ORGANIZING ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A Play by

Lonnie Carter and Rich Klimmer

Commissioned by

the Playwrights' Center

and

the Guthrie Theater

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Eight actors play all the roles - CAST (in order of appearance)

CHORUS

FRANK, union organizer

RICH, union organizer

Graduate Students -

CHEFALI, Arab-American filmmaker

MARK, White

APRIL, African-American

ROB, Filipino-Irish-American

JASON, African-American

RUTH, White

LIZ, White

Community Organizer –

KEITH, African-American

University Officials including their hired guns –

BART TARTT, President of Abraham Lincoln University

Provost

University Attorney

Athletic Director

Press people –

LOU GOBBS

KITTY PROGRESS

WINSTON NTSHONA

Officer of the Law –

Officer MARCOS

A few other stragglers TBA and doubled and trebled by above cast members

TIME – The Eternal Present
PLACE – America

PROLOGUE

CHORUS

Welcome to the University
'Twas 1865 when first we opened these doors
We took the name of the 16th President
Six weeks earlier he'd been inaugurated for a second term as White House resident
That day Pennsylvania Avenue was mud and fetid water
    but the crowds were large
Trains, carriages, folk on horses and foot, babes in arms,
    bands blaring 'The Battle Cry of Freedom'
An escort of African-American troops
Lincoln taking the oath on the East Portico
The Capitol Dome, newly completed, clearly in view
"With malice toward none and charity for all
    Let us strive on… to bind the nation's wounds"
One of the spectator's was John Wilkes Booth,
    a two-bit actor whose brother in fact was famous, one Edwin Booth
    but John Wilkes was a hack, to put a point fine upon it, forsooth
He'd thought of kidnapping at first, spiriting Lincoln away to the South
    and holding him for ransom 'til the North gave up the War
War!
There were several plotters, most of them living down at the mouth
    disorganized, alcoholic, delusional, vicious, three or four
    who'd come to see Honest Abe as a stain on the confederacy's escutcheon
The faith-based, Bible-belted, cotton-ginned, julep-minted, cypress-plantationed,
    state-of-the-art
    SLAVERY
Civil War buffs, we're history students
    some of us even majoring in it
    however imprudent
    or is it impudent
And although we would never draw the comparison directly
    albeit correctly
    for reasons obvious to one and all
    there is a sort of post-modern bondage
    and not do we refer to the ever popular cyber sites of S & M
    no, something out in the open quite a bit more
    but more on that as we move along
We took the name of the President 16th
    because of his extraordinary writing ability indeed
    but especially because of his devotion to landgrant colleges
    he thought, and we think, there is a place for the sons and daughters
        of those who aren't wealthy, who don't enjoy privilege
        who aren't straitjacketed/strangulated by entitlement
        at institutions of higher learning which rival the elites

Where sons and daughters of middle class and below
Artisans, barbers, shopkeepers, wheelwrights
All those who couldn't quite make the grade
Who educated themselves
And so they worked long hours at two jobs or three
And sent their offspring not to the elites,
the Ivies where the Legacy Lads
still get their Gentlemen C's and Duncecap D's
and maybe a B or three in Banana Republic Home Econom,
and accounting by Colors which they Ace each of them such a phenom
'Twas Abraham Lincoln, the Splitter of Rails,
committed to those of us just below and far below
the Ole Boy network, the clubs, the regattas, the cotillions,
the debs and dues we could not pay even if we were asked to join
which never we would be without major coin
and even then only in the grudgingest way
what say your name, boy, say hey?
But talking this way we tend to forgetting
for getting and schooling the boys has been hard enough
but schooling the girls has proved unbelievably tough
those of us, immigrants in need of these landgrants,
and second and third generation must never forget
that whoever has been wherever one's been has had antecedents
and those before those have had antecedents
and this is what we mean by His and Hers and Its-tory
So here we all are and you'll meet us individually
And we'll tell you our stories
And we're confident in ourselves
Optimism, enthusiasm, a dollop of naivete, perhaps
No Downimism, all Uptimism,
a large helping of FAIRE LAISSEZ, in caps
We're all teachers, indeed
We're all students, indeed
Teachers, students, because we are in need
Of that terminal think, that thing that is a degree
Without which we're kept second class or third or fourth
As we teach our second class or third or fourth
While tenured Grand Profs boff undergraduate muffs
In seminars, retreats, symposia on magic dragon puffs
So we've decided to unionize
To protect then enhance what we have
We have strength in numbers
But the university has strength in dollars
How best to serve the student,
Of whom we are many
Who often don't have a clue

I'm afraid that's true
Even us, we don't always know
What we should do
But organize is what we intend
And organize, yes, without end
How do you get to Carnegie Hall
Organize Organize Organize
ALGO Abraham Lincoln Graduate Organization
Let's jump with the Dane and we'll have our say
The cat will mew and dawg will have its day

SCENE 1

CHORUS
Scholars, Employees, and Organizers, step forward.

CHEFALI SHAH
Chefali Shah, Iranian-American – kitchen Farsi – filmmaker.

MARK CZYZ
Mark Czyz – physicist in training – put up your invisible fences – kitchen Hungarian.

APRIL UNSELD
April Unseld – hope of my Af-Am family – kitchen Gullah - Literature, Criminology and Very Creative Writing

ROB WINDSOR DOMINGO
Rob Windsor Domingo – waterfront concerns – Engineer and Ship-builder-American. Filipino-Irish. Pinoy-Paddy.

JASON "DWB" WHITE
Jason DWB "Driving While Black" White – mathematics – your truly irrational number.

RUTH ROBINS
Ruth Robins – one 'b' in last name – fluent in Latvian – anthropology. And literature.

CHANG
Chang. Mr. Chang. Accountant. From Grey, Beijing. Serve the people heart and soul.

LIZ SERRABUONA
Liz SerraBuona, Garibaldi-American – "sempre birri, birri, sempre birri" – basement-dwelling Socio-Logue.

KEITH FRAZIER

Keith Frazier – Community Organizer – Radical President of my local ADA – Auto Didacts of America.

No education, no formal, at that

an organizer, an endangered cat

Things are not what they seem

nor are they otherwise

Let's now separate the truth from the lies

SCENE 2

CHORUS

Rich and Frank on the Campaign.

FRANK

How'd you guys get into this mess in the first place?

RICH

Long story. Group got started in 1999. We got 700 out of 1100 authorization cards in 10 weeks. 950- 1,000 who meet the standards of the law.

FRANK

So what the hell happened?

RICH

Lawyers happened. Big Foot firm in the city, you know 'em –Dilly, Dally, Doolittle and Stahl. They go to the state labor board and spend six months arguing that we're not employees. Moron hearing officer agrees with them. We appeal to the full labor board. Another year goes by.
You work with Voice @ Work. How does it work?

FRANK

We change the dynamic. Instead of the workers against the employer and the worthless law, it becomes the employer against the whole community.

We connect your campaign with the labor movement in the city—so your members can tell their stories and then ask for support. Next, we line up political allies. In this case that's Marciano and Onyx.

Then we go to the religious community and form an Interfaith Council on Worker

justice. No employer—public or private-wants to have a bunch of priests and ministers, and rabbis and imams calling them out in public. Very bad publicity. Next we mobilize the undergraduates. Then the community organizations. Big employers tend to be lousy neighbors. None of this matters if you can't win the election.

SCENE 3

CHORUS

Come to Jesus Meeting.

Setting: ALGO office the Sunday after the Stewards school fiasco. ROB and APRIL are the Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee and are on released time to work the campaign. RICH is physically tired but mentally alert and trying to control his anger.

RICH

What the hell happened yesterday? How many people were supposed to be there for the organizers' training?

ROB

Thirty-six.

RICH

And we had eighteen. You're the co-chairs. You can't lead them if they don't show up.

APRIL

How much trouble are we in?

ROB

Have you talked to the Regional Director?

RICH

Yes, at 7:00am this morning before he took his family to mass. Look at these shitty wall charts, what are they from the card drive two years ago. Say the community campaign works, we get an election date and we go down in flames. You lose any chance of organizing this place for a decade, the whole movement is set back. We have five other campaigns with 6,000 T.A.'s in them. I'll be frank here. right now my gut tells me close this thing down today.

SCENE 4

CHORUS

April and Rob tell their stories.

APRIL

I'm April Unseld and I'm the hope of my family. That is, I'm not jiving you, I am THE hope of my Af-Am, Gullah-Am family and I ain't going to make it in boxing, no million dollar brain-damaged baby here, nobody going to make a movie of me in no gym. My momma wants me to watch my grammar and my Gramma wants me to watch my grammar, I watch it alright; in fact, I can talk in all sorts of sophisticated and NOT ways. I'm the oldest of eleven and I'm a Philly girl, not lookin' to be any grey mare any time soon. My momma used to leave a razor blade under her pillow, just in case the Pillowman, as she called him, came in lookin' for a little action or passion beyond the point of his no return. She's got bad diabetes, no good kind of that, and I'm her hope, she being the old grey mare. I tell he I'm doing research for her cure. Being some kind of doctor – in my own mind. In the mind of the University, Master's in Creative Writing and Criminology seeking a writing cure for Pillowman crime. I dig the Bronte Sisters, Emily,
Charlotte and especially Ann and her 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall; 'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights' better written, but Ann's more wild, if you're getting my drift. Me, the Hope of my Af-Am Gullah-Am Fam.

ROB WINDSOR DOMINGO

Rob Windsor Domingo. I have waterfront concerns. I'm an engineer and Ship-builder American. Also Pinoy-Paddy, Filipino-Irish, I'm quite a mix. I did not say 'mutt'. I grew up in a Chesapeake Bay fishing community and had relatives in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, near the Mystic Seaport, where my parents took me when I was two years old. All those places are where I get my concerns. You can say I've been waterlogged all my life. Since the womb. I take it upon myself to read everything I can about the sea. How dams dam, how locks lock, how keys key. I have a hard time communicating my enthusiasm I can show it, really show it, but when I see that others, like my students, aren't as enthused as I am, it hurts, like a slow ache – and so I read and re-read 'Moby Dick' and I really just like the parts about the fishing, the science of harpoons, not the Good and Evil part, even though that's the whole part, I guess. Do you know that Melville wrote that book when he was landlocked in western Massachusetts and that he never saw Mystic Seaport or the Chesapeake Bay? And did you know that a lot of Pinoys are emigrating to Ireland? Come on along. It's all ahead of us.

SCENE 5

CHORUS

Hire Education Revealed. ALGO-Abraham Lincoln Graduate Organization.

RICH

Today we learn a basic organizing technique by sharing our own experiences. Do this back in your departments. I want each of you to identify the one thing you would like to

change about your situation as a TA at Abraham Lincoln and why. Nothing is out of bounds.

LIZ

I developed diabetes when I was pregnant with Mikey—that's not atypical. My health plan says I can only have four specialist visits a year. It doesn't cover outpatient blood testing. It doesn't cover my machine and test strips, or the syringes or the insulin or anything. So here I am a married mother with a husband who's a bricklayer's apprentice who only gets individual coverage until he makes journeyman. And I am borrowing $4,000 a year to take care of what is described as a chronic but treatable disease. I had better health care two summers ago when I was a cocktail waitress at the Warwick hotel bar.

RICH

One for health insurance.

ROB

It is the way we are treated as professionals. I know my field. That's why I want to become a professor. But I have the use of a desk for two hours a week for sixty students. I have nowhere to keep books, papers, anything. I need a half an hour to show some kid with no family exposure to college how to write a decent sentence and all I see is the next fifteen people who are waiting to see me. I might as well have gone into the shipyards at home and fix fishing boats for all the good I'm doing here.

MARK

I did community organizing before I came here. I know about living without money or time. But don't tell me this is a privilege to work my ass off trying to teach and do my own studies when there isn't enough time for it. You guys have offices. In Urban Studies we have to use the tables in the Student Union.

RICH

That sounds like two for working conditions.

RUTH

It goes deeper than that. We are not prepared to teach. I've got a dissertation advisor who sees me every week and is concerned about everything I do. Should that comma be a period? Does my research data actually support the statement? But when it comes to teaching I am totally on my own. I spent two years in Africa learning how to do field work. I got a one day orientation and was sent off to teach. The only teaching I've ever done was in Sunday School. I can't teach the Sermon on the Mount six times a week for twelve weeks in Introduction to Anthropology. (Laughter)

LIZ

Jack can't go on a job to lay bricks for a garden walk without a journeyman watching his every move and they want us to teach undergraduates by what, osmosis?

JASON

It's worse in the sciences. They put us in class the day we walk on campus. I'm a math guy. I never gave teaching a thought. I didn't know what pedagogy was until Ruth told me. Now, here I am with two classes with 80 students each teaching Basic Calculus. It took me a month to figure out that if I'm facing the board writing equations nobody in the room can hear a damn word I'm saying until some kid said, "Mr. White, we can't understand what you are saying."

APRIL

This isn't the '60s when you were a TA, Rich. It's a one day orientation where they show you how to fill out the grade report for the Dean and tell you that you can be fired if you miss class or office hours.

KEITH

I got more training on how to load trucks for CVS than these folks ever saw.

CHANG

International students are vulnerable. We can only work for university. Anything else gets us deported. Language training. It joke.

RICH

Why hasn't anyone mentioned money?

ROB

We don't have any so we don't worry about it.

MARK

You are the money answer, Rich. You bring day-old donuts in the morning and buy cheese pizzas when we work nights. (Laughter)

RUTH

We borrow. It's a whole new approach to indentured servitude. If we get our degrees and wind up as adjuncts it can be a life pattern.

APRIL

So we develop all these strategies—where are the farmers markets, the day-old stores, shop at St. Vincent DePaul stores with the homeless, live so many to an apartment that we get PO boxes to fool the fire marshals and building inspectors.

JASON

If nothing else, this union effort has got to get a raise in stipends.

LIZ

I'm in trouble. Jack's got two years left on his apprenticeship with the bricklayers and

I've still got the dissertation to write. If we don't get out of my parents' basement, I'm going to hit the job market as a divorced mom with a three-year-old. If it wasn't for sex and the kid, we'd be over a long time ago. I am sick of knowing there are no full time jobs at the end of the rainbow because they can screw people like us who are dumb enough to give a shit about books.

CHEFALI

I'm living in the editing lab in the communications school. I have a sleeping bag, much as I did when I was ten, sleeping out under the stars, as a Brownie, before I was a full-fledged Girl Scout. I had a little Brownie camera and that's what they called me – Brownie – I have it still and I'll always be one.

SCENE 6

CHORUS

Liz and Mark tell their stories.

LIZ

Hi, I'm the Garibaldi-American. "Sempre birri, birri, sempre birri."
"Always spies, spies, always spies", said Garibaldi in 1862
He was moving forward – 'Avanti! Avanti!" when he was stopped at a check point
And Garibaldi, having to hand over his papers
nearly loses it. He's on a mission, he doesn't want to be exposed,
he's trying to establish the Italian state
versus the corruption of the aristocracy, and this functionary,
of course, only 'doing his job'
hemming and hoing, belches up some bad Chianti,
and refuses to let Garibaldi pass,
so Guiseppe, ever the diplomat, in the mode of the Gordian knot,
takes his sword, mind you, brandishes it in the air
cuts through the barrier and his 'carrozza', his carriage, barrels on through
and Il Resorgimento, the Surge, surges on
So last night, my husband was surging on, and I said, 'Do you think I'm a spy?"
And he said, "As in 'Birri sempre birri'
And I liked that answer and he surged on

MARK CZYZ

Mark Czyz. C-z-y-z. A four letter name with two 'z's. Slovak and Hungarian. Maternal Grandfather came here to escape Franz Joseph's army. My grandmother was Slovak. We were never counted in the census, because if anyone ever knocked on the door, grandpa told grandma not to answer. It had to be the Emperor's men come to haul him back to Buda. Grandpa died at 47. He worked in a factory, pre-OSHA, carving gravestones, no ventilation and he died of some sort of phthsisis. I'm uncomfortable in the academy. I

never feel I'm quite up to, not the work, I do the work, but the, ah, atmosphere – Geography and Urban Studies. Lately I've been fascinated by Physics and how this might apply to my course of study. Einstein said he knew what he knew because he stood on
the shoulders of Copernicus and Kepler and Galileo and Newton. In order to stand on anyone's shoulders, you have to be pretty adept at standing, period. I'm a lost particle. Lost to the knock, that is. I always think that the knock will be for me. But they won't find me if I'm standing on someone's shoulders.

SCENE 7

CHORUS

Steering Committee Split. Dead Wood falls of its own weight.

(NOTE – BRIAN and TAMIIKA played by actors playing CHANG and CHEFALI))

BRIAN (new), TAMIKA (new), APRIL, RICH, MARK, JASON, RUTH, LIZ, KEITH.

RICH

This is not an autonomous local, Brian, but an organizing committee. I have the final say and one call from me now and I will close this thing down.

BRIAN

Sounds like a threat, Rich. You just came on board. Tamika and I started this Steering Committee. And the motion passed five minutes ago. Stop pushing Marciano. He's a homophobe and thinks all queer eyes should die now.

APRIL

If we didn't know better, we'd say you're gay, but of course, this is just your hobbyhorse issue. Marciano is labor's key guy on the council and I wouldn't let him date my mother, but I want him on my side in a fight.

BRIAN

Once again, the motion passed. All officers on payroll staff must leave the room and no longer participate in leadership meeting

RICH

The motion isn't binding.

BRIAN

Then what good's a motion? If we're just going *through* the motions?

MARK (to BRIAN)

You *are* just going through the motions. You're a lazy prick and a self-promoter.

APRIL

That's real helpful. What's getting lost is that the community campaign wasn't approved;

it involves the wrong people; we shouldn't be dealing with religious leaders because ALU is a secular institution and the Teamsters are gangsters.

LIZ

The people in my school don't respect ALGO because they think it's all about being politically correct.

JASON

It's time for the old leaders to get with the program or get off the bus.

TAMIKA (*to JASON*)

Far be it from me to call you a "Tom", Jason, my Brother. Even though you're a 'Bama and you don't have a clue about city matters.

MARK

I am sick of you people on steering and your identity politics. You don't care about real issues – housing, health care, big classes. You are people who are afraid to win.

RUTH

Brian, Tamika, how many one-on-ones did you do this week? Are your contact sheets turned in on time? Do you know what the numbers are in your schools? Looks to me like the only role you guys have is to eat food that somebody else made or brought.

BRIAN

The motion passed – o, for pity sake, I quit. Keep your bloody union and stick it up your old whazoo.

TAMIKA

Robert's Rules of Order, ain't worth a tinker's fart with you bozos. I'm out of here big time.

BRIAN and TAMIKA storm out.

KEITH

Those two couldn't organize two for lunch if it was catered.

SCENE 8

CHORUS

It's time for Keith.

KEITH

Keith Fraiser from Baltimore. I read two books over and again, the Bible and Saul Alinsky's 'Rules for Radicals'. My first job was doing youth outreach through my church. Another Lutheran, like my quiet tall pal Rutheran. Was still in Baltimore when the crack epidemic hit. You either deal, as in 'deal', or you leave, or you stay and you 'deal'. I did the third. Went to work for BUILD, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, the first living wage campaign that succeeded in the country. Moved to Philly to take a job with Organizing Alliance, community-based. Wife, kid. She'll go to college, if I can get her that far. Never went, went right into outreach. Seems like I couldn't do anything else, except maybe that other kind of 'dealing' and that very definite final leaving. I'm reading the book of 'Lamentations' today.

'I have forgotten what happiness is; I tell myself that my future is lost, all that I hoped for from the Lord. But I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope. The favors of the Lord are not exhausted; his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning.'

And now to Saul Alinsky.

SCENE 9

CHORUS

Firing and Hiring Keith.

RICH

How'd you do today?

KEITH

Six contacts. One signed the Vote Yes petition. Three are really jammed up on healthcare — taking out loans and stuff like that but not ready to move. Two are raising this goofy Social Security thing about having to pay more taxes. And one stone asshole who thinks unions are part of the international communist conspiracy. I wrote him down as a 4—Do Not Contact.

RICH

Not a bad morning. On Social Security the answer is simple. Union status has no effect. Keith, what's up? You don't show up

KEITH

I've got to take care of my little girl Mia.

RICH

What about your wife?

KEITH

She was shot and killed in a drive-by at 34th and Vine last summer.

RICH

Oh shit.

KEITH

I'm really jammed up. I do mornings for ALGO. I got a part-time gig at a Kinko's running off flyers. And from midnight on I'm on call at the CVS warehouse loading trucks. That's how I handle the kid's health insurance. It's a Teamster gig.

RICH

Why didn't you come to me?

KEITH

I don't know you. If I came to you what would you have done?

RICH

I'm gonna hire you full time. What's the first thing we do?

KEITH

The Office. Sometimes there's so much junk on the conference table if I didn't see the legs I'd of thought a trash pile was levitating.

SCENE 10

CHORUS

Finding a Jewel Outside the Basketball Arena.

RICH

I need someone to run the visibility crew. Other than Buttons and T-shirts people on campus don't know who we are or what we're about. We have to create an echo chamber.

MARK

This is what I do. It is all about space, time and density. I need to get my crew together and count the crowd flow at different times at these four locations over several days. We then plot the results and choose the two highest volume points on Tuesday and

Wednesday. Most people on campus on those days. Once we've got the grid down, buy lots of colored paper so every flyer has a different look each week. Also, we'll need a crew to write and produce and package the flyers. 5,000 the first week. Four sites. We can have it done in an hour.

SCENE 11

CHORUS

April at the Building Trades.

APRIL

I'm scared. These are mostly older white guys from the South Side. Why are they going to listen to a black girl from the West Side?

FRANK

They haven't listened beCAUSE they haven't been spoken to. They'll listen to you beCAUSE you ARE the black girl from the West Side who has never spoken to them before, and you sure as blazes are going to speak to them now. You are the one to twist their heads.

APRIL

You think so?

FRANK

Twist them, baby, and make them shout.

(To audience)

Good evening. I'm Frank Sicek from the Organizing Department of the AFL-CIO. I appreciate this invitation from the Metropolitan Building and Construction Trades Council and your President Pat Doyle 1000 teaching assistants and ALGO need your help. Ms. April Unseld, the Co-Chair of the Abraham Lincoln Graduate Organization/AFT,

APRIL

Every morning I wake up and face a moral dilemma, indeed a dreadful choice, whose education will I sacrifice today? Mine or your sons' and daughters'? I am a Teaching Assistant in the English Department at Abraham Lincoln University. I am allegedly a half-time employee. I am supposed to work twenty hours a week. However, I have three courses of twenty-five students each in Introduction to CompositionI am expected to hold one office hour for each hour of instruction for individual consultation with students. Those are at best minimum standards for a quality education. However, I don't have an office. I share a desk with three other TA's in a basement room. At the same time I am expected to take three courses of my own to complete my studies.

What am I paid for this? $1,100 a month . I have to pay from that 50% of the premium for what we call the spatula health plan. That means that if you are hit by a bus the plan will provide a spatula to scrape you off the pavement.

There are no rules or procedures to determine if I will be re-hired or not. I have nowhere to turn if I have a grievance. I am told when I say that I want a voice on the job, that I should be grateful for having a job. And what of my students? I see them slipping through the cracks. I see them working jobs to stay in school and so they can never come to office hours until I find a way to stay awake twenty-four seven.

Our Working conditions Are Your Children's Learning Conditions.

SCENE 12

CHORUS

It's Ruth's time and Jason's rhyme.

RUTH

I was teaching this course on Keats. O, I'm Ruth Robins, one 'b'. Latvian. And his sonnet, my favorite beginning,

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain

And from the front row I hear, Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-
And it's one of my favorite students, Apostoli, from Chile, and I say,

'Roncando Hombre', which means something like 'snoring dude'

and Toli wakes up and he's so sorry, and he starts quoting Neruda –

'Cuerpo de mujer, blancas colinas, muslos blancos
te pareces al mundo en tu actitude de entrega'
'Body of a woman, white hills, white thighs
you look like a world, lying in surrender

and I say, 'Snore away, Roncanda Neruda', and I turn away because the class is over and I don't want to speak with anyone. I want to think in Latvian and travel to Riga and minister to aging Lutherans and forget.

JASON

Jason DWB White
Whenever I Drive While Black
which is whenever I drive
I watch my Black
So when, not if, stopped
I make sure I have no contraband in the form of ounces, grams, glocks in my Black pocket
Whenever I leave anywhere, even my car, I say, 'I'll be White Black'
Now about the irrationality of my number, the surdity of my abs
If you're getting my pecs – what IS he saying?

It was a joke, racist, all jokes are, aren't they, or sexist, ageist, religionist, Islamist, man, we're getting a camelload of those these days, but the one that got me was the Mike Tyson 'joke', after the ear-butting or the head-biting or whatever dying-to-survive move he made. What does Mike say when you ask for his telephone number,

Fee fie fo fee fo fum fum
I think that did it – the straw that broke this camel's Black.
I would become a mathematician
Neither a beautician, nor an optician, nor an electrician,
nor a technician, nor a nician nician
but a Mathematician
The Force is Black
Black and Forth

SCENE 13
The eight students and KEITH.

CHORUS
Keith explains it all.

KEITH
I understand there's some dissension in the ranks.

CHEFALI
Where's Rich?

KEITH
Out smoking a carton. What's it to you?

ROB
Who are you?

KEITH
Who are you?

CHANG
Are you a student?

KEITH
No.

APRIL
Are you a teacher?

KEITH

No.

MARK

We'd like to know who you are. Because we don't understand –

KEITH

You don't understand what?

RUTH

How you can understand us? You never went to college.

KEITH

I never went to college so I can't understand you and because you go to college you understand each other.

LIZ

But what we don't understand…

KEITH

Yes?

JASON

It's like this -

KEITH

It's like that.

JASON

We're not playin' -

KEITH

O, no, you don't play. I don't play. Nobody here play.

JASON

We don't know what you do.

KEITH

And you KNOW what YOU do. Oh, yes, you all know what you do. Hear what I do. It's what I say to myself every day –

I ain't never gone to college, no no
Just that college, name of UCLA
Dass Uptown Corner Lenox A – vee – noo
Dass Thirty fourth and Vine, CEE-Ment so fine
Sixty-ninth and Stony-Eye - Chee Caw Go

St. Paul and Minnie-Ap, Hmung night and day
D.C., the Cap'tol? Dass fourteenth and U
Atlanta, Bawl'more, I been there, done mine
N'awlins and Denver and Miami too
San Anton and Phoenix and Dallas hot
San Fran and Oakland, their corners all shot
Cleveland, Orlando, Miami - who knew
I'd be in those places morning 'til night
This Union Stuff never out of my sight

JASON
You been all those places, my friend?

KEITH
I may be hyperbolizing just the slightest, to this end
My point is, there's folks and folks at every stage
'cause we believe in the Cause for every age
got nothin' to do with how much edu-CAY
ev'rything to do with how much you do day to day
And there ain't no nothin' 'bout no revolution
We settle for some nice evolution
Some steady advances, we taking our chances
Got nothin' to lose but our chains and our hang-ups
Look forward, not backward, it's all those Big Bang-ups

JASON
We're going to keep you around for a while.

SCENE 14

CHORUS
Provost meets Attorney

PROVOST
Provost.

ATTORNEY
Attorney.

CHORUS
Strategy – from the Greek 'strategos,' meaning soldier
Corporate from the Latin for 'body'

Corporate strategy

PROVOST
Three new campuses projected by 2010.

ATTORNEY
Where?

PROVOST
Abe Linc West
Abe Linc South
Abe Linc East

ATTORNEY
Where's North?

PROVOST
North's North.

ATTORNEY
Why no North?

PROVOST
Look –

ATTORNEY
No, you look. You ever been to a cockfight?

PROVOST
The cock who draws blood first –

ATTORNEY
– is never the one who wins-- except when he does.
The university which draws the most corporate research blood money is the one with the most branch campuses – in all directions, You want lots of students, establish those branch campuses . You get students, where we want them from. Wherever they can pay the most.
That is, where they drive
Because they have cars
And those, shall I say, in the inner city/
Do not say "inner city"
Los Coches-- cars
Students have cars, more than those who teach them

PROVOST
Let me see if I understand –

The university which draws the mosst corporate research blood money is the one with the most branch campuses
That is, where they can pay the most, and are not on bloody scholarships,
I think I have it — distilled, et cetera –

ATTORNEY
I like the et cetera part. It's very Latin – 'and other things.'
Do you have dinner plans?

PROVOST
I beg your pardon?

ATTORNEY
Now you do – Beg my pardon and et cetera, that is, you have dinner plans.

Enter the President BART TARTT

President TARTT
So, what have you decided, Brilliant One and Brilliant Two?

ATTORNEY & PROVOST
Well, Mr. President

PROVOST
Well – it's about the Latin.

President TARTT
The Latin -
how inn – arresting, as most slobs pronounce it these days
That is, 'Inter Est,' from two Latin words, meaning, roughly,
There is Something Between.
So if I am Inter Ested in You
there is something between you and me.
You've been to cock fights in this town.
And therefore you know, whichever cock draws blood first
Will win –
Except when he does not
Let us move forward
Be pro-Active
Believe in your own Sh*te
Whatever smells in your drawers as you rise from your toilette
Use it
It won't stink for long
Feces is ephemeral and eternal
all at once

Any questions?

ATTORNEY

Not a one sir!

PROVOST

Not a one sir

President Bart TARTT salutes THEM, turns on his heels and leaves.

ATTORNEY and PROVOST

We are prepared for this and we WILL take over.

THEY may or may not be going out to dinner.

SCENE 15

CHORUS

The Lou Gobbs Show.

CHORUS OF NEWSGATHERERS

NNN - Not Nothin' News
News News Not
The Lou Gobbs Show
Sitting in with Lou tonight Kitty Progress and here's Lou.

LOU GOBBS

Good evening, let's get right to the breaking news, if it ain't breaking, we don't fix it. With me tonight, Kitty Progress. Nice to have you here, Kitty.

KITTY

Lou

LOU

Kitty

KITTY

Lou

LOU

Kitty

KITTY
Well, Lou

LOU
Well, Kitty

KITTY
Lou Kitty

LOU
Kitty Lou

KITTY
Litter Kitty

LOU
Kitty Lit

KITTY
Lou?

LOU
Thanks, Kitty

KITTY
Thanks, Lou

LOU
Great job, Kitty

KITTY
Great job, Lou

LOU
Kitty Kitty

KITTY
Lou Lou

LOU
Kitty

KITTY
Lou

LOU

Kitty Kitty from, ah

KITTY
Lou, ah

LOU
Kitty, ah?

KITTY
Lou, ah –

LOU
Thanks, Kitty.

KITTY
Thanks, Lou.

LOU
And now to John Jack, John?

JOHN
Lou?

LOU
John?

JOHN
Lou –

LOU
John –

JOHN
From the White House today, Lou –

LOU
Yes, John?

JOHN
Well, Lou–

LOU
Yes, John

JOHN
Lou, the White House today had no comment

LOU
John, thank you, John, great report

JOHN
Thanks, Lou.

LOU
That was John. Thanks, John. Now back to Kitty. Kitty? Are you there? Not there? Thanks, Kitty, for being – not there. John, are you there? Thanks, John. Lou here. Great report. Christianne? Great to see you. Christianne? Always a pleasure. Kabul. Great to get your report. Karachi tomorrow. Christianne?

CHRISTIANNE
Lou, the President was asked today why the U.S. forces hadn't yet captured or killed Osama Bin Laden and the President said, yes, the President said, we hadn't yet captured or killed Osama Bin Laden, and I quote, "Because he's hiding."

LOU
"Because he's hiding." That's what the President said, Christianne?

CHRISTIANNE
Lou, that's what the President said, Lou.

LOU
Well, that's leaving it to the President, Christianne. Thanks, Christianne. That was Christianne from Kabul. Great report, Christianne. Back to John. John? We've lost John. We've lost Kitty. And now let's get right to the striking news. Ah, yes, strikes, they're as American as, well, strikes. This one at Abraham Lincoln University – Organizing Abraham Lincoln, so-called, and here to tell us more is Winston Ntshona. Winston?

WINSTON
Lou, I'm here at ALU –

LOU
Winston–

WINSTON
Lou, here at ALU –

LOU
Winston, where's the 'C'?

WINSTON
The sea, Lou? The shore?

LOU
The A – C – LU, Winston? Never mind.

WINSTON
Lou, I'm here at AL-LOU by the sea hoping to speak with the President of this August institution of higher learning. He's Jameson Tartt, previously head of the Wall Street firm of Tartt, Smartt, Lark, Park, Finch and Titmouse before being named only the sixth head of this August –

LOU
Winston, let me stop you, the sixth head, he has six, six, I mean he has six heads, he's a kind of a freak –

WINSTON
Lou, he's a corporate raider and that's his rep and his street cred. The President's in a meeting with the trustees, Lou. Wait, I think he's emerging –

JAMESON TARTT 'emerges', flanked by lawyers and the provost, Associate Deans, et alia.

WINSTON
President Tartt, may we have a word with you?

PRESIDENT TARTT
Word? Sentences, paragraphs, pages, whatever you like and we're on the SAME. Good to see you, Winston. Got my check, did you? Just kidding. Have at me.

WINSTON
Mr. President –

PRESIDENT TARTT
You may call me that.

WINSTON
Is it true that Teaching Assistants have in-class contact, as teachers, not just proctors with some 88% of the university's undergraduates and yet they have no medical benefits, no pension plan, a denial of intellectual property and quite simply no respect?

PRESIDENT TARTT
Intellectual Property? I didn't know you were into real estate? And you're spelling that 'respect' how, Winston? R-e-s-p-e-c-tee? It's true, Winston, that our fine TA's bear the brunt, do the grunt, never shunt, in the hunt, munt' after munt', year after year, without fear, without peer, my mouth to God's ear. Yet –

WINSTON
One Iranian-American filmmaker, lives in her lab because she can't afford a studio.

PRESIDENT TARTT

She lives in her studio because she can't afford a lab? Next thing you'll tell me is that she can't feed her pit bull. I come from the great coal state of West Virginia. I've been there when the mines have collapsed and the hillsides have been gouged and the canary has emerged to announce that there's still oxygen far below and I've known, as a little tyke, the visit of John F. Kennedy in 1960 to our great state and I'm here to tell you that these TA's, r-e-s-p-e-c-t them though I do, they are no Dan Quayle.

WINSTON

President Tartt –

LOU

Mr. President, excuse me for interrupting as only I can, and pardon me, Winston, great report, Winston, Lou here, President Tartt, there's something that's really bothering me and, well, I just have to go ahead and ask it, in all your years of experience in the corporate vector –

PRESIDENT TARTT

Lou Here, great to hear you, Lou. Great reports on outsourcing illegal muchachos. Aut I agree with your blog, Lou, the only way to stop illegal aliens is to arm Lou Gobbs at the border!
"Que controla el frontera!

No riesgo con Gobbso!"

That great sucking noise we hear, Lou, the Laughta at Nafta. Adios, Ross Caballero Peron 'Don't cry for me, Pennsylvania.'

LOU

Jameson what's really bothering me, I mean isn't this a teapot in a tempest, we have the finest university system, so please tell me, why in God's name can't we just educate our young people without all this folderol, I mean it's just beyond me, James.

PRESIDENT TARTT

It's what makes it real, Lou.
I'm asked this all the time.
Just what does the public want
    in a university President
A species of public intellectual
    or a species of chief executive?

LOU

I couldn't have asked it better, Mr. Prez.
Species
    that's the word for all species

Just like Chairman Mao put it on the back of those little taxis everywhere in BayDing, - Serve the People Heart and Soul

PRESIDENT TARTT

He said that, Lou?

LOU

He said that, James, Jameson. Thanks to you President James Monroe Tartt. Winston, back to you, Winston –

WINSTON

President Tartt, you've said you'd be willing to debate a union representative and I quote, "anytime, any place," yet, according to the union, you've repeatedly not been available for the many times and places they have suggested. What do you say to that?

PRESIDENT TARTT

Whose payroll are you on? The-No-Journalist-of-Color-Left-Behind payroll? Your race is not exactly looking good in the Fourth Estate department these days, now is it, Winnie? Just funnin', mah main man. You, me, Usher 'n 50 cent, we be down!

LOU

That's it, dudes, Live and Let Die, and Winston, you know you're up for review, and that's wheys and curds kewl. Dass k-e-w-l.

WINSTON

I'll be the one to re-establish decorum, Gobbs. I mean, Lou. Mr. President, one last query –

PRESIDENT & LOU

QUEERRRY?

WINSTON

Is it true that there's a sexual harassment charge about to blow up in your plastic surgified puss?

PRESIDENT TARTT

For the last time, let me stress to you, I am the SafeGuarder of Pedagogical Rectitude, wrectum?, damn near killed 'em,
I am the President, the First Sitter, if you know your Latin, the presiding academician in the Stalls of Academe, and any attempt to Unionize the Urinals, the vaunted U-U attack, will be met with the Shaving of the Ice. If you think, Zambonis notwithstanding,– that you're going to have a hockey season for your TA's, Tits 'n Ass, you have another puck coming.

LOU

And we'll speak with you later, Winston. Great job Winnie.

WINSTON

Great job Lou.

SCENE 16

CHORUS

The International Students. Chefali Shah and Mr. Chang.

CHEFALI

Chefali Shah, not SHAW. I'm not Oirish, I'm EYEranian. And it wasn't the SHAW of EYE-RAN, as in 'Humpf and Pshaw,as in George Bernard Shaw not the SHEEK of Araby, it's the Shake of Arabia and I didn't know the Ayatollah Khomeini personally who fomented the revolution from his hideout in Paris who overthrew the Peacock throne of the Shah and I wasn't reading Lolita in Tehran. But I would have liked to have met Mossadegh whose crime was that he wanted to give the Iranian oil to the EYEranians! Well, Great Bloody Britain, and Winnie Chinchilla Himself, we're not going to stand for that.

Chinchilla, who called Mossadegh, "the senile lunatic" Better believe it 'cause it needs to be heard.

So I'm in this place having food with friends
and we're getting up to leave
and as I'm maneuvering between tables
there's this florid white man
and he's looking me up and down, that way dumb American florid white men have
and he says to me as I'm passing, his remark not in passing –
"Hey, you think Saddam was a good guy?
"Because people like you should never get through our porous borders"
People ask me why I want to make films. That's why – he's why – I want to make films.
Chefali Shah, as in rah rah sis boom baaa, not 'Humpf, Pshaw, Law, what Law?
Islamic Law of the Qu'ran known as
Sharia
or
Shah-RIA, ya dig?

CHANG

Chang. Known only by last name. Maybe say 'Mr. Chang'. Go to Bei Da University. How you say, Harvard of China. Or Harvard Bei Da of U.S. Bei Da mean 'North Big'. Like capital Beijing mean 'North Capital'. Bei Da in Beijing. Sun Yat-sen, founder of Chinese nation., known also as Sun Zhong-Shan, Sun Middle Mountain. Shanghai mean 'Up Sea'. Bei Hai Park Beijing North Sea in North Capital. Tian'anmen Square

‘Heavenly Peace Gate Square. Chang. What Chang mean? Wang mean King. Wong mean King. Both mean King. Chang? What he mean? Chang mean factory. Also Chang worker in factory. I don’t want to work in factory. Make firecrackers in state run factory. Blow off hand in state run factory. Accountant. I am accountant. Know what that mean? That mean do not blow off.
Now you know Chinese. You think?

SCENE 17

CHORUS

It’s the Light

Setting: RICH, ROB, APRIL and KEITH in the ALGO office for daily staff meeting

KEITH

It’s the light, man.

ROB and APRIL

The light???

KEITH

Yeah, everything out there is determined by the light. Some people only come in the morning when the light is in the east, others at midday when the ambient light is overhead, others in the afternoon when it’s in the west. And then there are the ones who only come at night when there isn’t any light. They do their own work, teach their students and hold office hours only when the light is right for them. It’s weird. Nobody knows anyone, sees anyone, talks to anyone unless they’re in the same light group.

I spent all last week at the art school. I got six new volunteer organizers and trained them in small groups and then took them out. They got fourteen signatures on the Vote Yes petition.

I like going there. It’s so pretty and peaceful; you wouldn’t know it’s a sweat shop.

SCENE 18

CHORUS

The basketball game action.

SETTING: Outside the ALU Arena, home of the ALU men’s basketball team, the Blues. Student demonstrators chanting:

“Basketball is Lincoln’s Game, Our Health Care is Lincoln’s Shame.”

There’s a yellow school bus festooned with signs for the AFL-CIO, the Coalition

of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Jobs For Justice, Election Now, etc. TONY SCULLY, the President of the Central Labor Council, is holding forth to APRIL, CHEFALI and RUTH.

TONY SCULLY

Tony Scully, President Central Labor Council.
Out here these are my people.
Let me review, let's be clear, to the point
There's a ball game inside of this joint
Whoever wins gets an NCDoubleA bid
If it's ALU Blues, every kid'll be poppin' his lid
What we got to make sure, is before they step in
That they each got a sheet, an Election Now pin
A leaflet, a smile for all 14 Thou
From 11:00 to half past, they're all going past
And it's ESPN's major broadcast
Alright, it's time for a countoff, lads and lasses
You're adults, not kids, I 'spect no sasses
We're going to match just right for maximum punch
'Cause when you got a hunch, you bet a bunch
Hey, Rich and Frank –

RICH and FRANK enter. Adlibs as THEY greet.

TONY SCULLY (Cont'd)

I'm out of here, my cousins, habla con mi amigo especial agente Marcos, may he be not mean.

Indeed the Policeman has entered and RICH and RAY engage HIM.

FRANK

Officer Marcos, I'm Frank Cicek; this is Rich Farrell. I'm with the AFL-CIO amd Rich is with the AFT, these are our people and this is our bus.

Officer MARCOS

Who's authorized 'your people' and 'your bus' to be here and now?

RICH

We have a permit signed by the Mayor.

Officer MARCOS

Would that be Mayor Pendejo?

FRANK

We don't know him well enough to call him that.

Officer MARCOS

But I do.

RICH

Officer, we want to make sure that we understand what standard of cleanliness is required once this demonstration is over.

Officer MARCOS

What ‘standard of cleanliness’? How about no papers, no signs, no Starbucks’ cups, no muffin wrappers, no green tea jugs, no Dasani bottles No POM juice stains on the sidewalk, no Marlboro Light butts in the puddles, no McD’s French fry grease on the lampposts, no depleted triple A batteries and absolutely not a whiff of an unwashed body part and that’s for starters. Comprende, muchachos?

FRANK

Si, comprendemos, senyore, El Diablo anda suelto. To be perfectly clear, we never patronize Yuppie scum ‘tiendas’, y Sub-Commandante Marcos, your command is our command.

An ESPN director (female) and the Athletic Director (male) come bounding on.

ESPN

Officer, this is the major broadcast of the week and we can’t even get our trucks here because of this school bus.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Who authorized this?

ESPN

Division One game of the week to determine a bid and a seeding and we can’t even get our trucks because of this yellow thing.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Who authorized this?

ESPN

This yellow thing ...

ESPN & ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Who authorized this!?

Officer MARCOS

El Alcalde Pendejo.

ESPN & ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Who?

Officer MARCOS

The Mayor, one Melvin Butts.

The chanting, which had subsided, grows again.

DEMONSTRATORS

Basketball is Lincoln's game
Our health care is Lincoln's shame

Athletic Director confronts Demonstrators.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Don't you know that the more money the program takes in, the more all of you will have?

JASON

That's trickle-down theory you are espousing
Like folks up in mansions and other such housing
It's jokes that they're cracking on the homeless and shacking
Know you're no better when you tell us you do this for us
You have the law's letter but the spirit is ours and this is our bus
And moving it ain't, how 'bout that yellow paint

Cheers.

ESPN

Now guys, let's make one thing perfectly clear
This sport these hoops, slam-dunks, alley-oops
The cheerleaders, the mascots, the low-carb beer
It's all here for you here and now, what makes this U great
Greater than State, so come on, let's pick and roll
From high post to low, no point guard slow
White, black and brown, red and yellow soul – Let's take it to the hole!

RUTH

If slouching to Abraham's bosom is what you demand
Know we reject where you stand
No basketball program so glutted with boosters, alte cockers and roosters
fueled by tv dollars and sponsors
for Hooters and crooked shooters
point shavers, overtime savers
sneaker endorsers, under-the-table enforcers
convertible-givers, so-called Christian Right-to-Livers
cash dispensers, half-time censors

million dollar coaches, locker room roaches
will push this bus from its parking place
We're a whole lot of full court press
Look us straight up and down and see our game face
You want something from us, you have to say YES.

More cheers.

CHEFALI
We're taking some eggs from your very large basket
There's enough for us all, we just need some redress
We won't even make you your wrongs confess
We won't even show you your custom-make casket
Just give us what's due; don't tell it, don't ask it
Now we're handing out our literature and this bus it will stay here
You may move your stuff around us, just pretend this is your sound bus
Now you got a problem with that and what part is still not clear

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
I think we can come to some accommodation

ESPN
By all means, on the grandest of scales, it's good for the nation
Let's hear it for EDUCATION!

The Athletic Director and Mr. ESPN slouch off while being heard to say –

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
We'll bury these punks

ESPN
I know just the lunks

RICH and FRANK back on the scene with Officer MARCOS

Officer MARCOS
Los Payasos, these administrators and bureau craters. Fuacata y chinga

FRANK
I couldn't have said it better myself.

RICH
You'll be able to eat off this street, it'll be so clean.

FRANK
It's Utopia, it's Erewhon, it's The Way of All Flesh

Officer MARCOS

La Calle de Carne

FRANK

The Street of all Meat.

RICH

How do you say, Fantastic?

FRANK

Fantastico.

RICH, FRANK y MARCOS

Fantastico!

SCENE 19

CHORUS

The State Senate Committee Room. State Senator Onyx Mae Patrick.

State Senator Onyx Mae Patrick chairing the hearing, praise the Lord, questioning the main witness,

President Bart Tartt. In medias res.

Senator ONYX

Mr. President, I have two memos sent from your office to your staff and I quote
"Get the notices printed
and say we violated the Law
Let the truth go forth from this day forward
Let them bite the hand that feeds them
They'll soon find out who needs them"
And the second memo
"Let's violate the law
Let's show them what we've hinted
Get the notices printed
Iraq is back, it's shock and awe."
Would you care to comment on either or preferably both of these, sir?

President TARTT

Senator Onyx, this was not totally Onyxpected and I'm sure you know the old joke. In the knowledge economy, one must always Be Prepared, as the Boy Scouts Marching Song of

America have been prepared; for those of an idiosyncratic gender preference in their midst. I would just emphasize that here in the Groves of our Abraham Academic Bosom, we have agreed to every meeting, every demand and we are proud of our corporate spirit in the face of the obstacle known to all as the Union to resolve this very horny dilemma.

Senator ONYX
The State Labor Board ruled as required by law that an election be held with all due dispatch.

President TARTT
Madame Chairperson, Madame Sofa, Madame Big Comfy Couch, if I may call you that

Senator ONYX
You may not. President Tartt will answer why on seven dates were meetings set and the university changed or failed to make even one.

President TARTT
Madame Chair before you administer the coup de grace is always greener on the other side of the quad, there will be an election before the end of the year.

Senator ONYX
Not good enough –

President TARTT
The end of the semester.

Senator ONYX
Mr. President, seven meetings. Is any of this in error?

President TARTT
Errare est humana, absolvere est divina.

Senator ONYX
To err is human, to forgive divine. We're not divine and we are not in the forgiveness business, not in this Knowledge Economy.
The election?

President TARTT
One month.

Senator ONYX
From today. Meeting adjourned.

End Act One.

Act II

SCENE 20

CHORUS

Organizing 1-on-1.

Setting: The ALGO office. RICH, ROB, APRIL, LIZ, JASON, KEITH

RICH

Rob, give us the numbers.

ROB

Yeah, we've identified 983 TA's employed this semester. We have 66 on committee listed as 1's. That includes stewards, volunteer organizers, phone bank crew, visibility team, Lit production and international student outreach All but two have signed the Vote Yes petition.

There are another 454 who have signed the petition and completed the survey. Those are the 2's. There are still 291 3's that have to be moved. There are 112 hard 4's who have said they will vote against the union more than once. There are still 60 no contacts.

JASON

Rich, didn't you say that when the employer campaign hits directly we can expect to lose 20% of our 1's and 2's?

RICH

If we stop talking on a regular basis, or have been soft in our assessments.

JASON

That means we could lose 104 of our 520 Yes votes.

JASON

We have to think more creatively.
Our dues are high.
We'll take them out on strike.
My advisor won't like it.
I won't get reappointed.
But let's take a different tack on this session.
Tell us all where you came in
How'd you get into this line of work?
Was your mommy a coalminer's daughter
Did your pappy drown in a coal mine's water?
What brought you to this exotic pass

Did watching ‘Silkwood’ or ‘How Green Is My Valley’
push you to critical mass
We want to hear about the Organizer Cult
And how you first moved from plan to result

RICH

You want me to put my Pocket Zen into play, hey
I can switch gears, or so I used to be able
Each of us got a bro named Cain
The task, the task is to stay Able
This Organizer Cult is a misnomer
The wrong way to look through the telescope
This ain’t about The One, but the Many
Any may join
The squarest of pegs, the roundest of holes
Now similar souls, dissimilar souls
We two - I make haste ‘slow’, you make slow ‘haste’
Cross the road by half?
and by half again
and by half again and again
you’ll never get to the other side by halves
Throw a drowning man 50 feet from shore a 25 foot rope
Yessir, you can say you’re goin’ half way, but that man will surely drown
No Cult of One. Everyone must be a pair.
This the kind of poker where two pair beat three of a kind any day of the week
I tell you ‘How the Watch Works’
You tell me ‘The Time’
Together we are The Watch

JASON

Man, that’s some haiku
Blew me away, Dr. K
Real, not virtual you
But how do we put this into practice hard
How do we convince and persuade the ‘Baas’?
Us?, sit at the table with these asses of lard
When all we want to do is shout ‘No mas’
Don’t we need some high visibility dude
Maybe some Preacher, Junior, with a ‘tude

ROB

Or some retired liberator from a foreign land
What about Nelson Mandela to lead this band

RICH

Hey, get me not wrong, He’s the Man on High

If he should walk through that door with Slovo Joe
Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama wheeling in Mother Theresa, Helen Keller
Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Mother Jones
Sure, throw in Desmond Tutu if that's your pleasure
When all we need is you too
Man is of all things the measure
That's what the thinkers of antiquity knew
So until you come up with a philosopher king
whose special voice
Sings for our suppers, pulls Excalibur from its stone
sucks out all the bad marrow from the bone of every contention
We're back to the Cult of Extraordinary Folk
When what we got here isn't pie-in-the-sky
To fight for what is necessary to lift the yoke
We co-labor in this colLABORation

JASON
In this co-LABOR-nation and The Big Bad Uniblustery

LIZ
What's he saying?

APRIL
What's he talkin'?

RICH
I think he's sayin' that he ain't playin'

JASON
The Idea of the University
Wasn't one of diversity
The very word university, etymologically speaking,
'the true word', if you will, is simply what etymology means
while 'university' - 'turned toward one' is its meaning
It's purpose was to know how we know
Do we perceive/do we receive/do we sense with our 'mens'
Our mind our brain our cranial cranes are flying pecking our cranial

The other students realize HE is breaking down – they've seen signs of this before, and are ready to calm him down.

JASON (Cont'd)
Sana mens in sano corpore
Sound mind or sound body – take your pick
The study of knowing, epistemology, if you must know
Fee fie fo fee fo fum fee

Whose telephone number is that

STUDENTS (variously ad libbing)

It'll be alright

JASON

You're all very kind
Good night ladies, goodnight, ladies, goodnight Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are.
I'm too young to even know that reference!

SCENE 21

CHORUS

Is Abraham Lincoln Moving to Florida?

SETTING: RICH enters the ALGO office. It is total chaos. APRIL is sitting with her head in her hands. RUTH looks like she has been hit with a bat. MARK is furiously throwing darts at a picture of the university president on a cork board. ROB is mumbling as he works on the computer. JASON is furiously reading and marking RICH's charts. LIZ is throwing a fit.

LIZ

Those lousy motherfuckers. Those rotten pieces of shit.

MARK (as he throws each dart)

Corporate assholes. Bourgeois pig. Lying bastard. Liberal phony.

RICH

What the hell happened?

ROB

We got the voter list from the university. It only has 500 names on it. Most of our Vote Yes people aren't on it.

JASON

They've included all the Fellows on the voter list.

RICH

What are these Fellows?

JASON

They're senior graduate students writing their dissertations who get paid but don't teach.

ROB

It's bad. Our numbers verify 983 eligible with 16 questionable. They gave us a list with only 410 plus the 90 Fellows.

RUTH

This is just like what happened in Florida in 2000. They rig the voter list to steal the election.

RICH

Genius. That's our quarter sheet for tomorrow. Is Abraham Lincoln moving to Florida?

SCENE 22

CHORUS

The Clergy.

RABBI AKIVA AKIVA

We've come to the end of today's forum entitled - Abraham Lincoln University: The Clergy Looks at a Citizens' Employer in the Community. Jewish leaders have always supported the labor movement and the rights of employees to form unions for the purpose of engaging in collective bargaining and attaining fairness in the workplace.
I want to thank our panelists, the Reverend Zaiga Robins, the Latvian Lutheran Minister

REVEREND ZAIGA ROBINS

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America commits itself to advocacy- to protect the rights of workers, support the collective bargaining process, and protect the rights to strike.

RABBI AKIVA AKIVA

Sidney Lanier from the United Church of Christ.

SIDNEY LANIER

The United Church of Christ reaffirms its heritage as an advocate for democratic, participatory, and inclusive economic policies in both public and private sectors.

RABBI AKIVA AKIVA

Sister Mary Bruno from Good King Wenceslas Catholic Church

SISTER MARY BRUNO

The Catholic Church believes no one may deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself.

RABBI AKIVA AKIVA

Arundhati Tagore from the Siddhartha Gautama Center.

TAGORE
The complete teaching of all Buddhas are to be found in every human being's dignity as an expression of greater worker enlightenment.

RABBI AKIVA AKIVA
And the Reverend Carlos Bulosan from the Filipino Peace Collective.

BULOSAN
All workers including undocumented, migrant and farm workers have the right to organize.

RABBI AKIVA AKIVA
I'm Rabbi Akiva Akiva of the Ultra Reform Synagogue wishing you 'Shalom.' If we can all join hands-

SCENE 23

CHORUS
Let's Get Silly – ALGO Has a Social.
Let's get silly and have some fun, ALGO
Shake the dew off the lilies and get those blues on the run, ALGO
Spend your penny and water your snake
Rattle and roll and shake shake shake
It's an old fash sosul
A Def Bash Mosul
We got our two bits
Half of Fifty Cent give us fits
Don't be hurrying your worrying
Bugger the rent, kaboodles and kits
Bring on home all the old stuff
like cuttin' rugs
and jitterbugs
23 Skidoo
'O when the saints' on my old kazoo
Lindy Hops
Dizzy's BeBops
right to the present and beyond
to the Hips of Hops
this ain't no Golden Pond
no gaps, no naps in Raps
We so old we recall when BlingBling was King

We so old we recall when the Big Bang was not televised
When the Revolution was not digitalized
We so old we recall when creationism was not evolutionized
We knew Gil Scott-Heron before he was penalized
We so old we recall when paleontologists were unionized
    geologists were Balkanized
    sociologists were psychologized
STOP
One more time -
We so old we know when working stiffs were not marginalized
Let's keep politics out of this
Yeah, sure, sister
I'm working Saturday, Sunday, honey
I got no time to spend my money
I got so angry last night I started a fight in an empty bar
Then I jumped in my car, my Dusenberg
And I sped right off 'til that siren blurred
    my brain, got my neck in a chain
    and the Poleesman said,
    This your 220, young man?
    That's my Dusenberg, Officer Krupke
I ain't down with your PRO gram
Time for some NO gram
She who hesitates is lost
I so tired of being bossed
If you ain't usin' that thing
    you losin' that thing
Runnin' on CPT, you say
Willie Mays The Man, say hey!
She walk just like she got an oil well in her backyard
Whachu sayin' wid yore flimmin' 'n' flammin'
Hey, young scratcher, we need some Bob Marley 'Jammin'

SCENE 24

CHORUS

Planning Election Day.

RICH

A thrust analysis tells us the rate of growth between 1's and 4's. That gives us a handle

on how the 3's and uncontacted will break. The 4 vote is stabilized. The 1's, that is people on committee, are still growing.

ROB

No cleavages on gender race, domestic versus international, school or discipline as a pattern. It all comes down to whether we have an effective steward or not.

LIZ

What do you do with the 3's on election

RICH

Count 'em as No votes.

ROB

We'll phone bank all Yes votes this weekend-- get them to identify when they plan to go to the polls.

RUTH

Remember, there's no campaigning on the block of the polling place, including signs. No union or university officials inside the building. Each side gets two poll watchers. Rich suggested we keep tallies inside by giving them hard candies. Every ten voters they eat a candy and put the wrapper in their pocket.

JASON (jokingly)

What if they don't like candy?

LIZ

Candy is the least of my worries-- why do I get so few VO's?

JASON

The lab sections are all on Wednesdays. I can't move voters until after 2. I need more people at the end.

KEITH

What about the van for the Art School?

RUTH

If I'm going to get the posters up in time, I need four short left-handed volunteers. I'll team them with my tall righties and we can cut the papering in half.

ROB

But I need two people for data entry or we won't be able to run reports until the middle of the next shift.

MARK enters.

MARK

I knew they'd wait to the last minute to pull this shit. Read this letter from the President. It's going into every TA's mailbox on Friday afternoon.

ROB (*reading over RICH's should*)

It's all the stuff we've been inoculating about. Fewer jobs if we unionize. High dues. Bad relations with advisors. Strike. International students will lose visas. The damn Social Security myth is still there. We'll be starting from zero in negotiations.

APRIL

Stop, stop, stop. Suddenly I feel like I'm trapped in one of the old wallpaper Steering meetings. Let's stop acting like the damn No voters that can't realize their own self-interest.

SCENE 25

CHORUS

Five Language Fone Bank.

LIZ

Alright, everyone. Tonight's our Five Language Fone Bank – American, Imperial English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese.

JASON

Why not Albanian, Bulgarian, Tsarist Siberian, Hmong and Javanese?

LIZ

Five questions -

JASON

One per language?

LIZ

For each lingua -

1. Can you live on your salary?

ROB

Fat chance

LIZ

2. Health insurance adequate?

CHEFALI

Can you live off your fat?

LIZ

Don't answer a question with a question.

3. Teaching load fair?

MARK

Like my old man's strap.

LIZ

Working conditions commensurate with your discipline?

CHANG

'Commensurate'?

LIZ

Gauge who you're talking to. Find another word. 'Equal to,' 'fair,' always have 'fair' as a fallback – and

5. If the election were held tomorrow, how would you vote?

RUTH

And the bonus question?

LIZ

If the answers are in our direction -

Bonus: May we make a personal visit?

APRIL

Yes, you may. Now, pardon my skepticism, but when do I find out if these telephones run on time?

LIZ

Avanti, now do you have any special needs?

JASON

Like do I need a ramp?

JASON starts dialing.

JASON (Cont'd)

Hello, may I speak with Vikram Singh? My name is Jason DWB White from the American Federation of Teachers, how are you today and have I interrupted tea? ... Haha, that's a good one, I'll remember that. I understand that you teach in the IT division at ALU as a Graduate Assistant ... well, that's what I'm calling about ... so let me be clear ... you think the whole thing is an abomination of desolation ... see you tomorrow ...

JASON hangs up and starts to dial another number.

LIZ

You didn't get a time or a place.

JASON

For what?

LIZ

The answer to the bonus question.

JASON

He hung up after 'desolation.'

CHEFALI makes the next call.

TONY
Elzbieta Czyzewska, prosze ... she's where? Warsaw. Dzienkuya bardso. I'll try back.

APRIL makes the next call.

APRIL
Yetide Badaki, please ... she's gone back to Nigeria? Regards to President Obasanjo.

CHANG
Yongsoo Park, please… Mr. Chang for AFT.

ROB
Rob Windsor Domingo for AFT.

RUTH
Ruth Robins, one "b", for AFT.

MARK
Mark Czyz, two "z's" for AFT.

All Fone Bankers
For AFT!

NEW SCENE

CHORUS

Frank and Keith Get Ready

SETTING: Frank and Keith in the ALGO Office the afternoon before Election Day

FRANK

We've got to get our quadrant schedule and staffing finished.

KEITH

I'm worried/ We got Science and Engineering and tomorrow is a heavy lab day. Most of my stewards have two section, plus Wednesday is whenm their two o'clock seminars meet. We have to get our vote in no later than noon.

FRANK

How do you keep track of this stuff without a notebook?

KEITH

It's all looking and listening. Ssomebody sees me with a notebook the figure I'm either a cop or a crook casing the joint. I can't afford the hassle.

FRANK

Rich says we have first choice on the floaters for GOTV. Who do you want?

KEITH

John, the ex-Marine from poly sci. He knows how to work. And I want Ruth as soon as the postering is finished. And also Thelma, ,the black theology grad who did the inter-faith stuff. And the bicycle riding biologist—what's his name==Paul.

FRANK

Paul? Isn't he the guy that makes up those goofy chants at the rallies that nobody can get right?

KEITH

He can't rhyme, but he can count and that is what we need. He knows the turf.

FRANK

We got it.

KEITH

How? Especially after the blow up with the committee yesterday.

FRANK

Rich just said this is the way it's going to be—Frank's in charge of floater assignment.

KEITH

So he made you the heavy?

FRANK

Yes, and the key to winning is no erosion of the yes vote in our sector. It was a command decision. What happened yesterday anyhow?

KEITH

Campaign jitters. Everybody 's afraid of losing and getting blamed.

FRANK

That doesn't make any sense, we're the only ones with real problems.

KEITH

Think about it. Where you and I come outta, losing is always possible and usually likely. The TA's are people who played by therules and always won. Why do you think they are so angry when they get screwed over for the first time? If hard work always paid off, how would you feel when you saw that's not how the world works?

FRANK

Hadn't thought of it like that. They are so idealistic and hard working and they run off flakes in a heart beat.

KEITH

Yeah, but they've never gone o for four on called strikes.

FRANK

We got our walkie-talkies and call in phones ssyched?

KEITH

Yeah, I made palm cards for everyone and four poster sheets for the office. Here's yours.

FRANK

(with a light laugh) I guess all we need is handles.

KEITH

You're here. I'm out there You're Papa Bear and I'll be Baby Bear.

FRANK

Papa Bear? Now I'm the COG.

KEITH

The COG??

FRANK

Certified Old Guy and I'm only 39.

KEITH

Rich is the COG. He was 40 when he was born.

LAUGHTER among the two..

SCENE 26

CHORUS

Why We Fight.

SETTING: The ALGO Office. Night before election. The place is packed with graduate employee activists.

APRIL

We've asked our big brother, Rich, to say a few words.

RICH

When I played basketball, I always hated pep talks. So I'm not going to give one. Instead I want to say a few things about tomorrow's election and the future.

We have the numbers to win big tomorrow. All you have to do is get out the vote. You do that and we win the second round of a three-round preliminary. You had to get the cards to get the election. You did that almost three years ago. You beat their lawyers at the Labor Board, in the community, among the political leaders and forced the election date. That tells me you won round one and know what you're doing.

You have a majority of the bargaining unit willing to go public with their intention to vote, YES. All you have to do is get them to the polls. This isn't won until the ballots are counted and we have an absolute majority of the eligible voters sharing our dream with their actions.

Next, we have our third round to win. Negotiate a fair contract that meets the needs of the members so that they will ratify it. Some of the work will be the same—maintaining visibility to build an echo chamber. Continuing to do one-on-one assessments of every Teaching Assistant. Some will be new – researching the proposals, doing an analysis of the budget, training the bargaining team and building a credible strike threat. The national union will provide the training, but you will have to do the work. A further word on the strike threat. I've been planning legal and illegal strikes for thirty years back to when I was a local officer. One thing I know. The better prepared you are to withdraw your labor and shut the employer down, the less likely that you'll have to. That is a credible strike threat.

But the fight won't end there. This is the first fight in a struggle that will last as long as you are in the academy. You are going to have to fight for decent pay and benefits when you are adjunct faculty. You are going to have to fight for dignity and the integrity of the learned professions when you are full-time faculty. You are going to have to fight that the university is a place where citizens with critical capacities are produced, rather than continue to let it slide into a place where the children of the upper middle class are credentialed for the more lucrative jobs in society.

I once shared your dreams. To get paid to read and discuss books was the neatest thing I'd ever heard of. It sure beat mindless factory work that destroyed the soul. It was better than bartending which is like being an acid dealer who has to stay in the room with the customers. And it was work that had value and meaning. So I spent six glorious years in graduate school discovering that I knew what I was doing with the help of superb teachers.

Then I took a job at a new urban university. A place like Abraham Lincoln but designed for the world of working people and people with families. I encountered wonderful students there—the airline mechanic who wrote a paper on place names and the coming of industrialization; the woman with three kids who brilliantly explained the election of 1896 and the triumph of the corporation. But there was a problem. The administration didn't care. We had our offices in an abandoned airplane hangar. They closed the library on the weekends. All they were concerned about was how many students they could cram into each classroom. We had to fight this soulless takeover, so we organized a faculty union and that school's a better place because that union is *in*place. It's the same fight you're fighting right now. A fight that I love. A dream that I still dream.

Don't look back.
Don't second-guess.
Keep the soul alive.
Let's go seal this deal.

SCENE 27

CHORUS

12:30 PM. Election Day.

SETTING: ALGO office. Rob, Rich and Frank. Everyone else is in the field.

RICH
What's the noon count for the whole unit?

ROB
316 Yes and 31 No.

FRANK
This next two hours is the heavy turnout time, right?

ROB
Yeah, almost half of the YES's are supposed to vote between Noon and Two,

RICH
Something doesn't feel right. Where are the NO votes? That number should be higher.

FRANK
That's it. Where the hell are they. Are we going to get buried at the end?

ROB
I talked with Mark. He said the campus is just plastered with VOTE YES petitions and people are reading them to see who's signed.

RICH
316 is nowhere what we need. We have to have an absolute majority of the unit to bargain effectively. We gotta have a minimum of 493 Yesses.

FRANK
The VOTE YES poster has 578 on it. If we have any flake factor at all, we're in trouble.

CHORUS
The Vote Count.

MARK
Possible 980.
Yes 690. No 119.

A cheer goes up.

MARK (Cont'd)
That's definitely beyond a simple majority.

CHORUS (variously)
What's that number? 690-119.

What do we want – Health Care
What do we want – Dignity
What do we want – Union Contract

LIZ
Someone stole my bicycle!
What do we want?

ALL
Bicycles!

SCENE 28

CHORUS
April and the Attorney.

APRIL UNSELD runs into the University's chief Attorney.

ATTORNEY
April, oh April, it's April, isn't it? Peter Hargreaves here.

APRIL
Yes, sir, I'm here too. What may I do to you and right back and forth achoo?

ATTORNEY
I just thought it might be best if we –

APRIL

If we –

ATTORNEY

understood –

APRIL

– each other's –

BOTH

– positions.

ATTORNEY

Yes, positions. You see –

APRIL

I don't really, I mean firmly, I don't see your position other than that it is supremely, firmly, did I say firmly, mired in the firmest concretist Krappe.

ATTORNEY

April –

APRIL

The cruelest month and I am the cruelest mutha.

ATTORNEY

I've read that poem, we have a common link – it is the missing link that could bind us –

APRIL

Cut the cord and the link
Let me leave you with a truism to add to your collection – Do you want a good fake or a really good fake? You, Pozzo, are a really good fake, I grant you that. In the medical profession they have the Hippocratic Oath. In your vocation, it's called the Hypocritic.

ATTORNEY

I got one for you, my dear. It matters not who votes, but who counts. And I definitely count.

APRIL

Ooo, you be so cooo. But I think you don't want to count again. Because we'll keep coming back. We are the Hydra Head and we give very good Hydra.

SHE snaps those fingers and is out of there.

EPILOGUE

RICH
Scholars, Employees, Organizers, step forward.

CHEFALI
I finished my Ph.D. and teach film and mass communications at a community college in Los Angeles.

MARK
I finished my degree and am a national representative with the American Federation of Teachers Organizing Department in Philadelphia.

APRIL
I am completing my dissertation and working as Executive Director of an AFT Local in Philadelphia.

ROB
I left the Academy to join the American Federation of Teachers as a National Representative in Los Angeles.

JASON
I received my Ph.D. in mathematics and am teaching at a public university in New York City.

RUTH
I completed my dissertation and am an adjunct faculty member at two colleges in Chicago.

LIZ
I completed my degree and am a research sociologist with Catholic Charities.

CHANG
I completed my Ph.D. and am teaching accounting at a state university in Bejing.

Everyone but Keith steps forward.

CHANG (Cont'd)
Our brother Keith died of a heart attack the night we ratified our first contract at Abraham Lincoln University. He was 34 years old.

Keith steps forward.

KEITH
"I have forgotten what happiness is. I tell myself that my future is lost, all that I hoped for

from the Lord. But I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope. The favors of the Lord are not exhausted; his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning." Here comes Brother Saul with his Rules for Radicals.

End Play.