RADICAL ORATIONS ON THE STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT

Public oration draws on a range of histories from street corner soapboxes to acts of public resistance to the persuasions of self-taught religious leaders. Great orators facilitate this with little more than the resonance of their voices and the gestures of their bodies. We invite you to perform an oration, adding to both the spectacle and contemplative moments of Nuit Blanche. The orations provided examine structures of support beginning with this question: How is it that some get by so well, while others barely get by, or not at all? Jar your audience. Capture them with your voice. Invite them to dwell in questions about why they survive while others nearby are sinking. Seek to engage, disrupt and challenge.

Follow these simple instructions to practice your oratorical skills:

1. Tear the page separating the text strip from the cone.
2. Roll the paper into a cone making sure it is small on one end and broad on the other—facilitation the projection of your voice.
3. Find an audience, a time, a place to speak.
4. Read any of provided orations using the cone to project the sound of your voice.

THE THINK TANK THAT HAS YET TO BE NAMED

The Think Tank that has yet to be named initiates research, conversations, and actions that explore contemporary sociopolitical issues in the places where we encounter them. Whether these ‘places’ be physical sites, institutional structures, or social systems, we address these contexts as manifestations of models and metaphors that inescapably impact our lives. We create generative spaces where strategic questions are invitations to others to consider their relationship to the places, structures, and systems which shape our individual and collective experiences of the world.

Learn more at www.wearethethinktank.org
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON,
UP FROM SLAVERY

The individual who can do something that the world wants done will, in the end, make his way regardless... One man may go into a community prepared to supply the people there with an analysis of Greek sentences. The community may not at that time be ready to respond to a demand for the first product, and with the demand will come the ability to appreciate it and to profit by it. I was determined to have the students... erect their own buildings. My plan was to have them... taught to see not only utility in labour, but beauty and dignity; they would be taught, in fact, how to lift labour up from mere drudgery... The majority of our students came to us in poverty... and that while I knew it would please the students very much to place them at once in finely constructed buildings, I felt that it would be following out a more natural process of development to teach them how to construct their own buildings. Mistakes I knew would be made, but these mistakes would teach us valuable lessons for the future. Not a few times, when a new student has been led into the temptation of marring the looks of some building by lead-pencil marks or by the cuts of a jack-knife, I have heard an old student remind him: “Don’t do that. That is our building. I helped put it up.”

DAVID GRAEBER, “A PRACTICAL UTOPIAN’S GUIDE TO THE COMING COLLAPSE”

Labor... should be renegotiated. Submitting oneself to labor discipline —supervision, control, even the self-control of the ambitious self-employed— does not make one a better... definition of productivity should make it easier to reimagine the very nature of what work is, since, among other things, it will mean that technological development will be redirected less toward creating ever more consumer products and ever more disciplined labor, and more toward eliminating those forms of labor entirely.

What would remain is the kind of work only human beings will ever be able to do: those forms of caring and helping labor that are at the very center of the crisis that brought about... from a mother, a teacher, or a caregiver? We might be forced to conclude that the real business of human life is not contributing toward something called “the economy” (a concept that didn’t even exist three hundred years ago), but the fact that we are all, and have always been, projects of mutual creation.

JOHN STEINBECK, THE GRAPES OF WRATH

One man, one family driven from the land; this rusty car creaking along the highway to the west. I lost my land, a single tractor took my land. I am alone and I am bewildered. And in the night one family camps in a ditch and another family pulls in and the... out. The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen. Here is the node, you who hate change and fear revolution. Keep these two squatting men apart; make them hate, fear, suspect each other. Here is the anlage of the thing... the side-meat stewing in a single pot, the silent, stone-eyed women; behind, the children listening with their souls to words their minds do not understand. The night draws down. The baby has a cold. Here, take this blanket. It’s wool. It was my mother’s blanket—take it for the baby. This is the thing to bomb. This is the beginning—from “I” to “we.”

If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. If you could separate causes from results, if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, ... But that you cannot know. For the quality of owning freezes you forever into “I,” and cuts you off forever from the “we.”