of their lovers, friends and neighbors, and polishing their funeral speeches; perfecting their rituals of death rather than a relatively simple ritual of life such as screaming in the streets. I feel this because of the urgency of the situation, because of seeing death coming in from the

edges of abstraction where those with the luxury of time have cast it. I imagine what it would be like if friends had a demonstration each time a lover or a friend or a stranger died of AIDS. I imagine what it would be like if, each time a lover, friend or stranger died of this disease, their friends, lovers, or neighbors would take the dead body and drive with it in a car a hundred miles an hour to Washington D.C. and blast through the gates of the White House and come to a screeching halt before the entrance and then dump their lifeless forms on the front steps. It would be comforting to see those friends, neighbors, lovers and strangers mark time and place and history in such a public way.

But, bottom line, this is my own feeling of urgency and need; bottom line, emotionally, even a tiny charcoal scratching done as a gesture to mark a person's response to this epidemic means whole worlds to me if it is hung in public; bottom line, each and every gesture carries a reverberation that is meaningful in its diversity; bottom line, we have to find our own forms of gesture and communication—you can never depend on the mass media to reflect us or our needs or our states of mind; bottom line, with enough gestures we can deafen the satellites and lift the curtains surrounding the control room.

*I want a president* is a call to us, a public who keeps showing up in ever-increasing numbers, a public who believes that there is value in the experiences of those systemically excluded from political power. The circulation of the piece and the attachments and responses that have propagated from it for more than twenty years inform us of the breadth of the desires we collectively hold. As many of the responses in this publication make evident, *I want a president* does not issue a reformist call. On the contrary, the piece deeply resonates with such a large and diverse public because, with ferocity and clarity, it offers us permission to desire ambitiously. I want a political possibility, it says. And this other political possibility, too. And this one and this one and this one.

January 5, 2017



I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their last lover to aids, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest, who held their lover in their arms and knew they were dying. I want a president with no airconditioning, a president who has stood on line at the clinic, at the dmv, at the welfare office and has been unemployed and layed off and sexually harrassed and gaybashed and deported. I want someone who has spent the night in the tombs and had a cross burned on their lawn and survived rape. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a Black woman for president. I want someone with bad teeth ~~and an attitude~~, someone who has eaten ~~that nasty~~ hospital food, someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.

Zoe Leonard, 1992



## ZOE LEONARD

### *Introduction*

I wrote *I want a president* twenty-four years ago. It's been circulating a lot lately, which has been something of a paradox for me. On the one hand, I'm thrilled and gratified that something I made more than twenty years ago might still be considered relevant. At the same time, I am utterly horrified and saddened that these words still have such relevance.

This is not a text I would write today. I don't think about identity politics in the same way—that is, I don't think that a specific set of identifiers or demographic markers necessarily leads to a particular political position.

I also think and feel that the Obamas changed something, irrevocably. I don't agree with everything that Barack Obama has done while in office—I don't agree with all his policies or positions—but he and Michelle Obama elevated the role of the presidency. They brought dignity, they brought grace, they brought intelligence and patience to their roles, and, perhaps most importantly, they have acknowledged complexity; complex issues aren't answered with one-liners; instead issues have been unpacked in long discursive speeches, complex considerations of tangled and complicated problems.

This kind of attention changes things. It has prompted a more nuanced and grounded conversation about race and gender, about class and civil life, about energy and climate. It has made me think about what civic life is, what civil life is.

In this context, it feels possible to understand myself as a citizen of this country, despite whatever differences I may have. And this is because there seems to be room for difference, for discussion.

So in some ways I was surprised when this text from 1992 resurfaced and began to circulate the way it has, why these words matter to people. When I was invited to install this work on the High Line, my fear was that it would be misunderstood as a call to vote for a third party. It's not. I'm with her.

I think that what's going on in the text is both a real call and a metaphoric one. Yes, I want a real person in that office—someone intelligent, experienced, and

compassionate—but this text also asks for something beyond any one person. It's a question of power. Who has it. Who gets a voice. Why are some of us marginalized, while others are ushered in? This is a structural question. This is a conceptual question. This is a real-life question. How do we choose to govern ourselves?

I suppose I am here today because I am still taken by the idea that government can be not only *of* the people and *for* the people but also, most importantly, *by* the people. And that means us, you and me. All of us here today. Right now.

## FRED MOTEN & STEFANO HARNEY

### *We Want a Precedent*

Our president, our deluded and degraded and demonic sovereign, in whatever form this abstraction of our abstract and wholly fictional equivalence will have taken, is a featureless point on a long and hopelessly straight line of knock-offs. It's like how Richard of Bordeaux, who can do whatever he wants except stop himself from doing whatever he wants, carries around his own deposition (disguised as the serial murder that constitutes the peaceful transition of power and its vulgar ceremonies) like a genetic flaw, as the illegitimate but inevitably heritable Bolingbroke-ass ambitions that leave him with ever increasingly etiolated capacities for self-reflection. So that in all its singularly focused limitation and qualification, in the relative nothingness of the prison that it calls a world, the all-encompassing and all-to-be-settled sphere that it stomps all over all the time, posing for an impossible arc of deadly and impossible pictures, our president, whichever one you ever wanted or didn't want, each one after the other in noticeable imperial decline, is just a sick, uneasy head in a hollow crown, making us watch it talk about how it's gonna kill us and then making us watch it kill us.

What we want is usually said to be all bound up with what we don't have. Zoe is talking about what we want, though, slantedly, in the dimensionless infinity room we can't even crawl around in when we cruise the rub and whirl of the city as a grove of aspen in late fall, in the mountains, held and unheld at the bottom of the sea. She's talking about what we want in relation to what we have when what we have is all this experience of not having, of shared nothing, of sharing nothingness. She speaks of and from a common underprivilege, from the privilege of the common underground, in and from the wealth of a precarity that goes from hand to hand, as a caress. Look at all the richness we have, she says, in having lost, in having suffered, in having been suffered, in suffering one another as if we were one another's little children, as if we were in love with one another, as if we loved one another so much that all one and another can do is disappear. We want a president, she says, who's loved and lost all that with us, who's shared our little all, our little nothing. Such a thing, the general and generative nothingness that is more and less than political, would be unprecedented. Maybe she doesn't want a president; maybe she wants a precedent, the endlessly new thing of the absolutely no thing, its zen xenogenerosity, its queerreproductivity, which keeps on beginning in beginning's absence as ungoverned and ungovernable care. Is it possible to want what you have become in suffering, both in the absence

and in the depths of suffrage, without wanting what it is to suffer? How can you want what it is to be all without wanting not to be whole? Is it possible to crave the general incompleteness without that seemingly unbearable desire to be pierced, ruptured, broken? In lieu of the president we want and don't want, we have Cedric Robinson, whom just a little while ago we lost. He says:

If, in some spiteful play, one were compelled by some demon or god to choose a transgression against Nietzsche so profound and fundamental to his temperament and intention as to break apart the ground upon which his philosophy stood, one could do no better than this: a society which has woven into its matrix for the purpose of suspending and neutralizing those forces antithetic to individual autonomy, the constructed reality that *all are equally incomplete*. . .

Then the principle of incompleteness—the absence of discrete organic integrity, if it were to occupy in a metaphysics the place of inequality in political philosophy, would bring to human society a paradigm subversive to political authority as the archetypical resolution, as the prescription for order.<sup>1</sup>

How can we come more accurately to understand American democracy—the brutality of our improvement, the viciousness of the ways we are put to use—as the praxis of privatized interest in inequality, expressed in the theory of the abstract equality of every complete individual, whose constant recitation brutally regulates the general interest in an equality given in and as an absolute incompleteness that defies individuation? How can we come to understand that the interanimation of our bondage and our freedom, our liberalism and our protest, therefore, is the metaphysical foundation of a national political philosophy that we have come to claim, against our will. Beyond that, and more importantly, how can we more intensely feel the physics of our surround, our social aesthetic, the gravity of our love and loss, our shared, radically sounded, radically sent incompleteness? How can we disavow that claim? How can we want to want the order from which our forced desire is derived to be drowned in the disorder of all (the nothing) we have? What would it mean to say we cannot take a position on politics—even the old and honorable “I don't vote because I'm Marxist” position? What if we said we have no options, that here we don't even have the option of no option? We think that would be good. Zoe gets us started: to think off of what we want is lightly to inhabit not being and not having, here.

1. Cedric J. Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 196–97.

WU TSANG

*The System Is Not Broken*

To vote means to express a wish or make a choice. For the past fifty years, voting in this country has been symbolic of who is seen as a citizen, who is entitled to rights and protections under the law, who is subject to the law. A vote is also a vow, among other civic duties like paying taxes or serving jail time, to commit to upholding the state. So what does it mean to vote in 2016?

As I was coming here yesterday, I was reflecting on how the brutal extremities of this year have played out in my immediate community. For example, some might say this is a moment of extreme visibility or media obsession with transgender people. Yet at the same time we face unprecedented violence. It seems like the more they celebrate us (or at least our bodies and appearances), the more they kill us and lock us behind bars, often in solitary confinement for our so-called safety.

We may know the stories about how the system adapts to take control of us absolutely, but I guess it's different and much more sickening to experience it playing out. Over the past couple of years, my whole belief in the inevitable progress of civil rights has actually come undone.

In 2008 we won a huge symbolic victory of having a black president, but that seems to have obscured the fact that the actual job of being the US president means ultimately upholding an ever-expanding capitalist war machine disguised as "liberal democracy." What is this world we've created in the so-called era of multiculturalism? We now have the most drone strikes, the most terrifying domestic surveillance, the most racist and militarized police, the most immigrants deported, the most brown people criminalized and murdered by cops or locked in prisons and detention centers. The rich are growing fewer and far richer, while the rest of us are falling through a disappearing safety net and being swallowed by debt.

They privatize and coopt everything that we try to nurture and create in response to this state of war, including our social movements. And these developments are not new, they are as old as the colonialism and slavery that this nation was founded on—just in new forms that are now more invisible and

harder to talk about. The system is not broken. It's actually highly effective. Now more than ever.

I don't want a president. I don't want a dyke for president. We may even have a dyke for president in the next decade or two, but she will probably be an Ellen-type rich, white lesbian who can check another box. I don't want Laverne Cox for president or any other marginalized person who has managed to gain enough mainstream visibility to perpetuate power the way it has always operated. I don't want a president, if running this country means sadistically destroying other peoples' countries with our paramilitaries and complicit dictators and globalized culture.

So what's at stake here? What do we elect in these choices? So we can afford nicer clothes, so our products can be delivered on time, so we can Google anything, so we can fall in love, get married, feel cultured and sophisticated and connected, and kill others indiscriminately for the "right" to do so? Is our liberal democratic way of life worth the hundreds of children murdered by our drones, or the thousands of refugees drowned while escaping wars that we orchestrate, or the millions of disproportionately poor people and people of color locked away in for-profit jails, or the countless thousands of trans people and others who are not seen as humans, suffering premature death—so that what? We can live a little longer and consume a little bit more shit?

Our lives are more meaningful than that. Or maybe better yet, we should say that our lives are not worth anything measurable in this American value system.

In the words of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten:

We need to stop worrying so much about how [the state] kills, regulates, and accumulates us, and worry more about how we kill, deregulate, and disperse it. We have to love and revere our survival, which is (in) our resistance. We have to love our refusal of what has been refused.<sup>1</sup>

The only option I can see at this point is—I agree with Fred—we have to refuse what has been refused to us. The system is not broken. It's doing exactly what it intended to do. I've also been thinking . . . Reina Gossett recently posed this question at Arika's conference on prison abolition: "Is there anything to be gained in claiming criminality as a political position if it means embracing the ungovernability of our social entanglements?"<sup>2</sup>

Zoe's piece inspires me to think about what radical transformation actually feels like. It's not about who we elect, or that anyone can lead us—it's about how we spend our time together and show up for each other. Her poetry brings our love and our struggles onto the surface of the city.

Who the fuck are we to want to rule the world? Let's face it: we are never going to run the world, because to do so would mean trading in the beautiful parts of us that make us wild, make us brown, make us queer, lovers, broken, fallen, dispersed, disabled, impossible, criminal . . . They will eventually take even these qualities from us too—nothing is sacred—so we need to keep moving and changing shape, inventing new ways to ask the questions. We need to keep fighting, knowing that we are going to lose. Only in that loss will we gain our survival.

1. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Michael Brown," *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture*, 42, no. 4, Dossier: On Race and Innovation (2015): 81–87.
2. Reina Gossett, remarks at "Subjection to Subjection: Reina Gossett, Saidiya Hartman, and Charlene Sinclair," organized by Arika, Edinburgh, September 28, 2014.



## MORGAN BASSICHIS

### *Response to Zoe Leonard's "I want a president"*

It is so good to be back on the High Line. What an honor and a thrill. I've met so many amazing people here—in the macaroon line, in the bathroom line, in the actual bathroom. I realized as I was walking here today that I actually met my mentees on the High Line. First of all, let me pause: do you guys have mentees? If not, I'm not trying to shame you, but I honestly can't believe you. It's very important. Basically we have a planet. And that planet—who knows if it will even stay a planet. And if we don't have mentees, literally who will remember us? Who will remember what we were like? I remember when I met my mentees on the High Line, they were so sweet, these little gay—actually I don't know how they identify, if they identify as my mentees, I shouldn't assume, because you don't know how people identify. Identity is more like how you feel about how they identify. But when I check in with myself, yes, they do feel like my mentees, so, yes. When I met them they were so tiny. They were like gay twins. They were covered in tablets, literally covered. It was kind of science fiction-y. Shoulder tablet, hip tablet, peck tablet, like they were texting their pecks, you know? Looking anywhere but where they were walking. One wrong step they could have fallen onto Tenth Avenue or found themselves rolling around in a tick bush. They were in danger, and I could see it, I could see it from a mile away, and so I just made it my business to walk a few feet behind them and keep an eye on them, and eventually I got up the courage to just say, in a super quiet and reassuring voice, "I'm watching you." Or not "I'm watching you" but "I see you"—I don't remember the exact words—but they were so startled, because this is the thing all you prospective mentors need to know: mentees will never ask for your help. They'll always kind of run away, like these two kids, they literally started running. And so I just started running after them, which is very difficult because the High Line is incredibly narrow, but I could tell they really needed to use their legs and get energy out. So I immediately supported them and just started pushing all this blonde, all this Swedish or Finnish blonde or whatever, screaming "Let them through! Let them live!"

It was powerful, for them obviously but also for me. I got just as much out of it. I think of the High Line as kind of like our commons, you know? Like the common room of our house, or someone's house that we live in. And there's this amazing, gorgeous common room that you can't "sit down in" or "put

your stuff in” or whatever, but you can completely walk through anytime you want, if no one else is there. So not everything is bad, you guys.

But obviously it has been an intense time for me, with my thumb [points to profoundly injured, highly bandaged left thumb, the “elephant in the room”], which I’m not going to talk about. I do just want to put up a small boundary around that. Which is hard because the organizers of the event—Zoe, in particular—have kept insisting, “We really need you to talk about it, it’s important, the personal, the political,” all that stuff. But I want to keep today about Zoe and her amazing poster from 1992. This is not about me. I will say, very briefly, that my generosity—my desire for others to be happy and literally fed—has often gotten me in trouble, and this time it almost cost me my life. Or if not my “life” then definitely a significant part of my thumb. That’s all I can say.

I’ve been having such a hard time figuring out what to say today, because there’s so much noise out there, so much to read. I literally wake up every morning in this shadow of, like, seventeen Elena Ferrante books, each one more unopened than the last, just screaming at me, like “You don’t care about Naples?” It’s been so hard to hear my own inner voice. So I did what I always do: I went on one of my cleanses. I did my annual, well first-annual, November Lexapro cleanse. Have you guys done this before? It’s super simple, basically you just take your medication, consistently, and then you wake up one day and you just stop. I’m trying to think if there any other important details . . . No I think that’s it. It’s highly effective, you know immediately when it starts working because you start basically crying all the time and you get the flu but it’s not “the flu.” Does this make sense? I’m trying not to be too science-y. It’s not like “doctor-approved” from the whole medical industrial system, but that’s exactly why it’s so powerful.

And my cleanse actually helped me to hear my inner voice, and you know what it told me? To call my mother. So I called her and was totally honest. I said, “I know we haven’t talked in a while.” And she was super defensive; she said, “But we talked yesterday,” and I was like, “I didn’t call to talk about that, I called to talk about 1992. I need to know about 1992.” She gave me this whole spiel about how it was the “middle of the night” and she “didn’t understand my questions,” before pausing for a moment and finally, with exasperation, disclosing: “It was the year of Natalie Cole.” Do you guys remember this? It was the year she won the Grammy for Best Song, Best Album, Best Record. Honestly, I could not tell you the difference between

those things. She performed with her late father Nat King Cole on a big screen behind her, do you remember? It was like she brought him back from the dead. That was the message I needed.

I am so inspired by all the athletes taking a knee right now and sitting out the national anthem—that spell that we cast over and over—they’re just not saying the spell, they’re divesting from the spell. And Zoe’s piece is like a spell, a spell from 1992. And Natalie Cole was doing this spell in 1992, and I thought maybe her spell wanted to come back again, too. So I thought we could sing it together, not to me, but with me, to each other, in rounds. Would you?

*Unforgettable, that's what you are  
Unforgettable though near or far  
Like a song of love that clings to me  
How the thought of you does things to me  
Never before has someone been more  
Unforgettable in every way  
And forever more, that's how you'll stay  
That's why, darling, it's incredible  
That someone so unforgettable  
Thinks that I am unforgettable too*

MEL ELBERG  
*FREAK FLAG*

. . .

People singing; people with song mouths connecting with song  
hearts; people who must sing or die; people whose song  
hearts break if there is no song mouth; these are my people.

—Carl Sandburg, excerpt from “Work Gangs”

. . .

more than what the sky can measure      pointedly   the watchwoman  
dreamt a saying      there's his belt  
and holster and right   below that  
you can see the star made of all   the eyes can't meet yet  
impending   stateless      as the blur green blimp   toward which it labors  
as as light   action is endless  
conflicted   ungovernable  
I heard something that wasn't there singing      trumble   into the years   today  
the invisible charge   resistance   suggested sex      as a lifetime  
of celestial augmentation   wooed to unblanket   those darts pull themselves   further out  
    & I see you  
decentralize beauty      like this

. . .

may we

a me and anyone else      stand

alone as we come together      individual temps a-hum

the long way to hear love's texture from the first      affliction

the song goes      *separate*

*them*      recombine them

soft-listening is a dare-escalating-consequence

your raucous tastes      their habit of sleeping

in a field far faraway      from your own field

where a will to kindness in hellfire      soundly gathers

bad mouths      palms barking

at a bald knit forehead

miss you

. . .

from how far does the discontent   connect   or   travel over water

I wanted to kiss your voice   a self showing its bigger body

what it really is   to aim your money at a cosmos   uncuffed to logistics

*Un suffer*

Amelia says

the entrenched   the anointed   *I know you very well*

poem by dead woman   who you are when you're lost

to the hard mountain midranges of night   *my shelves*

in pincer position   what   grows outward   discordant

invisible   contagious   only one more beam to get the roof on

right   every sentence's   whole long life

each second   in a little greenhouse   of the solar system

revisions

to the earth's personal philosophy

. . .

at my most unemployable I still roll through phases of this desire  
to sleep in the basement between nature and its threads to be resting in the look of

sitters for a 100 year old portrait who didn't know what  
the image would come to mean

*many die in the water*

*and some drink from that*

water

in delirium

belt and holster bow and quiver

*in one direction* says Celan

*two kinds of strangeness might lay next*

*to each other*

between you and the sky this mother

making strange look both effortless

and fundamental

doublewide yards split our houses

haunted for other exchanges grown over

a night we spent together inside her country

. . .

many die in the water

and some drink from that water

in delirium my kittens

promised a more pleasurable future

for over which some death now wants to eat their

long mixed feelings in late blooming hours with the cool night text

of relation the harsher moments appeal to predecessors in question

worth their stars in all sweet memories

. . .

two stars a shooting at least two beats the betrayed

unembraceable bit of glimmer truth chance their way

down the throat of the city my lover has left at least once a night the hot mics

constant mirror monitor the gets in the way of us making it better

even the siren sunset now between our hands

a bow and a quiver lonely she

crossed the threshold

and the threshold groaned



. . .

to my most *intimately sectioned* terrify them mid-way if their soul-dead  
heart-heads-off parade continues its threat to your songline  
my ears are about the hurt pimped between her object and it's deerheart  
in my time to see or hear of more justice than not surround  
more pansies less pretense  
money as death and the languages of permanent revolution  
dance themselves beyond incorporation  
to attend to remagnetize more not less  
human potentials  
as poems  
and vice versa  
gross transactions  
of care outside their jurisdiction  
for the interdependence of everyone trying to get free  
at which point we can begin to fully talk like this  
I want my most radical  
endeavors to presage themselves  
like a duula clock whose hands glide instead of  
clicking starlighted are the instruments measuring  
more

. . .

if you drive through    the public station where love is  
                 both considerate of and wants    to void the space  
between our stars    our legs    the sea is the sky  
                 the lights are the pieces of time    *what we see    awake is death*  
*what we hear asleep is sleep*    understanding thrives in the shade  
                 piped in from the corners of just woke    eyelids  
tender to your    who you are's    be tender    to your friends    tenderize    the  
so called  
                 meaningless so-called post emotional liaison with the universes and  
                 meet  
                 for the first time again  
                 your hearts mad oceanic capacity

## MALIK GAINES

### *A Reading of Josephine Baker's "Speech at the March on Washington" (1963)*

*The performer Josephine Baker made a rare trip to the United States in 1963 to attend the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. She was fifty-seven. Baker addressed the crowd gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial wearing a military-style skirt suit adorned with the medals she had been awarded by France for her clandestine work with the Resistance during World War II, accentuating politically her history of costumed performance. Having written about Baker and her speech, I began reading it aloud as a part of a lecture about the singer Sylvester, who was inspired by Baker. I memorized the speech and delivered it, wearing a skirt suit and medals, as a part of My Barbarian's performance Post-Party Dream-State Caucus at the New Museum, New York, on November 3, 2016. Other speeches and anthems were delivered that evening, and Zoe Leonard read her statement I want a president for the first time publicly. Days later, I delivered the speech again for the audience assembled for Leonard's event on the High Line. In it, Baker tells her idiosyncratic story of resistance and connects her decades of work as a remarkable black performer to the civil-rights movement unfolding in front of her.*

Friends and family . . . you know I have lived a long time and I have come a long way. And you must know now that what I did, I did originally for myself. Then later, as these things began happening to me, I wondered if they were happening to you, and then I knew they must be. And I knew that you had no way to defend yourselves, as I had.

And as I continued to do the things I did, and to say the things I said, they began to beat me. Not beat me, mind you, with a club—but you know, I have seen that done too—but they beat me with their pens, with their writings. And friends, that is much worse.

When I was a child and they burned me out of my home, I was frightened and I ran away. Eventually I ran far away. It was to a place called France. Many of you have been there, and many have not. But I must tell you, ladies and gentlemen, in that country I never feared. It was like a fairyland place.

And I need not tell you that wonderful things happened to me there. Now I know that all you children don't know who Josephine Baker is, but you ask Grandma and Grandpa and they will tell you. You know what they will say. "Why, she was a devil." And you know something . . . why, they are right. I was too. I was a devil in other countries, and I was a little devil in America too.

But I must tell you, when I was young in Paris, strange things happened to me. And these things had never happened to me before. When I left St. Louis a long time ago, the conductor directed me to the last car. And you all know what that means.

But when I ran away, yes, when I ran away to another country, I didn't have to do that. I could go into any restaurant I wanted to, and I could drink water anyplace I wanted to, and I didn't have to go to a colored toilet either, and I have to tell you it was nice, and I got used to it, and I liked it, and I wasn't afraid anymore that someone would shout at me and say, "Nigger, go to the end of the line." But you know, I rarely ever used that word. You also know that it has been shouted at me many times.

So over there, far away, I was happy, and because I was happy I had some success, and you know that too.

Then after a long time, I came to America to be in a great show for Mr. Ziegfeld, and you know Josephine was happy. You know that. Because I wanted to tell everyone in my country about myself. I wanted to let everyone know that I made good, and you know too that that is only natural.

But on that great big beautiful ship, I had a bad experience. A very important star was to sit with me for dinner, and at the last moment I discovered she didn't want to eat with a colored woman. I can tell you it was some blow.

And I won't bother to mention her name, because it is not important, and anyway, now she is dead.

And when I got to New York way back then, I had other blows—when they would not let me check into the good hotels because I was colored, or eat in certain restaurants. And then I went to Atlanta, and it was a horror to me. And I said to myself, My God, I am Josephine, and if they do this to me, what do they do to the other people in America?

You know, friends, that I do not lie to you when I tell you I have walked into the palaces of kings and queens and into the houses of presidents. And much more. But I could not walk into a hotel in America and get a cup of coffee, and that made me mad. And when I get mad, you know that I open my big mouth. And then look out, 'cause when Josephine opens her mouth, they hear it all over the world. So I did open my mouth, and you know I did scream, and when I demanded what I was supposed to have and what I was entitled to, they still would not give it to me.

So then they thought they could smear me, and the best way to do that was to call me a communist. And you know, too, what that meant. Those were dreaded words in those days, and I want to tell you also that I was hounded by the government agencies in America, and there was never one ounce of proof that I was a communist. But they were mad. They were mad because I told the truth. And the truth was that all I wanted was a cup of coffee. But I wanted that cup of coffee where I wanted to drink it, and I had the money to pay for it, so why shouldn't I have it where I wanted it?

Friends and brothers and sisters, that is how it went. And when I screamed loud enough, they started to open that door just a little bit, and we all started to be able to squeeze through it. Not just the colored people, but the others as well, the other minorities too, the Orientals, and the Mexicans, and the Indians, both those here in the United States and those from India.

Now I am not going to stand in front of all of you today and take credit for what is happening now. I cannot do that. But I want to take credit for telling you how to do the same thing, and when you scream, friends, I know you will be heard. And you will be heard now.

But you young people must do one thing, and I know you have heard this story a thousand times from your mothers and fathers, like I did from my mama. I didn't take her advice. But I accomplished the same in another fashion. You must get an education. You must go to school, and you must learn to protect yourself. And you must learn to protect yourself with the pen, and not the gun. Then you can answer them, and I can tell you—and I don't want to sound corny—but friends, the pen really is mightier than the sword.

I am not a young woman now, friends. My life is behind me. There is not too much fire burning inside me. And before it goes out, I want you to use what is

left to light that fire in you. So that you can carry on, and so that you can do those things that I have done. Then, when my fires have burned out, and I go where we all go someday, I can be happy.

You know I have always taken the rocky path. I never took the easy one, but as I get older, and as I knew I had the power and the strength, I took that rocky path, and I tried to smooth it out a little. I wanted to make it easier for you. I want you to have a chance at what I had. But I do not want you to have to run away to get it. And mothers and fathers, if it is too late for you, think of your children. Make it safe here so they do not have to run away, for I want for you and your children what I had.

Ladies and gentlemen, my friends and family, I have just been handed a little note, as you probably say. It is an invitation to visit the president of the United States in his home, the White House.

I am greatly honored. But I must tell you that a colored woman—or, as you say it here in America, a black woman—is not going there. It is a woman. It is Josephine Baker.

This is a great honor for me. Someday I want you children out there to have that great honor too. And we know that that time is not someday. We know that that time is now.

I thank you, and may God bless you. And may He continue to bless you long after I am gone.

## ALEXANDRO SEGADE

### *25 Years*

July 1992. Malik was coming to visit me in San Diego that first summer after starting UCLA. In the three quarters that comprised the school year, I had gone through major transformations: I did drugs, went to raves, shaved my head, pierced my nose, turned gay. I first came out to Karen and Jennifer, my friends from freshman orientation, and with them had imagined who my boyfriend would be: a Queer Nation activist, sullen, with tattooed arms, a goatee, pierced nipples, a go-go boy at Club Fuck who listened to industrial and lived on the east side and made underground movies. But then, one rainy night in the dorms, I met Malik. And now, he was coming to see my family home, sleep over in my childhood bedroom. Malik pulled up in his new red Mazda, Annie Lennox singing “Why,” and him singing along, just like in the dorms, listening to Annie, touching each other’s dicks in the dark bottom bunk. Malik’s straight roommate Gene teased us that we made him feel lonely; we tried not to shake the bed too much.

Malik politely answered my parents’ questions with a freckle-faced smile. He dressed in the uniform of a gay boy who worked at the Gap: white-buttoned shirt tucked into red jeans with a black leather belt and matching Doc Martens. Malik was the boyfriend material my parents wanted for me: a combination of safe—meaning my age and clean cut and healthy looking—and interesting—meaning from another academic family. All four of our parents were teachers, liberal-minded intellectuals who had married people from other racial groups, who now had to figure out how to deal with having gay sons, something they weren’t always good at. When I had first come out to my folks, over a pay phone on campus, my persistent allergies made them think I had a cold, which made them think I was dying, the phrases “I’m gay” and “I have AIDS” difficult to untether in the contemporary vocabulary. Now, it was summer, and Malik’s sunny temperament put them at ease: my mom noted that with him around I had better manners. The conversation during dinner at a fish restaurant overlooking the water had a pointed subtext: that we should be monogamous, settle down at seventeen, and survive the crisis, huddled together under a blanket, naked if need be but alive.

When we got home, my parents went to bed, and Malik and I were alone in my room. I had painted the walls dark red in my senior year of high school, and put up posters of Kate Bush and the green-haired anime character Eve, from Megazone 23. My bed was too small for both of us to sit on, so we piled blankets on the carpet and, in underwear and T-shirts, I watched him roll a tight, elegant joint. What my parents did not know about Malik is that he was just getting out of a relationship with a twenty-eight-year-old who had been his boss. "His apartment was so weird," he said, licking his finger and touching spit to the glowing end, controlling its burn. "A framed Marilyn Monroe poster on the floor and practically no furniture. Bare, off-white walls. Something was wrong with him." I inhaled, my eyes fixing on Malik's striped Calvin Klein boxer briefs. In the dim light of the red room, I thought about how much I wanted to lay my face on that warm cotton. "One thing about Paul, though," he said, breaking the lull, "is he taught me some things. He liked to rim me. I didn't know what that was. Do you?" I had read accounts of "rim jobs" in my dad's Penthouse magazines, but as often happens in moments of imminent sex, I was speechless. "Lay on your back," he said. "And lift your legs." I saw my underwear tossed across the room. Malik held my ankles wide apart, bending my spine into a curve. "You'll like this," he whispered. His hands ran down my calves. He placed my hand on my dick. I felt a quick lick, like someone tasting someone else's ice cream. He pulled away, and I felt his cool breath, before his tongue came back, prodding. The cum spurted across my stomach. His face between my legs, he wiped his mouth. Standing above me, he turned around. I grabbed his butt, stuck my face in deep. He pressed against my face, as I sank back onto the carpet, my head under his ass. Breathing in, I fucked him with my mouth. His balls bounced on my chin, and, exhaling loudly, he spurted all over me, dribbling onto my happy trail when I stood up to kiss him. "Uhhhh," he said, pushing me away, laughing, "You've just had your face in my butt . . ." Using his underwear, he cleaned me up slowly, then fell quickly asleep.

I lay down on the floor, watching him, certain my parents had heard. I was a little worried, wondering if what we had just done was safe, imagining that two gay bodies, when rubbed together, could spontaneously produce disease. I remembered that the safe sex brochure they passed out at the gay-lesbian alliance suggested you cut a condom in half, put it between the butt cheeks, and lick that, if you wanted oral-anal contact. How pointless that precaution seemed, holding him against me, the taste of each other on our mouths. Then, as now, I knew, as I know now, that whenever together, we were, we are, safe.



## LAYLI LONG SOLDIER

### *The Presidential Terms of “Brother” and “Sister”*

*This piece was originally intended for sharing verbally, in the moment, and as a one-time-only, from-the-heart offering. It is here, now, in written form. Yet my hope is that it can be read as if being heard. Understood by being felt.*

My name is Layli Long Soldier. I reside in Santa Fe, NM. I am a citizen of the United States. I am also an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, which means that I am also a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation, located on land known as the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Right now, our people—the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota people, the Oceti Sakowin—are in a state of crisis. Our relatives in Standing Rock, ND, are doing everything they can to protect their homeland and water from the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, from the desecration of their sacred sites and burial grounds, from toxic destruction of this home that has been theirs for thousands of years and will be home to their grandchildren for generations to come. In the past few days, the people of Standing Rock have suffered the assault of concussion bombs, rubber bullets, mace, tasers, billy clubs, and incarceration in their attempts to protect, so I admit that this is all I can think about right now. For this reason, today, I wanted to read something that is not my voice alone. I come here to share the voices of others, our people.

Responding to Zoe Leonard’s piece was difficult. To even ATTEMPT to articulate what kind of US President I’d like, I can feel it in my stomach . . . something blooms . . . and at the center, a bitter nectar of great, vacuous silence. It happens every time, and anytime, I think of a US president. Because at the threshold of the motivations and interests of an American president, American democracy, American capitalism, and this great American dream—there is the wall; a great, ever-present divide between all of this and → Native people. For example, in 2009, our current president spoke before a national conference of Native leaders, saying:

Brothers and sisters here. I pledged to all of you . . . I’d be a partner with all of you in the spirit of a true nation-to-nation relationship. I hope I’ve done right by you. We know the history that we share. It’s a history marked by violence, and treaties were violated, promises were broken, when Washington

thought it knew what was best for you. That is a history that we've got to acknowledge before we move forward. That's why I want you to know that I'm absolutely committed to moving forward with you and forging with you a new and better future. It's a commitment to getting this relationship right so that you can be full partners in the American economy, so your children and grandchildren can have an equal shot at pursuing the American dream. Few areas hold as much promise as clean energy. Up to fifteen percent of our potential wind energy resources are on Native American land and the potential for solar energy is even higher. We have a lot to learn from . . . uuuuuhhhh . . . your nations. Before we get at it I want to close with this: I know you've heard this song from Washington before. I know you've often heard grand promises that sound good but rarely materialize. And each time you're told this time will be different. I get it. I'm on your side. I understand what it means to be an outsider. What it means to feel ignored and forgotten. And what it means to struggle. So you will not be forgotten as long as I'm in this White House.<sup>1</sup>

But a few days ago, as violence escalated in Standing Rock and pipeline construction has come within a quarter mile of the Missouri River, our US president said he will wait before taking any action and allow this situation to "play out."

When President Obama addressed our leaders, he addressed them as his "brothers and sisters." I have thought a lot about what that means to him. I have thought about what it means to me.

I have wondered, could we ever elect a US president whose brother explains, "We are trying to protect land that was taken from us and now we're being seen as trespassers on our own land. Our people are tired and sick. Our people are DONE with sacrificing self-determination. . . . It's infuriating to look at hills that have our ancestors buried there. Sacred ground, burial mounds carrying our grandparents. And we're told that we can't walk there. We can't pray there. We can't put our bodies on the line to protect it. That pain runs deep."<sup>2</sup> Could we have a president whose brother looks straight through, whose brother holds still, whose brother knows it is enough?

Or could we elect a president whose own children, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren run on foot, nearly two thousand miles from Standing Rock, ND, to Washington, DC, to deliver a petition with 140,000 signatures for the halt

of the Dakota Access Pipeline, a president whose own daughters say, “I’m running to send a message that our Lakota voices need to be heard.” And, “The world needs to know we are here. They did not take us out. We are still here.” Will we, *could* we, elect a president whose daughters ran from Standing Rock to Washington, DC, taking each stride with the voices of their family in their bodies, a deep, inner chorus to “keep going, keep going.”<sup>3</sup>

Will we ever see a president whose uncle rejects the terms “protester,” “uprising,” or “environmental activist”? Whose uncle says, “We are not going up [to North Dakota] to protest, we are going up to protect.”<sup>4</sup>

Will a US president ever take office, whose own sister has stood at the front line in Standing Rock, who describes the moment saying, “They started moving in and I said, ‘You’re gonna’ arrest us now, right? You’re gonna’ make criminals out of us now, right?’ We wanted to hold the line but they started shooting. . . . They sprayed everybody in the face and it went in my mouth. I couldn’t breathe. . . . Concussion grenades went off. I just covered my ears and dropped down. I had a feather in my hand and I put my hands up. I just stayed there and I prayed the whole time. If we poison the water, we poison ourselves.”<sup>5</sup> Will we ever have a US President with a sister who braves the clearest enunciation in her crying?

Could we possibly elect a president whose brother-in-law is a Diné chef who volunteered to cook in the camp at Standing Rock. A brother-in-law who says, “When I stepped into the pantry in the tent, that’s all I [saw]—a stack of flour just ceiling high, nothing but canned goods, processed foods. . . . As a Native chef, it brought back this ancestral memory of survival food, when our ancestors were put in internment camps . . . put on reservations, . . . given government rations, commodities like lard, flour, sugar—and there were no natural resources or natural food to be found.”<sup>6</sup> Will there ever be a US president whose brother-in-law cooks up a pot of bison and blue hominy stew, whose brother-in-law remembers the tastes of his people?

And will we ever elect a president whose mother travels to Standing Rock and participates in a ceremony to burn the Doctrine of Discovery among clergy and tribal leaders, whose mother stands at the mic to say, “I am a survivor of boarding schools. I was a part of boarding schools for nine years. I have intergenerational trauma and I’m trying to heal from that. I was just silent for over fifty years. [I didn’t] tell anybody, not even my family.”<sup>7</sup> Could we elect a president whose mother’s voice shakes as it rises? Whose mother could not say it otherwise?

Will we elect a president whose sister grew up in Standing Rock, who posts updates online daily? Who says, “When I talk about Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline, people often ask me why do you bring up so many other issues: boarding schools, broken treaties, missing and murdered Indigenous women? It’s because they’re all connected,” she says. “They’re interdependent.”<sup>8</sup> Might we trust a president whose sister can see the wide stretch of land, hill, mountain, burial site, river, the past and present? Whose sister sees the connections between?

Would we ever elect a president whose family is accused of holding onto and living in the past, sneered at, and asked to let go? Whose family is told this, always and whenever, they fight for their rights, conveniently told this as they ask to be heard.

This election, I doubt I will see a president elected who truly considers Native people as his/her relatives, who considers this land not just a stretch of resources, but regards this land as his/her mother. But I wonder if I will ever, in my lifetime, see a president who understands hair as being connected to knowledge and wisdom, who knows that hair is connected to water, too. I wonder then, in my lifetime, if I will ever see a US president with hair down to the waist.

1. US President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President During the Opening of the Tribal Nations Conference & Interactive Discussion with Tribal Leaders,” speech delivered at Tribal Nations Conference, November 5, 2009. Transcript available at [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov).
2. Dallas Goldtooth, commentary in online video by Fusion, “Trespassing on Your Own Land at Standing Rock,” posted November 1, 2016.
3. Unnamed Lakota/Dakota youth, commentary in an online video by Respect Our Water, “Oceti Sakowin Youth and Allies/Relay Run to Washington, DC,” posted on July 18, 2016.
4. Unnamed Oglala Lakota speaker, commentary in an online video by Flying Limbs Productions, “Prayer Run to Standing Rock,” posted October 13, 2016. See speaker at 00:27 seconds.
5. Kandi Mossett, a journalist for Indigenous Environmental Network, testimony in an online video by Fusion, “Inside the Mass Arrests for NoDAPL,” posted on November 2, 2016.
6. Chef Brian Yazzie, quoted in an online article by National Public Radio, “A Navajo Chef Gives an Glimpse Inside the Makeshift Kitchens at Standing Rock,” November 5, 2016.
7. Susie Silversmith, a Diné representative of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, in an online video by Richard Silversmith, “CRCNA Rejects the Doctrine of Discovery at Standing Rock,” posted on November 3, 2016.
8. Waniya Locke, interview with author, September 16, 2016.

PAMELA SNEED

*Three Poems*

*Rope-a-Dope: For Sandra Bland*

I had just begun to relax  
celebrate the marriage equality ruling  
I had just begun feeling with Obama I was  
watching Ali in trouble off the ropes  
delivering to his opponents the rope-a-dope  
my father's eyes  
excitement  
I was just beginning to breathe air  
feel exhilarated at images of  
Joe Biden and President Obama running  
down halls of the White House with rainbow flags  
like boys with kites—soaring  
I was just beginning to forgive deaths of my brothers  
to AIDS  
not forget  
there should still be tribunals  
for them and every woman abused  
by the medical system  
I had just begun to turn a corner on Mike Brown, Freddie Gray  
Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, the massacre at AME  
not think of it all everyday  
Then the police kill this young Black girl in custody in Texas  
claim she committed suicide  
I remember we're a war nation  
in war times  
I imagine how James, Bayard, Nina felt  
seeing a nation turn its dogs, teeth, gas, hoses, bullets,

on children, adults, humans  
I can't stop thinking about Steve Biko  
his battered face  
they say he hung himself too  
the world's outrage  
who will pray now  
for us  
America

## Excerpt from *Mother Tongue*

However, before I talk about shame and fear, I have to say  
how proud I am in my own neighborhood seeing  
young bulldaggers, dykes, queer couples, unmistakably lovers  
who walk down streets, kiss and hold hands,  
how much has changed now even in my own lifetime  
whereas only yesterday these things were impossible.  
I would like to tell you about how my heart surged,  
the pride I felt seeing *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker on Broadway  
and me and every single person in that theater row sobbing hysterically  
when Celie as played then by Fantasia leaned over to kiss singer Shug Avery  
and realizing even in the most modern times I had rarely seen Black people  
express love towards each other in a large forum  
and I had never seen two Black women publicly kiss  
outside of a bar setting.  
I experienced the same feeling of pride at my first lesbian wedding,  
even though I'm not into weddings, I was touched deeply at  
watching two women able to openly celebrate love  
and realized the harm it can do to a person when all of their life  
they have to hide, have no means to celebrate their love  
and the importance of public acknowledgment.  
I think too about slaves and how everything they loved

was torn asunder, how the system separated and dehumanized them,  
said slaves had no capacity to love.

I want to tell you again about the pride and joy I felt the day  
I was with a woman watching her 8 year old daughter play soccer,  
afterwards my lover's work friend approached and sensing  
something between us asked, "Oh, is she your sister?"  
My lover looked at her and answered no point blank,  
"This is my lover," she said when it could have been just as easy  
to lie, or to avoid the question.

In saying all of this, I know no matter where I go, how long  
and how far, my own heart will always be queer.

I realize now when I look at the women's community,  
in much the same way Martin Luther King once looked  
over a crowd gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington  
at those who wanted and demanded recognition under the law,  
who no longer wanted to remain separate and unequal,  
like him, I too have a dream.

Like something at the end of that film *Gladiator*  
where a slave becomes a great fighter and defender of Rome.  
At the end when the soldier lays dying he envisions Rome's greatness,  
then to go home to his family and rest. I too have a dream.

Like unfreed slaves, those that worked plantations,  
died in sickness, childbirth infancy, field hands, sharecroppers  
and house niggahs, I too have a dream, like women suffragists  
who fought for rights to read, vote, work, leave the home  
I have a dream, like those Dahomeyan Amazons poet Audre Lorde  
once spoke of so valiantly, those one-breasted warriors,  
like turn-of-the-century abolitionists and educators, I have a dream.

From Ouidah to Benin to Ghana to Mississippi from Selma to Alabama,  
Sierra Leone, Massachusetts, Robben Island South Africa, Jo Burg,  
Cape Town, Cuba, China, Mexico, I have a dream, with the spirit  
of my ancestor's bodies' blood disintegrated into waters of the Atlantic,  
off coasts of the Caribbean,

Elegua, Erzulie, Shango, Oya, I call you, in the name  
of Sakia Gunn, Matthew Shepard, Jorge Steven Lopez,  
Mercado, Tyler Clementi, and those young gays slain recently in a  
nightclub in Orlando, I have a dream,  
Like slain student civil-rights workers spat at, kicked,  
maimed, ridiculed, scorned, left to die, I have a dream.  
Like the sons and daughters of immigrant workers  
I have a dream.  
Like feminist poet Judy Grahn once wrote I believe  
in a circle, a gathering of women, a place where we love,  
protect and honor each other,  
I have a dream.

### ***Response to Zoe Leonard's "I want a president"***

I am grateful that Zoe's artwork exists and grateful to the High Line for posting it.  
I grew up in a world where even just a few decades ago, art like this, displayed  
in public, wasn't possible. Being a dyke was a secret and considered  
shameful. Seeing it and reading it here I have the same sensation of freedom  
that I did when the city back in 2000 started posting subway signs and  
directions to the LGBTQ Pride Parade at Fifty-ninth.

I remember a time before this when some of us had to sneak to the parade.  
We carried our clothes and costumes in a bag and changed downtown.  
Some of us were willing to risk losing jobs, family, even death to experience  
who we were openly amongst our own people.

Zoe's text acknowledges me as a dyke and a Black Woman and helps me  
envision a future I don't really exist in yet.

It makes me feel a little nostalgic and teary as I did this past Gay Pride Month  
when the Chase bank started posting pictures of Gay families on ATM home  
screens and said June is LGBTQ Pride Month. Seeing these affirming words  
and images in public about us still makes a great difference. Some young  
person may pass here and read Zoe's text or some adult will feel acknowledged.



Seeing it here saves lives.

I want a president who is not a President,  
though of course on Tuesday I am going to vote  
and vote as Audre Lorde once declared as if my life depends upon it  
because it does.

I want someone who doesn't believe even symbolically that one person,  
one machine ruling over the masses is even remotely a democracy.

I want someone who believes that people given proper tools and paths  
of accountability can govern themselves.

I want someone who believes everyone's voice should be heard  
and works to facilitate that.

I want a President who is not a President who knows  
that the system of healthcare and education is badly broken  
and needs repair.

I want no more magic wands, smoke machines, Botox fillers,  
offices, neighborhoods, businesses that like toothpaste brands  
boast of and brainwash into believing in

THE AMAZING POWERS OF WHITENING

No more hunger games, privacy invasions, wars with countries  
we can't locate on maps, name one single food, street, or national dish.

I want a President who is not a President  
doesn't care about that stuff  
just wants to get the job done  
isn't running to improve their cache of success and accomplishments  
isn't a paranoid, narcissistic, addict, megalomaniac  
like the character of Al Pacino in Scarface who just wants  
MORE MORE MORE

Isn't straight out of Shakespeare

I want a President who is not a President.

I came of age in a time of war during a time  
when the AIDS epidemic was rampant  
when young people and People of Color were dying in droves.

They were poets, artists, people I wanted and expected to grow

old with—but as Allen Ginsberg describes in the first lines of the epic *HOWL*  
I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed.  
Now, I am watching another epidemic, through gun violence.  
I am shouting the name of Terrence Coleman, shot on Oct 30, 2016.  
He was a young Black Gay man who acted in Boston Theater Offensive's  
performance troupe, True Colors.  
When his mother called the EMTs for assistance with Terrence's mental  
health issues, the police arrived instead and shot him.  
This happened on Oct 30, 2016  
and we've never talked about ongoing wars against women, rape, and  
misogyny . . .  
Oh, I want a President who is not a President.

EILEEN MYLES

*Acceptance Speech*

First I want to say this feels incredible. To be female, to run and run and run to not see any end in sight but maybe have a feeling that there's really no outside to this endeavor this beautiful thing. You know we don't have a single female on any of our bills. And what about two women, two women loving. Or even more. A lot of women. A lot of money. Is there a message that I failed to receive that the face of a woman cannot be on our money. And what about that house I just won. That white one. When I sit there and if I sit there and I've got to tell you I'm not sure I want to sit there. Some of you might remember my first campaign yes that was back in 1992. Few men have run for twenty-four years. Twenty-five by the time I stand and take the oath in January to serve my country. I did not quit. I stand here with you on this beautiful rapturous day sunny day in New York to turn around, to look back and look at all that we've won. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's get back to that house. That white house. We often hear these words even as an explanation of what metonymy means. Are you familiar with this term. Yes I promise you a poetic presidency. The white house is a metonym. Certainly that white house we speak of is not the whole government. Like Fred Moten says it is incomplete. But it has come to be a symbol of it. And I think two things. I think whiteness, I think of the whiteness of the house and I think of house-ness. It houses the government. Now that I have won it offers to house me now. I now officially make that white house a homeless shelter. It is a complete total disgrace that we have people without homes living on the streets of America. I have lived with them. Not for long periods of time but in the same way that I am the first president who knows what women feel because I am a woman, I am one, I have also eaten chicken with the homeless. I ate at the Bowery mission. Very rubbery, very chewy chicken. Those chicken were not happy when they lived and they are no happier being chewed on dead at the Bowery mission, and the chewers are not happy either, no. So here's the future good food at the white house for all the homeless in America. You know who the homeless are. They are military men and women. Who fought our pointless wars, who came home after each stupid greedy war we have waged and they got less. Is there a GI bill for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. I'm not sure but I don't think so. Can they buy a house. Who can buy a house. Under Myles they have bought the white house. That is my gift. The white house will house the mentally ill, out-patiented during the great president Reagan,

meaning he threw them out of the house, the mentally ill, thrown out of the American house, and the alcoholics who do not have free and abundant and available treatment? Cause this country breaks our hearts. We will habit them too. We will occupy all government buildings and memorials housing and holding and loving the homeless and the sick and the starving. We'll do what the statue says. You know liberty. We will take buildings and we will build buildings and our culture our new America will begin to live. Our government needs to be in the business of living not dying, what else is a government for. The government will become more departmental and take you in, you and your wonderful needs. We'll start with the Department of Women. Obviously to say women matter and do matter so much and a lot we need a distinct place in the government to specifically focus on female concerns which is parity mainly, reforming congress so that if America is increasingly diverse in a multitude of ways our congress must represent those groups percentage-wise that's smart don't you think. So if most of the people in America are female so should be our government right. America is not a department store. We want to do more in our country than shop online and at the mall. Let's face it everyone is home shopping and yelling at each other at their computers. The malls are falling apart. The malls are pretty much gone. Let them go. We want to make real departments for who we really are. Not shopping. We will be stalwart, we will be strong. Let's go. Let's go out. We are out there now. We are here on the high line. Yes.

That's the way it works under Myles. Early on I described a department of culture. We will have that. We will have art in America, not just the magazine, just for starters we will multiply the budget of the NEA by tenfold. We will bring back CETA, that was like an art workers program we had in the eighties but we will call it SEE THE . . . SEE THE . . . what I don't know. I just got elected, I haven't worked everything out but just think of the possibilities. SEE THE sky, SEE THE river over there, SEE THE Whitney, a lot of people will be walking around appreciating and we will pay them. There will also be the HEAR THE program, the SMELL THE program. That's probably what you're going to do early on with all those you know recovering veterans who don't have to live on the streets. Get them in on the SEE THE, SMELL THE, HEAR THE programs. We're going to massively fund libraries, open twenty four hours, and they will not be filled with homeless people because they will have homes, so the libraries will be filled with people reading and watching movies, and going into the conversation rooms and having conversations and so on. All education will be free, trains will be free. Cars will eventually be banned. Cars are stupid. No

more pumping oil, no more fracking. Everything will be driven by the sun, or else be plugged in electrically. Electric something. There'll be lots of free food. A lot of archery. Everyone will be a really good shot. We'll get good at aiming, intentions, not killing. Oh yeah and we'll send a lot of masseuses to Israel and Palestine. Everyone needs a good rub. No more pesticides, here, anywhere, lots of small farmers, an amazing number of stand-up comedians, and lots of rehearsal spaces and available musical instruments and learning centers for people like myself who would like to play something, perhaps a guitar. Nobody would be unemployed. Everyone would be learning Spanish, or going to the sex center for a while having ejaculation contests, or just looking at porn for a while and going out into the yard and helping the farmers improve the crops. Just gardening. Helping the flowers. Distributing the flowers. SEE THE flowers. When in doubt always just being a SEE THE person for a while. There'll be a whole lot of people encouraging people to SEE THE. We want the SEE THE to thoroughly come back. There'd be an increase in public computers, like water, like air, have we stopped the oil and the fracking early enough to protect the water and air, we hope so but there will be a decrease in private computers with an enhanced desire to be here, exactly here where we are, which some would argue is there on the computer which of course would be allowed but being here would be cool, some people meditating, other people just walking around, smiling feeling good about themselves, living shamelessly and glad. Guns would be buried. Guns would be in museums and people would increasingly not want to go there. Gun museums would die. What was that all about. Money would become rare. I would have a radio show as your president and also I might be on television and also I just might want to talk to you. In the tradition of American Presidents like Fiorello LaGuardia the little Flower I would be president Edward Myles, the woman, changing my name, very often, would probably be good I would like that and I would write a new poem for you each week. I might just walk around saying it and eventually you would forget I was the president. I would go to the gym. There are people who like to manage things just like there are people who like to play cards and the managers would change often enough and they would keep the parks clean, America increasingly turning into one big park, one big festival of existence with unmarked toilets and nightly daily events and free surfing lessons and free boards, just put it back when you're done and a good bed for everyone, I just slept in the best bed last night and I slept on the plane sleep is great nobody would be short of sleep everyone would be well slept, chaotic and loving hearted and have all the time in the world to not kill, to love and be president everyone take your turn and dance. Dance now. I love my

fellow citizens. It is good to win. Thank you. I feel like I had a bad dream last night that like the head of the FBI decided to steal the election by making shit up about me because I am female but that wasn't true and we are really here undeluded, un-mucked up. Wide awake in America for once. See the see the see all of your fabulous beauty and your power and your hope. Thanks for your vote. And I love you so much thanks.

**JUSTIN VIVIAN BOND AND NATH ANN CARRERA**  
*Twenty-Second Century, with lyrics adapted by  
Justin Vivian Bond from a song by Exuma*

Oh, happy the-election's-almost-over day! I'm very excited and honored to be here actually. Nath Ann and I are going to sing a song for you now, called "Twenty-Second Century" written by a Bahamian voodoo priest by the name of Exuma in the late sixties and performed by Nina Simone, and I hope you like it.



*Tomorrow will be the twenty-second century  
One day men and women woke up  
Looked around and realized they were truly their own god  
That's the day men and women found freedom*

## BIOGRAPHIES

**MORGAN BASSICHIS** lives in New York and performs live comedic stories that explore history, mysticism, and just, like, being alive. Morgan's work has been featured at MoMA PS1 as part of the 2015 Greater New York exhibition, as well as at Artists Space, Dixon Place, the New Museum, Participant Inc., Poetry Project, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Morgan's essays have appeared in the *Radical History Review*, *Captive Genders*, and other edited volumes. Morgan was a 2015 Process Space Artist with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and a 2015 Art Matters grantee. Morgan's shows have been described as "out there" (by Morgan's mother) and "super intense" (by Morgan).

**MX JUSTIN VIVIAN BOND** is a trans-genre artist living in New York City. As a performer both on and Off-Broadway, Mx Bond has received numerous accolades winning an Obie (2001), a Bessie (2004), a Tony nomination (2007), the Ethyl Eichelberger Award (2007), the Peter Reed Foundation Grant, and a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant for Artists. V authored the Lambda Literary Award winning memoir *TANGO: My Childhood, Backwards and in High Heels* (The Feminist Press, 2011). Films include John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* (2006), *Sunset Stories* (2012), *Imaginary Heroes* (2004), and *Fanci's Persuasion* (1995). Solo exhibitions of JVB's watercolors, sculptural installations, and live art have been presented by Participant, Inc. (New York, 2011, 2016), Art Market Provincetown (2014), and Vitrine (London, 2015). Albums include *Kiki and Herb: Do You Hear What We Hear?*, *Kiki and Herb Will Die For You at Carnegie Hall*, *Dendrophile*, and *Silver Wells*.

**NATH ANN CARRERA**, described as a "heavenly" (*New York Times*), "gender-defiant" (*Time Out New York*) "glitter saint" (*Village Voice*), has had solo shows at La MaMa (*Death To The Patriarchal Rape Heads*), Joe's Pub, Wild Project, and the Afterglow Festival (*I Don't Want To Throw Rice, I Want To Throw Rocks: The Early Southern Gothicism Of Dolly Parton!*), sings as WITCH CAMP with Amber Martin, performs with Justin Vivian Bond, opened for Martha Wainwright at City Winery, and has sung at P.S. 122, the Kitchen, Abrons Arts Center, Le Poisson Rouge, and MoMA PS1.

**MEL ELBERG** is an anarcho-feminist writer, artist, and homosexual living mostly in Brooklyn, nu York.



**MALIK GAINES** is an artist and writer based in New York. His book, *Black Performance on the Outskirts of the Left* (NYU Press, 2017), traces a circulation of black political ideas in performances of the 1960s and beyond. Gaines has performed and exhibited extensively with the group My Barbarian, whose work has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the New Museum; the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Kitchen; Participant Inc.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Hammer Museum; the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles; among others; and was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial, as well as two California Biennials, two Performa Biennials, the Montreal Biennial, and the Baltic Triennial. He is assistant professor of Performance Studies in New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

**SHARON HAYES** is an artist who engages multiple mediums—video, performance, and installation—in ongoing investigations into specific intersections between history, politics, and speech. Hayes's work is concerned with developing new representational strategies that examine and interrogate the present political moment as a moment that reaches simultaneously backward and forward, a present moment that is never wholly its own but rather one that is full of multiple past moments and the speculations of multiple futures. From this ground, Hayes often addresses political events or movements from the 1960s through the 1990s. Her focus on the particular sphere of the near-past is influenced by the potent imbrication of private and public urgencies that she experienced in her own foundational encounters with feminism and AIDS activism. Hayes teaches in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Fine Arts.

**STEFANO HARNEY AND FRED MOTEN** are authors of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. Harney teaches at Singapore Management University and Moten teaches at the University of California, Riverside.

**ZOE LEONARD** is a New York-based artist who works primarily with photography and sculpture. Leonard has exhibited extensively since the late 1980s, including solo exhibitions at Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas (2013–14); Camden Arts Centre, London (2012); Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2009), Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2009); Reina Sofía, Madrid (2008), Dia: Beacon (2008); the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2007); Fotomuseum Wintherthur (2007); Philadelphia Museum of Art (1998); Kunsthalle Basel (1997); Secession, Vienna (1997), and the Renaissance

Society, Chicago (1993). Group exhibitions include Documenta IX (1992), Documenta XII (2007), and Whitney Biennials in 1993, 1997, and 2014. Publications include *Analogue* (2007), *Zoe Leonard: Photographs* (2008), *You see I am here after all* (2010), and *Available Light* (2014). A solo exhibition of her work is upcoming in 2018 at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

**LAYLI LONG SOLDIER** holds a BFA in creative writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts and an MFA from Bard College. Her poems have appeared in *The American Poet*, *The American Reader*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, *American Indian Journal of Culture and Research*, *PEN America*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Eleven Eleven*, and *Mud City*, among others. She is a recipient of the NACF National Artist Fellowship, a Lannan Fellowship and the Whiting Award. She is the author of *Chromosomory* (Q Ave Press, 2010) and *WHEREAS* (Graywolf Press, 2017). She resides in Santa Fe, NM.

**EILEEN MYLES** is a poet, novelist, and performer whose books include *Chelsea Girls*, *I Must Be Living Twice*, *selected poems*, and *The Importance of Being Iceland: Travel Essays in Art*. *Afterglow (a dog memoir)* will be out next fall. In 1992, Myles conducted an openly female write-in campaign for president of the United States. They have received grants and awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, Creative Capital, the Foundation for Contemporary Art, and in 2016 was awarded the Clark Prize. Myles is also a television poet. Their poems have appeared in seasons two and three of the Emmy-winning TV show *Transparent*. They live in New York and Marfa, Texas.

**ALEXANDRO SEGADE** is an artist whose interdisciplinary projects use theatricality, genre, and play to critically engage contemporary understandings of identification, and difference. In 2000 Segade cofounded the collective My Barbarian, which received the 2013 Foundation for Contemporary Art award for performance and was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. In collaboration with Malik Gaines, Segade has presented projects at MoMA PS1, the Kitchen, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and Recess. Segade collaborated with Wu Tsang on the film *Mishima in Mexico* (2012). Segade's solo performance and video has been presented at venues including the Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco; REDCAT, Los Angeles; Time-Based Arts Festival, Portland, Oregon; Anthology Film Archive, New York; Movement Research, New York; the 2013 Eaton Science Fiction Conference, and will be included in the 2017 Fisher Center Performance Biennial, Bard College.

**PAMELA SNEED** is a New York-based poet, writer, and actress. She has been featured in the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New Yorker*, *Time Out*, *Bomb*, *VIBE*, and on the cover of *New York Magazine*. In 2015, she appeared in *Artforum*, *Black Book*, and the *Huffington Post*. She hosted Queer Art Film at the IFC in New York. She is author of *Imagine Being More Afraid of Freedom than Slavery*, *KONG & other works*, (2009), a chapbook, *Lincoln* (2014), and a chaplet, *Gift* (2015). She has performed at Lincoln Center, P.S. 122, Ex-Teresa in Mexico City, the ICA London, the CCA in Glasgow, Joe's Pub, Central Park Summer Stage, the Whitney Museum, and many others, and she recently curated and performed in *All Black/An Invitation* at Danspace:Platforms. Sneed has taught at Sarah Lawrence as a guest faculty member and at Chicago's School of the Art Institute. She was a mentor-consultant for the Poet-Linc program at Lincoln Center and directed a final show at Lincoln Center Atrium in 2016. She has recently presented at a symposium at New York University on Humor, Politics, and the AIDS Crisis. Sneed is currently completing a collection of short stories *Anna Mae/For Me, Tina Turner and All Black Women Survivors* and a forthcoming chapbook, *Sweet Dreams*, with Belladonna in February 2017.

**WU TSANG** makes films, installations, performances, and sculptures that move fluidly between documentary, activism, and fiction. Her projects have been presented at museums and film festivals internationally, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Berlinale Film Festival; Santiago International Film Festival; Hot Docs Festival, Toronto; and South by Southwest Film Festival, Austin, Texas. Her first feature film *Wildness* (2012) premiered at the Museum of Modern Art's Documentary Fortnight, and her work was also featured in the 2012 Whitney Biennial and the New Museum Triennial *The Ungovernables* in New York. She has received grants from Creative Capital, the Warhol Foundation, and the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations.

This book comprises transcripts of the readings and performances in response to Zoe Leonard's *I want a president* Sunday, November 6, 2016  
Presented in conjunction with Zoe Leonard, *I want a president*  
A High Line Commission  
October 2016–March 2017  
On the High Line at Little West 12th Street, New York  
High Line Art  
Presented by Friends of the High Line  
*I want a president* is copresented by The Standard, High Line  
[art.thehighline.org](http://art.thehighline.org)

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Photo page 8: Zoe Leonard, *I want a president*, 1992. A High Line Commission.  
On view October 11, 2016–March 2017. Photo by Timothy Schenck. Courtesy of Friends of the High Line.

Photo page 47: Photo by Julieta Cervantes. Courtesy of Friends of the High Line.

The following individuals participated in soap-box events organized by the Friends of the High Line in connection to the installation of Zoe Leonard's *I want a president*: Nancy Agabian, Sol Aramendi, Caron Atlas, Natalie N. Caro, Mariposa Fernandez, Hassan Khan, Shaun Leonardo, Marisa Lerer, Andrea Louie, Mahina Movement, Christine B. McVay, Ivan Monforte, Meera Nair, Wazhmal Osman, Pauline Park, Amir Parsa, Paulina Perera-Riveroll, James Scruggs, Risa Shoup, Ian Stearns, Susana Torruela Leval, Jaret Vadera, Diya Vij, "I want a president . . . (a collective reading-DC)," in partnership with Visual AIDS.

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