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*To Austin, who helped eight characters
and one playwright find their voices*

Comments from Tony Vellela

Playwright of *Admissions*

Admissions began as a one-act play, but after only two readings, it became clear that there was much more there than a one-act could support, so I rewrote, and extended the play into its present full length.

I was very fortunate early on to attract Austin Pendleton's interest. We knew each other for years, and when I decided to begin playwriting (I've been a journalist for quite a while), it was Austin who gave me that initial encouragement. Then, when *Admissions* was starting to develop, he felt it was something he wanted to work on.

We launched into an extensive series of staged readings, to explore the play, and search for the right producing arrangement. We must have done twenty staged readings, and each time, I learned something new about the play and its structure. When we signed on to do its premiere production, in 1995, at the New Perspectives Theatre in midtown Manhattan, we were ready to move ahead. That production did quite well, and received some nice notices, including one from the venerable Clive Barnes. But the opportunity to do another production did not materialize for another three years.

In 1998, the Blue Heron Theatre Company asked us for permission to present the play, and they were, at that time, itinerant, moving from space to space. When we could not locate an appropriate site, the production was postponed for a year, as the theatre company completed work on their wonderful new facility, the Blue Heron Arts Center, in New York City. *Admissions* was the first play presented in their new home, in the late winter of 1999. That production was invited to participate in the New York International Fringe Festival, and with only one cast change, we moved it downtown in August of that year. *Admissions* was the recipient of both the Ensemble Acting and the Excellence in Playwriting Awards.

What I have learned, watching Austin direct all of these productions, is that it must be in the words. If a playwright expects a character (which is to say, an actor) to present something, some idea, some emotion, some action or reaction, it must be in the text. Now, in the course of writing *Admissions*, I saw that many of these characters are so motivated to get their point of view out that they interrupt each other. So I had to be sure that, as a playwright, I was aware of how that process works. This means that, whenever a speech involves someone being cut off, I have made certain that the last few words of the speech that is cut off are, in essence, “overwritten,” so that the actor doing the interrupting can come in forcefully a few words before the previous written line ends, and not worry about cutting off some important information, and so that the actor being interrupted is not left hanging, having to “make up” a few more words in that speech.

What I also learned is how much fun this play can be. For me, there are dozens of satisfying, rewarding moments, but none more gratifying than when the audience, a few minutes into the play, realizes that this is not what they dreaded during the opening moments—a bunch of seemingly stereotypical characters, with stereotypical positions and points of view. Once that happens, and the audience sees that this is a collection of individuals, with conflicting, complex motivations and behavior, prompting unexpected twists and turns, you can see them begin to lean forward, engaged in the action of the play.

And they stay that way until the last moment.

Cast of Characters

MELANIE, white, 20, college junior

HANK, white, 28, college senior, in a wheelchair

THOMAS, asian, 19, college sophomore

ARLETTA, black, 26, graduate student

RICARDO, latino, 21, college senior

ROB, white, 19, college sophomore

JULIAN, black, 22, college senior

LANCE CURTIS, white, television reporter

Setting

The action takes place in the offices of the college president, and on the steps outside the library, on an American college campus. The time is late May.

Production Notes

The play is performed without an intermission.

An interview with Austin Pendleton, the original director of *Admissions*, appears at the end of this script.

Acknowledgments

This playscript is the version presented at the 1999 New York International Fringe Festival, directed by Austin Pendleton. That production received the Excellence in Playwriting Award and the Ensemble Acting Award. The playwright acknowledges his appreciation for the excellent work of the cast:

MELANIE Jenna Jolley
HANK Edward Tully
THOMAS Zeth Zenn
ARLETTA Perri Gaffney
RICARDO Alfonso Madrid
ROB Todd Wall
JULIAN Vincent D'Arbrouze
LANCE CURTIS Michael Van Steyn

The voices of the Governor and the Press Secretary were provided by Sam Waterston and Amy Sloane.

The playwright also wishes to thank the following people, who helped greatly in the development of this play: actors LaTonya Borsay, Randy Bourne, Chad L. Coleman, Jerry Dixon, Kim Dooley, Andrea Frierson, Faith Geer, Jules Graciolett, Francis Guinan, Aaron Harpold, Ken Leung, Edwin Lugo, Jason Ma, Edelen McWilliams, John-Luke Montias, Cynthia Nixon, Brian Price, Cathy Diane Tomlin, and Alice Yearsley; designers Crystal Holly Thompson and Jason Cina; stage managers Brian Fagan, Alyssa Robbins, and Adrienne J. Kupper; and friends Ardelle Striker, Gary Bernstein, John Clancy, and Howard Fink.

ADMISSIONS

by Tony Vellela

Scene 1

(MELANIE and ARLETTA stand on a campus walkway. ARLETTA checks her watch. It is 8:45 PM, in late May.)

ARLETTA. We both lost. Don't you understand that? Hank and I both...lost.

MELANIE. But it's not like you to give up.

ARLETTA. I didn't...I'm not giving up. It played out the year before you got here. Hank and I tried, together, to get them to pick a student. But the local party officials in town took all our work, organizing students to vote, and left us behind.

MELANIE. You could at least let them know you'd like to be considered when that seat opens up next fall. Or, do you think they'd pick Hank?

ARLETTA. It doesn't matter to me. He's a strong candidate. He's tough.

MELANIE. Well, I'd work for you. Run the whole campaign, if you need me to. You've got a lot more to offer than Hank. Besides, the city council has no women on it. None. It would make a big impact if they finally...

(HANK enters. He is in a wheelchair.)

HANK. Ladies.

ARLETTA. Hank.

HANK. I'm sorry I'm late. This won't take long.

ARLETTA. I have a meeting at nine that'll run 'til midnight.

(THEY stand silent for a moment.)

HANK. I...thought you'd be coming...alone.

MELANIE. I'll just...go on ahead and get things started. *(To ARLETTA)* See you in a bit.

(MELANIE exits.)

HANK. I...just...wanted to be certain that everything's in...good shape.

ARLETTA. Oh? You think the planning hasn't been as...

HANK. Arletta.

ARLETTA. Hank?

HANK. I meant, everything between you and me. That we're both...ready to work together on this. Together.

(SHE does not speak for a moment.)

ARLETTA. This is not about the past. Whatever our history has been, it doesn't come into this.

HANK. Good. I was hoping you'd say that.

ARLETTA. We both know it's going to be a big enough job getting them to take us seriously, and not treat us like some sixties wannabees.

HANK. Exactly. There's a lot to do.

ARLETTA. I agree. *(A beat.)* So.

HANK. Good. See you tomorrow.

ARLETTA. Noon.

HANK. Right.

(ARLETTA and HANK turn away from each other, then back, almost ready for a handshake. Instead, they nod, turn away, and exit in opposite directions. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(One o'clock in the afternoon. The College President's Office is empty. Double doors from the secretary's office to the larger office are open. MELANIE stands in doorway, looking down the hall.)

MELANIE. *(Very sweetly)* Now you just go on and have yourself a very pleasant lunch, Miss Adams. Thank you so much for the

cookies. They look wonderful. That was very thoughtful of you. Oh, and be sure and stop at the sundial on campus walk. Mr. DeMarco has planted some simply gorgeous new daffodils.

(MELANIE waves good-bye, pauses a moment, then turns in the other direction, signals. ARLETTA, THOMAS, RICARDO, JULIAN, and HANK enter quickly. HANK is in a wheelchair.)

MELANIE. Come on!

ARLETTA. Everybody here?

RICARDO. I think so.

HANK. Clayton. Where's Clayton?

ARLETTA. I guess he's late.

MELANIE. Again. That God damn son-of-a-bitch! If he fucks this up, I'll kick him in the balls!

ARLETTA. *(Looking down the hall)* You sure Miss Adams is gone?

MELANIE. Yeah, she's gone. She doesn't suspect a thing. She trusts me.

(The door is closed. RICARDO takes a few pieces of green paper from a manila folder he has been carrying, puts the folder on the floor, takes tape from his shirt pocket, opens the outer door, and tapes one sheet of paper to the outside of the door. He then closes the outer door. They all proceed to move the secretary's desk in front of the door, barricading the entrance. A few check out the President's Office, looking in closets in both offices, checking out the private bathroom that adjoins the President's Office, and closing and locking the windows. Someone turns off the radio. After they all realize that they have done it, and that the offices are "secure," they stand motionless for a moment wherever they are.)

ARLETTA. *(Chanting)* Students! United...!

(RICARDO joins her.)

ARLETTA and RICARDO. ...Will never be defeated!

(The OTHERS join in.)

ALL. Students! United! Will never be defeated! Students! United!

Will never be defeated! Students! Uni...

MELANIE. No more tuition hikes!

(The OTHERS join in.)

ALL. No more tuition hikes! No more tuition...

(They are interrupted by loud banging on the outer office door. ARLETTA hushes them.)

ARLETTA. Who's there?

ROB. *(Behind door)* P.S.U.

(THEY all move desk away from door, open it. ROB rides in on rollerblades. RICARDO and JULIAN close door behind him. THEY return barricades.)

ROB. Hi. Clayton can't come. I'm here in his place.

MELANIE. Jesus! So where's Clayton?

ROB. He had to go home. His Dad got sick or something.

(These four responses are together:)

RICARDO. And that's why he's not here?

HANK. What do you mean, got sick?

JULIAN. I saw him in class yesterday.

MELANIE. He better not be drunk somewhere.

ARLETTA. And who are you again?

ROB. Oh. I'm Rob.

HANK. You're in the Progressive Students Union?

ROB. Yeah. I'm on the council. I just transferred here this semester. I guess I was the only person he could reach to fill in for him. I don't think I've met you all, really.

(ARLETTA and HANK begin to speak at the same time, then HANK defers to her.)

ARLETTA. I'm Arletta, from the African-American Students Association.

HANK. I'm Hank. I'm Student Senate President.

RICARDO. Ricardo. U.L.S. United Latino Students.

MELANIE. Melanie, from the Women's Center.

THOMAS. My name is Thomas. I'm president of the Asian Students Association.

JULIAN. Hi. I'm Julian, from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance.

ARLETTA. Clayton facilitated the planning and strategy meetings. Did he give you his notes?

ROB. Yeah. I've got them here.

(ROB retrieves a manila folder from his backpack, which contains about a dozen computer print-out pages and several pages of handwritten notes, as well as a map of the campus, and a diagram of the President's Office and environs.)

ROB. Let's...see now...the first thing...is to...

MELANIE. The first thing is probably to call the support captain, Lionel.

ROB. *(Sifting through papers retrieved from backpack)* Yeah. Here...Lionel...

HANK. Extension 1-9 5-6.

ROB. ...Fuentes, extension 1956.

MELANIE. *(Goes to phone, dials)* Lionel? We're in.

(The OTHERS shout responses for Lionel to hear:)

HANK. You bet we're in!

THOMAS. Hey, Lionel!

MELANIE. We made it!

RICARDO. Esta bien!

JULIAN. We're in, alright!

MELANIE. *(On phone)* What? Yeah, she's here. Arletta, he wants to talk to you.

(MELANIE hands phone over to ARLETTA.)

ARLETTA. *(On phone)* Hi, Lionel. Yeah...worked perfectly...the statement's taped to the outside of the door ...

(ARLETTA covers the mouthpiece; she motions to RICARDO; he hands her the planning folder.)

...No, Clay's not here. Some guy named Rob is in his place, but he's got the notes... What? But why? I thought we... Okay... Later. *(SHE hangs up.)* They're ready to move into place. He'll check back in an hour.

HANK. Any changes in the plans?

ARLETTA. They decided not to target the dining room, but they'll...

(THEY all react to this news at the same time.)

HANK. But we all agreed that we should...

MELANIE. Wasn't that one of the best places to...

RICARDO. I thought it was a bad idea when they first...

JULIAN. Lots of students pass by there when they...

(ARLETTA quiets them down.)

ARLETTA. ...but they'll have people at the library, the bookstore, the Science Building, and the front of McKinley in ten minutes. You bring the food?

HANK. Oh. Yeah. Somebody wanna download me?

(HANK points to a pack on the back of his chair. JULIAN and THOMAS unpack food, sodas, bottled water and other supplies onto the floor.)

ARLETTA. Now, while they're doing that, maybe...

ROB. Food? You brought food?

HANK. Sure. Think they're gonna reward us with food and drink for taking over the President's Office?

ROB. No, but I didn't think that...

ARLETTA. How much exactly *DO* you know about what the plans are?

ROB. Not a whole lot, I guess.

ARLETTA. Great. Well. Why don't we just ...

(ARLETTA motions to the others to gather around.)

...sit down here for a minute and...

(THEY gather around; some sit on floor; ARLETTA sits on edge of desk; HANK moves in closer.)

...review.

HANK. Right.

(ARLETTA filters through the notes quickly, extracts one computer-typed sheet.)

ARLETTA. Here are the basics: We state our demand for no increase in tuition, and for negotiations to reduce them, which we did through that statement. Support people move into place in five loca...

HANK. Four, now.

ARLETTA. ...four locations and take over, or sit in at those locations. No vandalism. No violence. We expect a reply from the Governor. Right?

MELANIE. Absolutely!

JULIAN. Yes.

RICARDO. That's right!

ROB. And how did this group get organized?

ARLETTA. Well, if I have a few minutes later, I can...

HANK. No. Arletta, we should...

ARLETTA. You're right. Explain it.

HANK. Well. For I guess about two years now, I've been trying to organize a kind of progressive coalition, to support each other's actions. So if, say, for example, your group is having a fund-raiser,

we all help publicize it in our groups.

ROB. Right. Makes sense.

HANK. Sure. But...some groups were willing, but either didn't have the time or the resources to commit. And one group objected to having another group included. So I tried to...

ROB. Who objected?

(RICARDO and JULIAN exchange looks.)

HANK. I think bringing it up now would not be...helpful. Anyway, when I found out that the state legislature was planning to pass a tuition increase for all the colleges in the state system, I thought it would be the perfect issue to organize around, since it affects everybody.

ROB. Right.

HANK. So I pulled the meetings together. The idea is, once we have some success here, we use that to establish an ongoing progressive coalition, to support each other's issues.

ROB. Great! One more thing. The food. How long do you expect that we'll...

RICARDO. Don't know. But we picked this office partly because it's well-equipped. *(Laughs)* Check it out! Bathroom, two phones, coffee-maker, little refrigerator, microwave oven, TV, radio, copier, computers, fax machine, everything. So they know that we know we can stick it out here, see?

ARLETTA. Now, let's get down to the...

ROB. But, what if...

ARLETTA. What?

ROB. Won't they stop directing calls to this number?

MELANIE. Of course, they might. But we have the private number for our incoming calls, and the switchboard for outgoing calls. See, my work-study assignment this semester was working here at lunchtime, so I know the ins and outs.

ROB. What if they cut the line?

MELANIE and JULIAN. *(Together)* Cell phones!

ROB. Right.

MELANIE. And if they cut the computer, I've got my power book and cell modem.

ARLETTA. We're also using Lionel's email address as an information-gathering point.

ROB. Pretty good. You guys are pretty good.

MELANIE. Guys?

(ARLETTA, HANK and JULIAN make fun of ROB's mistake.)

ROB. Oooh. Sorry. People. I'm still not clear about...

ARLETTA. It's important to settle on a few things before it starts to get hectic around here. Communications, dealing with food, and with...

HANK. There is a list in the planning folder.

(HANK takes out the list and gives it to ARLETTA.)

ARLETTA. Right. Let's take this list, break into small groups, and come up with some quick recommendations.

HANK. Small groups?

ARLETTA. Is that alright?

(HANK shrugs, nods "yes.")

ARLETTA. Looks to me like we could use three. A "food and drink" group, a "security and maintenance" group, and a "communications" group. Hank, you want to work on food and drink, since you handled picking up a lot of the stuff?

HANK. All I did was pick it up.

ARLETTA. Is that alright?

(HANK nods a reluctant "yes.")

HANK. Thomas, care to help me swallow my "food and drink" assignment?

THOMAS. Whatever it takes.

ARLETTA. Now. Security and maintenance. Julian, why don't you and Rob see what you can come up with for recommendations?

JULIAN. Okay.

(ROB nods "yes.")

ARLETTA. Fine. That leaves Melanie, me, and Ricardo for communications.

RICARDO. Esta bien.

HANK. Communications.

ARLETTA. Okay, small groups, ten minutes.

(MELANIE signals "thumbs up." They all indicate agreement, and disperse into their small groups. JULIAN and ROB begin to check out windows and doors. MELANIE, ARLETTA, and RICARDO move into the secretary's office. THOMAS and HANK move downstage center.)

HANK. "Food and drink."

THOMAS. Not your small group of choice?

HANK. She does manage to get herself at the center of things all the time.

THOMAS. Don't make too much of it.

HANK. Maybe you're right. So...we missed you at the Leadership Council meeting.

THOMAS. My great-grandfather died.

HANK. Was he...?

THOMAS. We were expecting it. He had a stroke last summer. He was the first in my family to come to this country. He was 102.

HANK. Amazing.

THOMAS. He was an amazing man.

(THOMAS takes out the list from the food bag, and hands it to Hank. As Thomas takes out an item and reads what it is, Hank locates it, nods or says "yes.")

THOMAS. Dinty Moore beef stew, large industrial size.

(THOMAS holds up two enormous cans; HANK nods “yes.”)

Super deluxe frozen pizzas, with the bonanza topping: mushrooms, pepperoni, onions, mozzarella, sausage, and peppers. And anchovies! *(Makes a face)* Eeuh! Zap, 24 cans.

HANK. What is Zap?

THOMAS. Cola, with a little extra caffeine, to keep you awake.

HANK. How much extra.

THOMAS. Sixty-five percent. And...Crunch 'n' Munch, Slurp 'n' Burp, and Lick on a Stick. And chocolate cupcakes, chocolate cookies, chocolate kisses, and chocolate yogurt. And a can opener. And...gingko biloba?

HANK. Let's put these pizzas in the refrigerator and check out the kitchen equipment.

(They take the pizzas, and move into the secretary's office, out of sight. MELANIE, ARLETTA, and RICARDO move into view. JULIAN and ROB move downstage center.)

ROB. There's a couple different ways. For instance, I could clean up after Hank, Arletta, and Ricardo, and you could clean up after Melanie and Thomas, or else I could clean up after everybody for the first eight hours, and then you could take over for the...

JULIAN. I didn't come here to clean up after anybody. Our job is to create a system each person can use, and let everybody be responsible for their own garbage.

ROB. Will everyone go along with that do you think?

JULIAN. Of course they will. It's reasonable.

ROB. I'm sorta glad Clayton couldn't come. I love this kind of stuff, even though I am pretty new to it. It's great to watch somebody like Arletta in action, up close.

JULIAN. Arletta? Arletta, come here a minute, will you?

(ARLETTA looks up at JULIAN from her small group meeting, excuses herself and joins JULIAN and ROB.)

JULIAN. Tell Rob how you got the Administration to add that Minority Studies class.

ARLETTA. I don't think this is the time to...

JULIAN. Please?

ARLETTA. Well, I was...after we turned over all these petitions, they said they couldn't find a qualified person to teach Minority Studies.

JULIAN. She told them she was qualified. She had them in a corner.

ARLETTA. So, they added the class.

ROB. Cool!

ARLETTA. And, last semester, they...

MELANIE. Arletta?

(ARLETTA nods to MELANIE, gets up and rejoins her group.)

JULIAN. Thanks.

ARLETTA. No problem.

(JULIAN and ROB move back into secretary's office, as MELANIE, RICARDO, and ARLETTA drift into downstage area.)

MELANIE. I was just saying to Ricardo that we should use the copier only when we need to, and keep an eye on the supply of paper, so we have plenty for faxes, if need be.

RICARDO. Very smart. You're a smart lady, you know that?

MELANIE. *(A little taken aback by this obviously personal statement)*
Uh, thanks.

ARLETTA. Okay, now. As soon as we...

(A phone rings, interrupting her. ROB answers it.)

ROB. Hello? Just a minute. *(Covers receiver)* It's for you.

(ARLETTA begins to get up.)

No, it's for Ricardo.

RICARDO. Thanks. *(He goes to phone, takes receiver.)* Hello? Just a

minute.

(He covers receiver, moves away from others, facing away, so we can no longer hear his conversation. OTHERS resume their activities.)

HANK. *(To ARLETTA)* I thought you were handling communications?

ARLETTA. I was just saying, once Lionel calls again, we should create a schedule of times for him to call with reports, and only digress from it if there's an emergency. That'll stabilize the atmosphere, and give us checkpoint times to be ready for.

MELANIE. Hey, you know what?

ARLETTA. What?

MELANIE. You're a smart lady. You know that.

(They both laugh.)

ARLETTA. *(To MELANIE)* It looks like we're in good shape.

MELANIE. Like always. So. Wasn't Nick here last weekend?

ARLETTA. He was.

MELANIE. And the weekend was...

(ROB approaches ARLETTA, and JULIAN trails behind him.)

ROB. Arletta, I, uh...I have a question.

ARLETTA. Are you and Julian finished?

ROB. Yeah.

(HANK and THOMAS have finished, and move back into center area.)

HANK. We are, too.

ARLETTA. Okay, everybody, let's reconvene. Ricardo?

MELANIE. Ricardo, off the phone.

(RICARDO says a few more words into the phone, hangs up.)

RICARDO. Be right there.

(They are reconvened.)

ARLETTA. Okay, now. Rob has a question.

ROB. Well, once we've heard everyone's recommendations, how are we deciding?

ARLETTA. Excuse me?

ROB. How are we...

(The phone rings. HANK makes sure ROB does not go for it, allowing MELANIE to answer.)

MELANIE. Hello? ...Yes, it is... Oh... Thank you. *(Hangs up.)* It...was the campus...security director.

HANK. Sullivan.

MELANIE. Sullivan, yeah. He said that...he has instructed the campus police not to...not to use force. At least for now.

ROB. Force?

HANK. That's...that's what we expected. *(They are silent.)* Right?

ARLETTA. Yes.

ROB. Jeez!

ARLETTA. So. Rob. What were you...asking about?

ROB. Me? Oh. Jeez! I...uh...I...how are you, how are we deciding? Voting, or by consensus?

MELANIE. Was that covered during the planning sessions?

ARLETTA. Let me check the notes.

(She pulls out a few pages, scans them.)

HANK. Clayton!

ARLETTA. Doesn't say.

MELANIE. Well, the Women's Center always uses consensus.

ARLETTA. Same with AASA. Are we all okay about that?

MELANIE. Let's get working, people. State budget committee adjourns in four days.

ARLETTA. Let's develop a list of the...

ROB. How do you all define consensus?

MELANIE. You all have to agree, or if someone disagrees personally, they agree not to block the decision by working against the decision reached by consensus.

JULIAN. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance tried consensus last semester, and frankly, it was sort of a nightmare.

RICARDO. You know, Julian, maybe the gays and the lesbians took too much time...socializing at meetings, and that...

JULIAN. Socializing? And what does that mean?

RICARDO. I just mean that, for instance, at the United Latino Students meetings, we've got some serious shit to deal with, and we...

JULIAN. We also have some "serious shit" to deal with.

RICARDO. There is a difference between...

HANK. Student Senate, of course, does all its business by majority vote.

ARLETTA. Which is the reason that, when it comes to important issues, Hank, you're totally impotent.

(That choice of words, aimed at Hank, startles everyone for a moment.)

I...mean that...it doesn't allow for alternative points of...

HANK. I know what you meant.

THOMAS. I...I would suggest that we ask if there are strong opinions not yet heard, and if not, we vote on consensus versus voting.

ARLETTA. Any other comments? *(Beat.)* All those who favor decisions based on consensus?

(ARLETTA, MELANIE, and ROB raise their hands.)

Those in favor of voting?

(The OTHERS raise their hands.)

I guess...we vote. Alright, now.

MELANIE. Let's get working, people. State budget committee adjourns in four...days!

ARLETTA. Let's develop a list of the...

HANK. Shouldn't we now elect a facilitator?

MELANIE. Elect...?

ARLETTA. Sure.

MELANIE. I nominate Arletta.

ARLETTA. Any other nominations?

HANK. I nominate Thomas.

ARLETTA. Other nominations. *(Beat.)* All those in favor of...me?

(ALL but HANK raise their hands)

And Thomas?

(HANK raises his hand.)

Thank you. Now. Can we hear what the small groups have...

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(Late that night. MELANIE leafs through Miss Adams' appointment book. ARLETTA, seated at President's desk, correcting papers from her undergraduate students, drinks coffee from a paper cup. ROB, seated cross-legged on floor, writes in a journal; his shoes and shirt are off. THOMAS, seated on floor, silently fingers a keyboard pad that is not plugged in, and has sheet music spread out in front of him. HANK, down right, is reading a book; his tie is untied, his collar loosened. JULIAN, seated on sofa, also reading; his shoes are off, legs pulled up onto sofa. RICARDO, seated on floor in extreme down left corner, surrounded by class notes, open textbooks, index cards with notes on them, and his radio; his shoes and shirt are off. For a minute, each one concentrates on their own activity. Then, THOMAS sneezes.)

ROB. God bless you!

HANK. Bless you!

THOMAS. Oh. Thank you.

(RICARDO turns on his radio, to a Spanish music station, and continues to work. EVERYONE looks over at him.)

ARLETTA. Ricardo! Hey!

(RICARDO does not hear her.)

Ricardo!

(ARLETTA wads up a piece of paper, tosses it at him, but it falls short, and he does not see it.)

THOMAS. Ricardo, turn it off.

(RICARDO still does not hear. HANK wheels himself over to where RICARDO is sitting on the floor, so he can see someone come into his line of sight.)

HANK. Ricardo. Please. No music. We've all got work to do.

RICARDO. *(Turning it down)* What? What did you say?

HANK. I said please, no music. It's past midnight. We've all got a lot of work to do here.

RICARDO. Can't you work and listen to music at the same time? I always listen to music when I work.

HANK. Well, no, because the rest of us don't...aren't used to, uh...could you please just turn it off?

(RICARDO surveys the room to see if he can find an ally, but the looks on the other faces back up Hank.)

RICARDO. Right. I see.

(RICARDO takes out a plug-in headphone, attaches it to back of radio, switches it on, and resumes his work, keeping silent time with the music only he hears.)

HANK. Thank you.

(RICARDO does not hear. HANK waves his arm to attract his attention. RICARDO takes off the headphones.)

RICARDO. Now what?

HANK. I just wanted to say “thank you.”

RICARDO. You are welcome. Olvidalo!

(RICARDO replaces headphones, resumes working and listening. HANK wheels himself next to THOMAS. JULIAN stops working, gets down on floor in front of sofa, lies on his back and begins to do sit-ups. MELANIE leafs through the appointment book again. ROB walks over to JULIAN.)

ROB. You do this every night?

JULIAN. Pretty much.

(ROB watches for another moment, then joins in.)

ARLETTA. *(Slams down pencil)* Damn! Can you believe...God!

MELANIE. What’s the matter?

ROB. You’ve been at this a long time?

JULIAN. I played soccer in high school. I started working out then.

ROB. No, I meant political work.

JULIAN. Oh. I thought you meant...I guess they both started about the same time, in high school.

ROB. Cool.

ARLETTA. These are the test papers from the Minority Studies freshman class I teach? Clarence, here, thinks we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday because he ended the war in Viet Nam.

JULIAN. I get a lot of satisfaction out of it. I don’t like feeling powerless. So, this is how I fight back. Plus, it does have other rewards.

ARLETTA. Holly wrote down that Sojourner Truth is a black news magazine.

ROB. How do you mean?

ARLETTA. And Randall thinks the Underground Railroad is a hot new rap group! These kids don’t have a clue about their own

history.

JULIAN. I went to a political strategies conference last spring, and met somebody that I'm, well, we're...

ROB. L-l-l-lovers. Lovers, you mean?

JULIAN. He's a professor. At Holton College.

ROB. Holton?

JULIAN. Holton's about three hundred miles from here.

ROB. Not so good.

JULIAN. Right. But we see each other about every other weekend, and vacations.

MELANIE. I don't know how you do it. Teaching freshmen? It would drive me crazy.

ARLETTA. It does drive me crazy. You're lucky you don't need to earn extra money.

MELANIE. Having rich parents doesn't mean shit if they're dead set against what you want to do with your life. Maybe being here will finally show them I'm serious about politics, that it's not some "phase."

ARLETTA. Send them to me! I'll tell them how serious you are!

ROB. Sounds like a commitment.

JULIAN. It is. How about you?

ROB. No, it's...we split up. This girl I was...she goes to the school I transferred from, and...she got too far into talking about how we were going to get married, and meeting each other's family, and, it was...this doesn't make too much sense to you, but I...

JULIAN. Yes, it does. I went out with a guy freshman year, Alexander. And he made the same kind of, I guess assumptions and, and expectations that we were...more serious than...

ROB. Right. I wasn't ready. Or, at least, that's not what I felt about her, if that's what you mean.

JULIAN. Uh-huh.

ROB. Do your parents know about...you know...

JULIAN. My parents? They were very cool when I told them about my personal life.

ROB. When was that?

JULIAN. When I was fifteen.

ROB. Fifteen?!

(THOMAS watches them, moves over on the floor to watch their routine.)

JULIAN. Care to join us?

THOMAS. Oh, I...

JULIAN. C'mon.

(JULIAN extends his hand to THOMAS, helping him up off the floor. THOMAS joins the exercising. The three of them accelerate the pace, breaking into a routine, led by JULIAN, that involves hand-clapping. HANK looks over from time to time, smiles, resumes reading. RICARDO looks up a few times, a look of annoyance growing each time.)

JULIAN. Let's pick it up!

(The pace of their exercises gets faster and louder.)

RICARDO. *(Removing headphones)* Hey! Hey, can you take that in the other room?

JULIAN. What? Sorry, what did you say?

RICARDO. I said...can you take your disco dancing in the other room? I'm trying to work here, okay?

(They look at each other, recognizing this as retaliation for asking that the radio be turned down.)

JULIAN. Oh. Yeah. We're finished. Right, guys?

(The others nod "yes.")

RICARDO. *(To himself)* What is this—auditions for Menudo?

(JULIAN returns to sofa, picks up book. THOMAS resumes place on

floor. MELANIE takes a vitamin pill from her purse, downs it with bottled water she's drinking. ROB wanders into secretary's office. RICARDO replaces headphones, resumes working, and silently keeps time with music. ROB wanders back into room, carrying an open can of soda, and eating a cupcake. He stops at each person.)

ROB. *(To MELANIE)* Wanna sip?

MELANIE. *(Taking can from him, reading label, handing it back)* Naah.

ROB. *(To ARLETTA)* Wanna sip?

ARLETTA. *(Pointing to her coffee cup)* No, thanks.

ROB. *(To HANK)* Wanna sip?

HANK. Thanks, no.

ROB. *(To THOMAS)* Wanna sip?

THOMAS. No, thanks.

ROB. *(To JULIAN)* Wanna sip?

(JULIAN shakes his head "no." ROB crouches down next to RICARDO, thrusts can into RICARDO's line of sight, raises eyebrows. RICARDO shakes his head "no." ROB stands up, wanders over to window, looks out, turns back into room, holds up cupcake.)

ROB. Anybody wanna bite?

(All except RICARDO and ARLETTA look at him wearily, and shake their heads "no." ROB slides his back along the wall and down until he is seated on floor. ARLETTA stands up, stretches, checks her watch.)

ARLETTA. Listen, people. It's a quarter to one. We better think about getting some sleep.

JULIAN. Sounds good to me.

(HANK signals to THOMAS for help, and THOMAS wheels him toward bathroom.)

ROB. Me, too. But how will we know when it's time for us to...

ARLETTA. I brought an alarm clock.

ROB. Great.

(MELANIE and ARLETTA go into bathroom. THOMAS begins to fold up his sheet music. ROB stands up, walks to window. JULIAN stands up, stretches.)

ROB. *(To JULIAN)* How do you think it's going so far?

JULIAN. Well enough.

ROB. I had been hearing that Hank was sort of, was an accommodationist.

JULIAN. *(A slight smile)* Accommodationist?

ROB. A real politician, quick to compromise, not really very...but hell, what do I know. I'm sort of like a fly on the wall here. But...it is so cool! You know, I didn't realize Hank was...older.

JULIAN. What I heard was, he was a star football player in high school, and got slammed in a game. Took him seven or eight years to recover.

ROB. No shit!

(MELANIE and ARLETTA come out of the bathroom.)

You know, my last roommate was...bisexual, and it, it never really bothered me.

JULIAN. My last roommate was straight, and I learned to overlook it and see his good points.

(ROB smiles, shakes JULIAN's hand.)

ROB. Good night.

JULIAN. 'Night.

(HANK motions to THOMAS for help getting to the bathroom, and THOMAS obliges. ARLETTA turns out desk lamp and overhead light in outer office. RICARDO notices the reduction in light, removes headphones. THOMAS and HANK come out of the bathroom and THOMAS wheels HANK over to the sofa, helps him out of his chair, and onto sofa. JULIAN has walked over to sofa, and with HANK's permission, takes one of the sofa cushions, uses it as a pillow on the floor. ROB has crossed himself and is quietly saying a

few prayers while looking out the window.)

ARLETTA. I need a ride to that conference in Boston—are you driving?

MELANIE. Yeah, I've got room. You need a place to stay?

ARLETTA. Where are you staying?

MELANIE. With...with Jeff. He's at Harvard. Is that crazy?

ARLETTA. You're going to a conference on Women and Self-Reliance and you're staying with an old boyfriend?

MELANIE. At least they're good for something!

(ARLETTA and MELANIE laugh.)

I get so tired of doing the dance. Where are all the great guys—that's what I want to know! Sometimes I fantasize about getting a cute one in bed for just a couple of hours.

ARLETTA. As long as he doesn't open his mouth and say something stupid!

MELANIE. That's right! Hump 'em and dump 'em! Look at that one over there. *(Indicates RICARDO)* He's got a great body on him, don't you think?

ARLETTA. Ricardo? Be my guest. Maybe he'll stop sniffing around me.

MELANIE. He hit on you? Ricardo?

ARLETTA. He keeps asking me to "go for coffee."

MELANIE. Doesn't he know about Nick, that you're engaged?

ARLETTA. Yes.

MELANIE. And last weekend with Nick was...

ARLETTA. It was fine. I want it to work, you know? You *do* know. But how do we do this? Me here, him there?

MELANIE. It must be hard. But, hey, you've been managing it for, is it almost two years now?

ARLETTA. Just about. It is hard. When we're together, it is so good,

so...right. But you know what I keep saying.

MELANIE. Take it slow. But you've been saying that ever since I met you. There is such a thing as too much caution. I envy you. Nick's a terrific guy. Just because your mother's marriage was...

ARLETTA. Second marriage.

MELANIE. ...second marriage was a bust is no reason for you to think...

(RICARDO approaches them.)

RICARDO. Arletta?

(She nods "yes.")

RICARDO. What time are we getting up?

ARLETTA. Six-thirty.

RICARDO. Wake me. Gently.

(He winks. Blackout.)

Scene 4

(The next morning. HANK, JULIAN, RICARDO, and THOMAS are asleep. ROB is sitting on floor, upstage, leaning against doorframe between the two offices, reading the planning folder. ARLETTA and MELANIE are seated on floor, far downstage right. The phone rings. MELANIE jumps up, runs to desk.)

MELANIE. President Kistler's office. Oh, hey, what's up, Lionel? Yeah, she's right here.

(MELANIE hands the phone to ARLETTA.)

ARLETTA. Hi. Yes! Great! Of course we can. 'Bye.

(She hangs up, claps hands together.)

Okay, people, some news. Lionel's arranged... *(Looks at those still sleeping)* Jesus! *(Clapping her hands)* Let's go, let's go, let's go.

(THEY begin to rouse themselves.)

MELANIE. 'Morning, everybody.

RICARDO. What time is it?

ARLETTA. Ten past seven.

RICARDO. Jeez.

ARLETTA. Everybody up?

RICARDO. Gimme a minute.

(RICARDO goes into bathroom, closes door.)

HANK. We've got to review the outline for...

(The phone rings. ARLETTA answers it.)

ARLETTA. *(On phone)* President Kistler's office...no, we will not be giving interviews over the phone...it's our policy...quarter to eight, right, with Lance Curtis from Channel Nine News...

HANK. What!?

(ARLETTA hushes him.)

ARLETTA. No, I will not comment...I said "no." *(She hangs up.)* God, they won't believe you.

MELANIE. I know. That guy from the Chronicle drove me crazy last night. He called about twelve times.

HANK. What was that about a...

(RICARDO comes out of the bathroom.)

RICARDO. We're running out of toilet paper.

MELANIE. Shows where your priorities are.

ARLETTA. Grab that box of tissues from the president's desk and put them in there.

(RICARDO does this.)

Now. Are we ready?

HANK. Go ahead.

ARLETTA. Arrangements have been made for three of us to meet with this reporter at seven forty-five on the steps of the library for a live interview on Channel Nine.

(The responses come at the same time.)

JULIAN. Great!

MELANIE. Alright!

RICARDO. Bueno!

ROB. Cool!

HANK. “Arrangements have been made?” Could we have more information, please?

ARLETTA. That’s it. Lionel is monitoring press coverage, so he set this up.

HANK. By himself.

ARLETTA. We agreed to give him that authority.

HANK. Who gets to do the interview?

ARLETTA. All he said was “three people.”

HANK. So we’ve got to pick three.

ARLETTA. That’s right.

HANK. How?

ARLETTA. Well, it needs to be a representative group.

HANK. We’re about as representative a group as you can put together. But we still need a way to pick.

(At the same time:)

MELANIE. In my opinion, we should look at the...

HANK. If we were to be truly democratic, we...

ROB. This is not something that I think we can...

ARLETTA. There is a larger issue here than merely who can...

JULIAN. The phone book. *(Raising his voice to be heard)* The phone book!!

RICARDO. *(Chuckles)* What are you saying!?

JULIAN. Hey, hold on, okay? Here’s how it works. You open to a

page in the phone book, you close your eyes and point to a name. The last digit in that person's phone number, is your "number." Those with the highest numbers get to go.

(THEY consider this for a moment.)

ROB. Yeah. That'll work.

RICARDO. I guess so. Del cuero malo sale una dama.

(ROB retrieves phone book from secretary's office, goes from person to person executing this routine.)

MELANIE. Eight.

THOMAS. Nine.

HANK. Four.

RICARDO. Six.

JULIAN. Six.

ARLETTA. Zero.

ROB. And me...nine!

(ROB moves the book to JULIAN, so his choice can be verified.)

So that means, let's see...Thomas, Melanie and me, right?

ARLETTA. Uh-huh. Right.

RICARDO. I don't think this was a good system to use.

JULIAN. Why not? It was fair.

RICARDO. Sure it was "fair," but we didn't exactly get "fair" representation.

ROB. Why not?

RICARDO. Dios mio!! Are you kidding? Look at the results.

ROB. So?

MELANIE. I think I know what he means. It looks too...unbalanced.

RICARDO. Right. *(To JULIAN)* Can't you see that?

JULIAN. What I see is that...

MELANIE. I know. I'll turn my place over to Arletta.

HANK. The Doublemint Twins—two bodies, one mind.

MELANIE. Anyone object?

JULIAN. Hell, why did we bother to even...

MELANIE. So it's Arletta, Thomas, and Rob.

HANK. Fine. Where are the press releases?

ROB. Here. With the planning folder.

HANK. Okay. Take one.

(ROB takes a copy from the folder)

ARLETTA. Now. Are there any other points we need to...

HANK. Look. If you want to represent us, you can start by getting there on time.

ARLETTA. Give me the folder.

(ARLETTA grabs the folder. ROB and THOMAS stand up. Lights dim, but we see ARLETTA, ROB, and THOMAS walk downstage right, beyond area of office. JULIAN and MELANIE wheel television set upstage left. HANK and RICARDO join them. Set faces upstage. LANCE CURTIS, the reporter, joins ARLETTA, ROB, and THOMAS. As the others turn on the television, lights come up on both groups.)

LANCE. *(Facing audience)* This is Lance Curtis, reporting live from the steps of the campus library, where there is somewhat of a “throwback to the sixties” occurring. I have with me some of the students who are staging a sit-in in the office of President Kenneth Kistler. *(Turning to ROB)* So, what's it all about?

ROB. It's...about...

MELANIE. Not Rob!

HANK. Oh, shit!

ROB. ...if you'll permit me to read from this... *(Looks at press release)* ...“the students of this university believe that...”

LANCE. (*Cutting him off*) In a nutshell, what's the bone of contention?

ROB. (*A little flustered*) It's about...the bone...is...protesting proposed...increases. In tuition. And...other issues that students feel are...unjust.

LANCE. (*Still to ROB*) Why should the taxpayers of this state increase their subsidy to students who already receive grants, loans, and other economic benefits by attending a state college?

ROB. Because...

RICARDO. Oh, man...

ROB. ...because college students...are an investment in the future. Without the...resources necessary to...

ARLETTA. (*Interrupting*) ...and the opportunity to benefit from an education, the chance to contribute to that future is denied to most students, especially poor black women.

HANK. What!

LANCE. I see. (*To ROB*) Does your group plan to remain in the President's Office until, well, how long does your group plan to stay?

ROB. I...I guess until...well, at least until...

ARLETTA. Until we receive word from the Governor that he will veto any legislation that requires an increase in tuition.

LANCE. You're very articulate.

ARLETTA. Yes. Thank you. As I was saying...

LANCE. But, first, let me ask you... (*To ROB*) ...what the "other issues" are that you referred to?

ROB. The other issues...are...

RICARDO. Dios mio! He is lame.

(MELANIE, JULIAN, and HANK react to his choice of words.)

I mean...don't you think this guy is...

ROB. ...to pay more attention to the...uh...economic conditions of

the students, many of whom...need to...maintain outside jobs already to...afford...like, uh...if you think about...

(ARLETTA and THOMAS both speak at the same time.)

ARLETTA. There is also...

THOMAS. In addition, we...

LANCE. Yes. *(To THOMAS)* You wanted to add something?

THOMAS. Yes. We feel the administration ought to recognize that the curriculum is far too Euro-centric to reflect the...

LANCE. Far too...?

THOMAS. Euro-centric—concentrating on European literature, history, and philosophies, ignoring the fact that the rest of the world has a valid history. Our country's population has become more diverse, and...

LANCE. *(To ROB)* If you don't get the response you're looking for—what then?

ROB. Well, I guess we...will...have to wait and see.

LANCE. *(To audience)* And that's what we'll be doing, also. Until then, this is...

ARLETTA. But wait, I think it's important to...

LANCE. Sorry. No more time. From the steps of the campus library, this is Lance Curtis reporting. Back to the studio.

(Lights dim. We see LANCE shake each person's hand briskly, stride off. JULIAN and MELANIE return television set to where it was. ARLETTA, ROB, and THOMAS return to the office area. Lights up. For a moment, both "groups" look at each other in silence.)

JULIAN. *(Extending his hand to interviewees)* So. Nice job.

(JULIAN walks to each of them, shakes their hand.)

RICARDO. Nice job!? Tu ta loco!? Are you serious?

ROB. What's the problem?

RICARDO. You hardly touched on the issues.

HANK. I didn't hear a word about this being a coalition effort. That's why I pulled this group together in the first place. And why didn't you nail him on that "sixties throwback" shit?

ARLETTA. He barely acknowledged that I was there.

HANK. You were able to get in your agenda well enough.

ARLETTA. My agenda?

RICARDO. Not one of you mentioned the reduction in enrollment of latinos and blacks.

JULIAN. I think you're being too critical.

RICARDO. Oh, hell. What do you know about politics?

MELANIE. Lighten up.

RICARDO. Sure. Lighten up. Meanwhile, we look like a bunch of jerks here.

ARLETTA. *(To MELANIE)* What did he mean, my agenda?

MELANIE. Never mind.

HANK. I'll tell you what I meant. We didn't hear "coalition" from you. We heard "especially black women" from you. That's very divisive.

JULIAN. She did the best she could under the circum...

ARLETTA. I don't need defending, thank you.

RICARDO. And she certainly doesn't need to be defended by you.

JULIAN. What's that supposed to mean? She doesn't need some faggot to defend her, she needs a real man to...

ARLETTA. "She" doesn't need anyone to defend her. What "she" needs is a break...from all of you.

(ARLETTA takes planning folder, throws it on the floor, goes into bathroom, slams door. Blackout.)

Scene 5

(It is mid-morning. Music is coming from the tape player. The

secretary's radio is playing, tuned to an all-news radio station. Outside the open window on the walk below, we hear students chanting in support of the sit-in students. Someone is knocking on the outer door. Both phones are ringing. HANK and JULIAN are making notes on clipboards, seated near the sofa. ARLETTA is seated at the desk. ROB and THOMAS are seated on floor, down right, making notes on the materials from the planning folder. MELANIE and RICARDO are looking out the window, to where the chanting is coming from.)

ARLETTA. *(Answering phone)* President's Office—please hold. *(Picking up other phone)* Hello...? We can hear them up here...

HANK. *(Annoyed)* See who's at the door!

ARLETTA. *(On phone)* ...I, we haven't...just a minute... *(To first phone)* ...President's Office...we will have a printed statement, but it won't be ready until this afternoon...

(MELANIE waves to the people below, then lowers the window. RICARDO turns tape off, and he and MELANIE go to the door.)

MELANIE. *(To HANK)* It's Michael. He brought the papers.

(They all begin to look through the papers, from time to time tuning in on ARLETTA's phone conversations.)

ARLETTA. *(On phone)* ...no, I can't answer any more questions. Sorry... *(Hangs up first phone, returns to other phone)* ...Great! Talk to you later. *(Hangs up.)*

RICARDO. The Chronicle has us on page three. Just a little story, not much.

MELANIE. The Journal...looks like the Journal didn't even...

THOMAS. That right-wing piece of...

MELANIE. Here it is. Page nineteen. They have a picture of the building, with an arrow pointed to that window! "Students Seize President's Office in Tuition Hike Protest."

ARLETTA. Everybody, listen to this. I just heard that, this afternoon...

(First phone rings; she picks it up.)

President's Office...

HANK. *(To MELANIE)* Did she say who she's talking to?

(MELANIE shrugs.)

ARLETTA. *(On phone)* That's right... No, I'm sorry. *(Hangs up.)*
Listen to this!

(The OTHERS turn their attention to her.)

I just heard that the Governor is going to make a statement at three o'clock...about us!

(THEY react with excitement.)

JULIAN. Score!

ROB. We did it!

MELANIE. Damn fuckin' right!

RICARDO. Finally!

THOMAS. Brilliant!

HANK. Heard from who?

ARLETTA. Rebecca.

ROB. Rebecca?

ARLETTA. She works in the public relations office.

HANK. Did she say what the statement was going to be?

ARLETTA. Just that he was going to make a statement. And what that means is...

HANK. Okay, let's get organized here. If the Governor's making a...

ARLETTA. *(Interrupting him)* That means our statement needs to be...

HANK. *(Interrupting her)* Excuse me? Can I finish?

ARLETTA. I thought you were finished.

HANK. You interrupted me.

ARLETTA. I was talking before...

JULIAN. Look, you guys, we don't need this. We've got a lot of work to do. Arletta, take the phones off the hook, and let's draft this statement.

ARLETTA. *(To JULIAN)* Excuse me? Are you in charge now?

HANK. *(After a beat)* Is that all you're worried about?

JULIAN. Hank, maybe it's more important for all of us to...

ARLETTA. Of course it's not. What I'm worried about is getting that statement written in an orderly...

(The phone rings; ARLETTA picks it up.)

President Kistler's office. Just a minute. Ricardo?

(She hands the phone to RICARDO.)

RICARDO. Si...si...bueno.

(RICARDO hangs up.)

MELANIE. Can you put your social life on hold for just one day, and tell the "ladies" that you...

RICARDO. Listen, you. That was my wife. She's been trying to keep me...

MELANIE. Your wife?

ARLETTA. You're married?

RICARDO. She's been trying to keep me up to date about my daughter, who is very sick right now.

ARLETTA. You have a daughter?

RICARDO. I have a daughter.

ARLETTA. You never told me all this.

RICARDO. I have a wife. I have a daughter. What difference does that make?

ARLETTA. All this time, a year, you were married, and still you kept asking me out, when you were...

RICARDO. What!? You thought I was coming on to you? I wanted to learn from you.

ARLETTA. You're telling me that all those times when you asked me to...

RICARDO. I could understand it from her. But you! I thought you understood how serious I am about... Jesus! Do you know how insulting it is for you to...

JULIAN. Ricardo. Ricardo?

RICARDO. What? (*Jumps up; in his face*) Que carrajo quieres tu? What?

JULIAN. How's your daughter?

RICARDO. Oh, God! This is hopeless.

(After a moment, when everyone is quiet.)

JULIAN. How's your daughter?

RICARDO. I'm sorry. She's, she's a little better. The clinic was closed for a while, but she saw a doctor, and he said, he gave her some medicine, and to come back in two more days.

JULIAN. Good. That's good.

HANK. Fine. Now maybe we can...

(The phone rings. RICARDO answers it.)

RICARDO. Arletta. Lionel. (*Hands her the phone.*)

ARLETTA. Hi. You *what??* Look, Lionel, I think that I...I know that, but I'm telling you, that is an extremely bad idea...I do not want him here...you should have cleared it with me. With me...what?...hold on. Melanie? (*Hands her the phone.*)

MELANIE. Hi, Lionel. I know, I saw them. Oh. I guess so. 'Bye. (*Hangs up.*) Lionel got a call from the TV reporter. He wants to get more background on us, for their evening news.

ROB. Great!

HANK. And...

MELANIE. He agreed to let him visit us, here, later today.

ARLETTA. He went and agreed to that without giving us a chance to...

ROB. Hey, I think it's great. It means we'll get more coverage, and...

ARLETTA. It means they have more control over the process, you idiot. It's crucial for us to stay in control of the information flow. That's basic politics.

HANK. Pulling back would either turn them off to the story, or turn them against it and make that the issue instead of what we're here for.

ROB. Are you kidding?

ARLETTA and HANK. *No!!*

(THEY pause to acknowledge a moment of complete agreement, shake hands.)

HANK. You haven't had much dealings with the press, have you.

ROB. I guess not.

HANK. Once the Governor speaks, we will be expected to have a formal response ready. Our...our credibility will depend on how clear and persuasive that statement is.

ROB. So, should we vote on a facilitator to run this?

ARLETTA. Again?

HANK. Good idea.

JULIAN. I nominate Thomas.

ARLETTA. You...?

JULIAN. Yes.

HANK. Fine. Other nominations?

RICARDO. I nominate Arletta.

HANK. Okay. Other nominations. *(Hearing none)* All those in favor of Thomas?

(JULIAN, HANK, and ROB raise their hands. HANK glances at

THOMAS, who then slowly raises his hand.)

All those in favor of Arletta?

(ARLETTA, MELANIE, and RICARDO raise their hands.)

Thomas, the floor is yours.

(THOMAS sits on the edge of the desk, above and in the middle of the group. HANK indicates to JULIAN and RICARDO that he would like help getting out of his chair, and they, along with the others, all help him do this.)

HANK. *(To RICARDO, who has been eyeing the empty wheelchair)*
Have a seat.

(RICARDO smiles, sits in the wheelchair.)

HANK. Sorry. Thomas, the floor is yours.

THOMAS. *(Takes a deep breath)* Now. *(Surveys the room)* This will be a facilitated discussion, and the facilitator will recognize hands only. No verbal requests. Speakers will speak in the order in which they have been recognized. We need a note-taker.

(He goes to desk for clean paper.)

Who will volunteer to take notes?

(Everyone looks around. RICARDO, HANK, and ROB look at MELANIE.)

RICARDO. Melanie.

MELANIE. Sorry, guys, I don't do minutes.

HANK. I'll do it. Give me some clean paper.

(THOMAS hands him paper, and a pen.)

THOMAS. We will begin by listing the objectives of this session, and by establishing a time line for the work we need to do. I need someone to write these items on oaktag.

JULIAN. I will.

(JULIAN walks to the other side of the room, takes the large oaktag tablet, and black magic markers on the floor in front of it, and returns to his place.)

THOMAS. Before we begin the list, who has a watch, and will serve as timekeeper?

ROB. Me. I have a watch.

THOMAS. The group will decide how much time to spend doing the entire process, and then decide how much time to spend on each item. And within each category, I would like to be reminded when we have fifteen minutes left, and when we have five minutes left.

(ROB nods “yes.”)

THOMAS. Alright now, let’s begin by making a list of the points this written statement must emphasize...first we will list the points, then prioritize them, and finally, decide how much time we will take drafting the text for each item. I will take items for the list now.

(ARLETTA, ROB, MELANIE, and HANK raise their hands. Blackout.)

Scene 6

(Everyone is approximately where they were. The oaktag tablet contains the list they have been developing. It reads: “More Grant Money”—“Guaranteed Stable Tuition For Four Years To Entering Freshmen”—“Increased Library Hours”—“Tax On Beer To Raise Revenue”—“Women’s Center Funding Increase”)

THOMAS. Are there any other issues?

(ARLETTA, ROB, and RICARDO all begin to speak at the same time.)

ARLETTA. I think we ought to...

ROB. We ought to make sure we...

RICARDO. If you think about it, the...

THOMAS. Hands, please.

(THEY raise their hands.)

THOMAS. Arletta, then Rob, then Ricardo. Arletta?

ARLETTA. More black faculty members.

(JULIAN writes this on the oaktag. THOMAS nods to ROB.)

ROB. I think we should specify “more grant money” for poor students.

THOMAS. Ricardo.

RICARDO. Calling for a tax on beer to offset the proposed tuition increases is regressive. Who drinks beer? Poor people. It’s a bad idea.

HANK. Well, we’ve got to make...

THOMAS. Hank?

HANK. Sorry.

(HANK and ARLETTA raise their hands at the same time.)

THOMAS. Hank, then Arletta.

ARLETTA. But, I was sure my hand...

THOMAS. Hank?

HANK. I only wanted to say that we should have some proposed solutions along with these demands. We can’t keep asking for changes without giving some indication that we realize there’s not an unlimited supply of money. That was a mistake that was made in the past.

(MELANIE raises her hand.)

THOMAS. Arletta, then Melanie.

ARLETTA. Well, this isn’t what I started out saying, but you’re wrong about that being a mistake in the past. In the sixties, when students protested low minority enrollment in this college, they included in their demands a list of fourteen different methods to offset the costs of increased recruitment from minority high schools, and the school agreed to implement them, and they never did. I researched it. But...what I started out saying was that we ought to specifically call for more grant money for black students.

ROB. To say that, just because someone...

THOMAS. Melanie.

MELANIE. If we point out a need for more black faculty, we should also point out the need for more women faculty.

HANK. Fine. Why not more black women faculty?

JULIAN. I'm not sure what to write down here.

THOMAS. At this point, we're just recording suggestions. We're not eliminating anything yet.

JULIAN. Okay.

(JULIAN writes "more women faculty," and next to "more grant money" writes "poor" and "black.")

THOMAS. *(To the group)* Other comments?

(ARLETTA raises her hand.)

THOMAS. Arletta.

ARLETTA. It's time they took a stand against the harassment and the prejudice against black students, and institute serious anti-discrimination regulations.

(JULIAN raises his hand.)

THOMAS. Write down "anti-bias regs."

JULIAN. I wanted to add something.

THOMAS. Oh. What is it?

JULIAN. If we include a proposal for anti-discrimination regulations, they ought to include violence and harassment against gays.

ARLETTA. Oh, come on.

RICARDO. You can't expect...

THOMAS. You have a comment?

RICARDO. Yeah, dammit, I have a comment.

(RICARDO thrusts his hand up hard. ARLETTA does the same.)

See?

THOMAS. Ricardo, then Arletta.

RICARDO. Que maldicion! I'm getting a little tired of this traffic control system.

HANK. I think it's working very well.

RICARDO. Well, my group doesn't use it. We let people talk when they have something to say.

THOMAS. Can we please stay with the topic?

RICARDO. Oh, Christ!

THOMAS. Oh, Christ? Do you have something to add to this list?

RICARDO. Yeah, I do. You can't equate discrimination against gays with discrimination against students of color. First of all...

ARLETTA. It's not the same thing.

THOMAS. Arletta? Ricardo...

RICARDO. Esta bien...no, go ahead.

ARLETTA. It's not the same thing at all. If you're gay, you can hide it. If you're black, you have to deal with people's reactions every minute of the day.

JULIAN. What're you...?

ARLETTA. Now, Julian, maybe it's not so easy for you personally to separate them, but you can't really call them equal.

JULIAN. That is the most... *(Raises his hand.)*

THOMAS. Julian.

JULIAN. That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. So gays are supposed to—what?—hide who we are? No way. Do you know that a friend of mine was beaten up on this campus because he dared to walk across the quad holding another man's hand? And what did the administration do about it? Nothing. Discrimination is discrimination—there's no such thing as one kind being more important than another.

(JULIAN writes "anti-gay" on oaktag tablet. ROB raises his hand.)

THOMAS. Add it to the list. Rob.

ROB. First, I agree with that. And second, I think Thomas is doing a

terrific job. But I...

RICARDO. Don't write that down.

(RICARDO walks over to where JULIAN is sitting, takes marker, starts to cross off "anti-gay." As he does this, JULIAN tries to prevent him by grabbing RICARDO's hand. RICARDO pulls back sharply, jumps away from him.)

RICARDO. Don't touch me.

(JULIAN stands motionless for moment, shaken, then leaves the room. After a moment, he returns.)

JULIAN. Don't worry, Ricardo. You're not my type. I've got standards.

THOMAS. Rob.

ROB. I...uh...I want to make a point about grants. I don't think you can say that a student is more deserving of grant money if he's black. There are poor white students out there also. It should be available to anyone who's poor.

(RICARDO and ARLETTA raise their hands.)

THOMAS. Ricardo, then Arletta.

RICARDO. If you're poor and white, you have a better chance of getting a scholarship than if you're poor, and brown or black.

ARLETTA. And, you have a better chance at getting a scholarship if you're white because you probably went to a better high school, where you learned more, and could compete...

RICARDO. That's right! More computers, more *time* on those computers, so you're better...

THOMAS. Ricardo.

RICARDO. If you went to a...

THOMAS. Ricardo! Arletta.

ARLETTA. ...and you could compete in tests that determine scholarships. And, you probably had better guidance and counseling departments in your high school, which could steer you...

ROB. Hell, not my high school.

HANK. This is not about... Arletta, whatever those differences may be...

THOMAS. Please. Arletta?

ARLETTA. You have that advantage. They steer you to scholarship and grant programs that black students never even hear about.

RICARDO. That is right!

HANK. That may be right, but that still doesn't...

THOMAS. Arletta, are you finished?

ARLETTA. Am I finished? No. In fact, I think we ought to include one of the original proposals students listed in their demands in 1969—open admissions.

(Those who respond do so at the same time.)

HANK. Open...?

JULIAN. Open admissions?

THOMAS. Arletta, what do you...

MELANIE. Open...are you...?

ARLETTA. Yes. If you want to attend any state college, you're admitted. It's as simple as that. It's no more than what's available...

(HANK, MELANIE, and ROB raise their hands.)

...in most other countries—France, Italy, even a poor country like Mexico. If you want to go to college, they have to find a place for you. And, it's free.

THOMAS. Hank, then Melanie, then Rob.

HANK. That's fine for community colleges, but at a university, it's impossible, because the...

RICARDO. I went to a communi...

THOMAS. Ricardo? Hank.

HANK. This is the same thing I was talking about before. We can't come up with unrealistic demands without showing how we think

they can be realized. Arletta, you know very well that open admissions was tried at some colleges. And it was dropped, and you know why.

ARLETTA. Too hard to administer. The old way is easier.

HANK. Too costly.

ARLETTA. An educated population is not a waste of money. But it is a dangerous idea, if you...

HANK. In a lot of places, it just didn't work. That is a fact.

ROB. Plus, they're talking about lower tuition for kids with good grades. That benefits your groups more right there.

ARLETTA. "My groups"?

ROB. If you go to a bad high school, it's easier to get good grades.

ARLETTA. You also get a bad education.

HANK. Regardless, open admissions had not been a success.

MELANIE. And besides that, what's the value of a college education then, if anybody at all can...

ARLETTA. "Anybody"?

MELANIE. The value of a degree comes from the fact that you have to earn it. I know you know that. But if they're just handed out to whoever wants to come to...

RICARDO. "Whoever"?

ARLETTA. I can't believe this.

RICARDO. How can you completely disregard all the...

THOMAS. Ricardo. Rob.

RICARDO. No, I'm serious. You think we want colleges to "hand out" degrees?

MELANIE. That's not what I said. *(To ARLETTA)* You know that.

RICARDO. Oh, come on. I recognize racist attitudes when I hear them. Even from people who think they're too liberal to have...

MELANIE. That was not a racist attitude. I simply meant...

THOMAS. Wait. Rob, you're next.

ROB. No, I mean, I agree. Look. I grew up on a small farm, where my folks grow carrots and beans. We can barely make ends meet from year to year. I've been working one, and sometimes two jobs, ever since I was ten. I don't have an equal shot at a grant or a scholarship. The government says we're rich, because of the value of the land, but they don't understand that we can't sell that land, or else the farm won't...

ARLETTA. Some people have never even had the chance to own...

HANK. We'd better begin to...

THOMAS. Can we return to...

(HANK raises his hand.)

THOMAS. Hank?

HANK. Up to this point, we've had a few differences, but we'd better move this to a vote right now, or we're not...

(ARLETTA raises her hand.)

...going to get past it and get the draft written.

THOMAS. Arletta?

ARLETTA. This issue is too important to leave to a vote. We need to reach consensus.

THOMAS. We already decided on voting as our decision-making process.

HANK. That's right. Thomas is right.

ARLETTA. But this is far too important for us to...

THOMAS. Arletta. There is a request that we move to clarify our position on this point. This means interrupting this process, clarifying, through a *VOTE*, and returning to the draft. Objections? *(Hearing none)* We need to contract for time to do this. Suggestions?

(JULIAN raises his hand.)

THOMAS. Julian.

JULIAN. Five minutes.

THOMAS. Five minutes. Other suggestions. (*Hearing none*) Rob, let me know when our time is up. Now. The issue is open admissions. Hands.

(Every hand goes up.)

Alright. Ricardo, then Melanie, then...Hank, then Julian, then Arletta, then...Rob. Ricardo.

RICARDO. This is basic. We can't fight to maintain access to higher education if we begin by assuming that some people should automatically be excluded from access. It's a contradiction.

THOMAS. Melanie.

MELANIE. It's not a question of access. It's a question of...

RICARDO. Of course, it is. You can't...

THOMAS. Ricardo. Melanie?

MELANIE. Thank you. It's a question of standards. I want my degree to be worth something.

ARLETTA. What?

MELANIE. I do. I'm sorry, but that's the way I feel.

THOMAS. Hank.

HANK. I think it's one thing to institute remedial programs to help students cope, and another to throw open the doors to anyone who wants to come in. College is not a democracy. It's a meritocracy—or it's supposed to be. It's based on how well you do. Not, contrary to what...

ARLETTA. Not what. Not what?

THOMAS. Hank, are you finished?

HANK. I'm finished.

THOMAS. Julian.

JULIAN. Open admissions does not mean that you hand out degrees like, like free samples at the supermarket. It means you

have equal access to try, to get the chance. I got into this school because I had good grades, and because they thought I'd enhance their "quota" of required black faces. But I'm not so self-satisfied to think that I got good grades only because I worked hard. I went to a private school, because both my parents are doctors. I was lucky. Most black kids aren't.

THOMAS. Arletta.

ARLETTA. That's right. You can't just look back at the past and say "Oh, that was wrong. We're never going to do that again," and merely hope that the situation corrects itself.

(ROB raises his hand.)

It's going to take more than words and intentions to correct centuries of white skin...

RICARDO. ...white skin privilege. That's right.

THOMAS. Rob.

ROB. Look. I'm sorry that, for centuries, your ancestors suffered, and were...locked out, and...I don't agree with it, but, you know, I didn't do it. And I'm not willing to be punished for something I did not do. I have enough trouble just trying to...

RICARDO. Oh, right. As if you could equate your "problem" with...

ROB. I can equate it, amigo. And I'll tell you something else. I'm tired of hearing the same old story about how...

RICARDO. *(Standing up)* Well, you'd better get used to it, "amigo," because...

ARLETTA. You're tired of...?

THOMAS. Can we please...

ROB. Used to it? *(Standing up)* I'm just about sick of it.

(ARLETTA moves closer to him.)

This whole movement is about equality, and all I hear from...

RICARDO. Equality is right.

(RICARDO moves closer to ROB, who steps back, and makes his way to the other side of the empty wheelchair.)

It's not enough to have some regulation that "permits" you to...

ROB. You can't regulate equality. It takes some determination on your part to...

RICARDO. Determination? Did you ever take a walk through any poor neighborhood, anywhere? Can you be that stupid? Or are you...

(ROB and RICARDO are now on either side of the empty wheelchair.)

ROB. Stupid? *(Pushes chair at RICARDO)* I'm not stupid. It's pretty clear to me that what you want is special treatment, and this is not...

RICARDO. *(Shoving chair back)* You'll see special treatment!

(As they shove the chair back and forth harder and harder, ROB is backed against the wall. RICARDO begins ramming him with the chair. JULIAN pulls ROB away as ARLETTA jumps in front of RICARDO to stop him. HANK watches frantically from the sofa as the chair gets battered against the wall.)

JULIAN. Hey! Stop this! Stop it! Knock it off!

(RICARDO stares icily at JULIAN. The room is deadly silent for a few moments.)

ROB. The, uh, timekeeper...notes that it's time to vote.

THOMAS. Right. *(Takes deep breath.)* The question is: should the demand for open admissions be included in our statement. All those in favor?

(ARLETTA, RICARDO, and JULIAN raise their hands.)

All those opposed?

(ROB, HANK, and MELANIE raise their hands.)

Three-three.

JULIAN. The facilitator votes.

HANK. Right.

ARLETTA. Thomas?

(THOMAS slowly stands, continues to survey the others.)

THOMAS. What is...most disturbing to me is...in some way, each of you...each one of you assumes...thinks you know how I feel, how my vote will come, what I...I went to a private school, also, where I was a model student. We asians have learned to become “models.” Ever since nineteen sixty-eight, when Watts burned, and Chinatown didn’t, the press, and society keep labeling us the “model minority.” They track us into the sciences. They could only see me as a brainy little geek in front of a computer terminal. And they certainly could not see me fronting my own rock band. From the very first day, the first hour on this campus, I felt the discrimination. People coming up and asking “where are you from?”—as if someone who looks like me must be from some Far East country. Fraternity boys shouting “gook” in my dormitory window late at night. And people always assuming they knew how I felt. The black students, and the latinos taking it for granted I always agreed with them, because I’m not white, and the white students thinking the exact same thing, because, in their eyes, my skin is not dark enough to make me “black.” When the school needs to show off their affirmative action progress, they lump us all together—latinos, blacks, asians, indians. But when they create special programs for minorities, they leave us out—we’re too “self-reliant” to need any help. I want an education, and I’m happy to be here. Some of my friends didn’t make it. Not because they couldn’t afford it. Their parents have been saving since the day they were born. And not, not because they didn’t have the grades. They did. Higher than the average student here. We all got good grades, so we didn’t bring shame to our parents. They didn’t get in because this university only permits a certain percentage of asian students in any freshman class. It’s a quota. They don’t want it to get “too asian.” Can’t have too many of “them,” or they’ll take over the school. And what would the alumni think? *(Beat.)* This vote on open admissions, that’s what this is about. It’s about discrimination. And equal access. I understand discrimination, but these categories have to stop, all of them. I want my friends here, not because their skin is the same color, but because they earned a place here. Equal access?

Who are we kidding? This country doesn't have the foresight, or the, the guts to offer free, quality education to everyone. That's a dangerous, radical idea. Right now, the number of slots is limited. That's the cold fact. Open admissions? I vote...no.

(Blackout.)

Scene 7

(A few minutes later. RICARDO is on the phone in the secretary's office. HANK, ROB, and ARLETTA are arguing loudly, grouped around HANK's chair, which he is in. MELANIE, THOMAS, and JULIAN are also arguing. All voices rise and fall. ARLETTA, HANK and ROB—their dialogue overlaps:)

ROB. ...no way will I be able to support something my group didn't...

ARLETTA. ...the Hopwood vs. Texas case turned the clock back—back, on all the...

HANK. ...finally, finally patch together a workable coalition, and then...

ROB. ...done a lot better if I lied on my application, and checked the box that said...

ARLETTA. ...higher education needs to include diversity of experiences, so that...

HANK. ...the Bakke decision reflected the situation back in the seventies, when...

ROB. ...three of my professors assigned texts they wrote, so it cost nearly twice as much as other...

ARLETTA. ...urban schools are fighting a losing battle, because their funds come from...

HANK. ...stop pushing for something that could blow the lid off what we...

(MELANIE, THOMAS, and JULIAN—their dialogue overlaps:)

MELANIE. ...get the fuck out of my way, if you think for a minute

that...

THOMAS. ...California's law school enrollment of asians went up when they dropped the...

JULIAN. ...administration doesn't even have a clue about what my...

MELANIE. ...issues for women are just as threatened as any other minority, and I'm not...

THOMAS. ...never even bother to look at how money for the arts gets cut, instead of...

JULIAN. ...always support these ideas in theory, but try to put them into action, and they close down the...

MELANIE. ...having money doesn't make it any easier to put your ass on the line when you...

THOMAS. ...orderly conducting of business clarifies thinking, so I chose to learn how to...

JULIAN. ...the value of teamwork when you're trying to reach a goal, and in this case...

(RICARDO has been off the phone for a moment, comes into the room and stands between the two groups.)

RICARDO. *(Shouting)* Shut the fuck up!!

(THEY all stop talking. For a moment, silence.)

THOMAS. *(Sarcastically)* Nice process.

RICARDO. *(Equally sarcastic)* I thought you'd like it.

ARLETTA. I insist that open admissions be included as one of the...

HANK. Arletta. It's dead. Leave it.

ARLETTA. Leave it? No chance. And from you?

HANK. "Me"? Oh, uh-huh. "Me," the cripple. The guy who should understand discrimination.

ARLETTA. I do think that that chair...I could see that it's just like being black. People see you as, the first thing they see about you is...

HANK. It *is* the first thing they see, but Christ Arletta, do you think that's what I *want* them to see? Don't you—God!—are you still?...don't you *want* people to see past your skin, and... No—here's the real question. You think I want some kind of a quota for handicapped kids? Say, two percent of every class has got to be kids in chairs? Is that what you want? Is it?

(ARLETTA does not respond.)

The issue here...is to see that we make our public, public statement as a coalition. Together.

ARLETTA. With you as the coalition-builder.

MELANIE. That *is* it. You don't want him to get any credit for any of this. Him, or anybody else.

ROB. Anybody white.

ARLETTA. *(To HANK)* Tell Rob about your campaign, Hank.

(HANK does not respond.)

Tell him what happened when you were elected.

ROB. What happened?

HANK. Nothing. A couple of people got the wrong idea about...

RICARDO. More than a couple of people.

ARLETTA. Tell him.

(HANK does not speak, but stares coldly at ARLETTA.)

Hank was accused of running a racist campaign.

MELANIE. That's not true, and you know it. *(To ROB)* What happened was...

HANK. What happened...what happened was a few people who wanted to—to keep themselves in power...hooked on to some, to one of the slogans we were using, and completely misinterpreted it.

ARLETTA. Not everybody saw it that way.

ROB. But...what was...what...?

JULIAN. "He can lead us...out...of the jungle." That's right, isn't it,

Hank?

(HANK nods "yes.")

RICARDO. Isn't it?

HANK. Yes. Yes.

ROB. But I still don't...

JULIAN. The student government leadership for the past three years was black.

HANK. It's too stupid to even...

ARLETTA. Too stupid? Then why didn't you renounce it? *(To ROB)* A student assembly was called, for both sides to give their interpretation of what was going on. But Hank refused to participate, to...

HANK. To dignify that kind of gutter mentality.

MELANIE. *(To ROB)* Like what she's doing now.

HANK. That assembly focused a spotlight onto one little slogan. It, it polarized everybody, split the campus right down the middle. It played on the most hateful, ignorant prejudices that...

ARLETTA. You had your chance, in an, an objective setting. That's the reason I convinced the administration to convene that assembly, so the...

HANK. *You convinced the...*

(ARLETTA looks at HANK, stone-faced.)

... You did that?

ARLETTA. Of course I did.

HANK. Jesus Christ! Do you have any idea how much that cost me in trying to get this campus unified? It took me months, Goddamn months before I could even get some of these people to talk to each other. That was the most destructive act I have ever had to...

ARLETTA. What was destructive was your campaign slogan. Maybe you should have...

HANK. That slogan meant "out of the jungle of confusion, of

overspending, of failure on the...”

ROB. Wait a minute. That’s it?

RICARDO. What do you mean?

ROB. I mean, that’s it? Some ambiguous phrase that could mean, that probably did mean something else, and you guys try to make out like it’s a racist statement. “Out of the jungle?” Come on. That’s it?

HANK. That’s it. Exactly.

ARLETTA. That’s not it, exactly. Those flyers were specifically distributed to the white fraternities, to the off-campus students, and the message was very clear, that...

THOMAS. I got one. I knew what the message was.

RICARDO. It wasn’t aimed at you.

HANK. That’s right.

THOMAS. Oh, I see. In this case, I’m supposed to be on the “black” side of the issue. Let me tell you something, Hank. I gave you the benefit of the doubt when that flyer came out, and I even got my members to support you. And now, you can’t even admit that there was a problem? You call that leadership?

HANK. It wasn’t *AIMED* at anybody. That flyer was only...

(THEY are interrupted by the sound of loud knocking at the door.)

LANCE. *(Through door)* Hello?

ARLETTA. Who’s there?

LANCE. Lance Curtis. Channel Nine News. *(After a moment, when no one answers him)* Hello?

HANK. Just a minute.

MELANIE. Shouldn’t we...

HANK. Just a minute! Okay. Listen up. I need one minute, alone. With you.

(He points to ARLETTA.)

ARLETTA. You need...?

HANK. Everybody? Please. Into the other room? One minute?

(They are so startled by the request that they comply, silently. HANK and ARLETTA are alone.)

ARLETTA. What do you think you're...?

(HANK holds up his hand to stop her from continuing. His tone is pleading and hushed.)

HANK. Wait. Stop. Please. We've got sixty seconds.

ARLETTA. What are...?

HANK. We have got to...you and I...have got to...turn the heat down here. This guy, this reporter, coming in here. We could lose it all.

ARLETTA. I almost *did* "lose it all," over your campaign slogan. Do you realize that?

HANK. You? How?

ARLETTA. Twelve of my members opposed the idea of that assembly, organizing it, participating in it. They pushed for us to boycott the election, outright. Maybe it's hard for you to believe, but my position was the moderate one. They started a splinter group, and it nearly killed AASA.

HANK. I never knew this.

ARLETTA. It took a lot, a lot, to keep it quiet. I chose doing what I thought was right—challenging that slogan, in an open, public forum—and that alienated my severest critics, the ones who want to kick me out because I'm not radical enough. They nearly succeeded.

(HANK holds up his hand, lowers it, puts his hands together, as if in prayer.)

HANK. I'm sorry. I didn't...but here, now, we've got to focus, because the truth is, there's nobody else. It's just us. You...and me. It's up to us. What do you say?

(ARLETTA does not respond for a moment. She lowers her head and closes her eyes. Then, she raises her head, and slowly nods "yes.")

HANK. Thank you. Now...let him in.

(ARLETTA slowly walks to the door. Blackout.)

Scene 8

(About ten minutes later. LANCE is leaning against the desk, drinking coffee that they have brought him. He makes a few notes from time to time. The students are grouped around him. RICARDO is holding back. JULIAN is still in the outer office, working on the statement.)

HANK. So we've been working on this project, together, for about two months now. And, while it's true that I was the original organizer, pulling together the first few meetings, it really has been a group effort, as you can see.

LANCE. Uh-huh. Great. So the rest of you guys, what, divide up the work so that your leader here *(Indicating HANK)* can oversee and concentrate on...

ARLETTA. There are no leaders.

LANCE. No leaders? But how do you...

ARLETTA. We work together on all decisions. Everyone has an equal voice. It guarantees that traditionally underrepresented groups, like for instance, black women, can share in the power of a coalition.

LANCE. A coalition? Like the U.N.?

HANK. In some ways, yes—groups may run their business differently within their, uh, groups, but work together to achieve common...goals. Functioning like a little democracy.

LANCE. I guess you hope you'll be a little more successful than the U.N., though, right?

(LANCE laughs and some of the others manage a weak smile, except ROB.)

ROB. *(With a laugh)* I guess so!

LANCE. A democracy. Might be a nice angle to the story.

ARLETTA. Well. That sounds like a great idea. That's very clever of you to find a fresh approach.

LANCE. What? Oh, thanks.

ROB. Would you...like some more coffee?

LANCE. As a matter of fact, I would. Thanks.

(LANCE hands the cup to MELANIE. She hesitates a moment, takes it, goes to refill it.)

Your liaison guy, Lionel something, said there'd be a prepared statement. Have you got a copy of that?

HANK. It'll be ready in a few minutes. Maybe we could...

ARLETTA. Would you be, are you familiar with the active campus organizations?

LANCE. To tell you the God's honest truth, I'm just making the jump over to the news side. I've been covering sports for a few years, so I do know all your athletic teams. Any of you play sports?

(LANCE looks for a reaction, including an embarrassing, apologetic exchange of looks with HANK.)

Guess not.

ARLETTA. There are other organizations on campus. For example, my group is working to increase the representation of African-Americans, in order to...

MELANIE. *(Hands LANCE refilled cup while looking at ARLETTA)*
Your coffee.

LANCE. Great. Thanks.

ARLETTA. ...in order to insure a broader educational climate, and to guarantee that the racial mix on campus better reflects the general population.

LANCE. I know. Quotas. *(To RICARDO and THOMAS)* So I guess you two guys are from that group, too?

RICARDO. Quotas? I don't think you...

(RICARDO begins to react to "quotas," but ARLETTA puts up her

hand to silence him. THOMAS is startled at his suggestion.)

THOMAS. I, uh, no. My organization is the Asian Students Association.

LANCE. The Asian students. You guys have your own separate group.

THOMAS. Yes. Yes, we do.

(JULIAN comes in.)

LANCE. Do you guys have an opinion on that California law that ended affirmative action in their universities?

ARLETTA. There...there was an exemption made.

LANCE. Oh?

ARLETTA. For athletes.

LANCE. Well, that's understandable. They *do* bring in those alumni dollars. And state schools don't have an unlimited supply of money, right?

HANK. Right.

LANCE. *(Checks his watch)* Listen, I need to phone in to my assignment editor. *(Takes out cell phone)* Is there a quiet place where I can...

ROB. Oh, yeah, sure. *(Indicates outer office)* Right in there.

LANCE. Thanks.

(LANCE goes into outer office, out of sight.)

JULIAN. Here's the statement. If we're going to make any changes, we better get to it pretty fast.

(JULIAN distributes copies to everyone. THEY begin scanning.)

HANK. Wait a minute. Where's the...oh, I see it. Here. Okay.

(LANCE finishes his call, appears in doorway, but remains quiet, watching them.)

MELANIE. This is wrong.

JULIAN. What?

MELANIE. This. Here. The second paragraph. There's only one "l" in coalition. And, the next sentence. There are two "m's" in recommendations. State spelling champ, four years running.

JULIAN. Oh. Right.

ROB. We didn't vote on this.

HANK. What?

ROB. Complete, uh, number eight, complete reinstatement of the bilingual remedial English program for latino students.

RICARDO. Hey. We voted on it.

ROB. I don't think so.

THOMAS. We did vote. But my recollection was that it was something like "support for," rather than making it an outright demand.

ROB. See?

RICARDO. We voted. (*Looks to THOMAS.*)

THOMAS. I suggest you add the words "support for" in front of it. The rest of this looks...

(JULIAN makes this note on his copy. ROB and RICARDO both try to look vindicated.)

MELANIE. Wait a minute. Where'd this come from? This "especially women of color" line after, here, number eleven. "Increased women faculty, especially women of color." I know we did not approve of that wording.

ARLETTA. Of course we did. You supported it.

MELANIE. I supported the first part.

RICARDO. All of a sudden, you people have this amazing selective memory.

ROB and MELANIE. "You people"?

RICARDO. You remember only what you want to. It's like, you rewrite history to suit you own...your own...

ARLETTA. Your own agendas.

MELANIE. I know what I voted for. And it isn't this.

RICARDO. The notes don't lie.

MELANIE. (*Advancing on him*) Meaning I do?

RICARDO. Meaning you still think you can get whatever...

LANCE. Whoa! Who'd have guessed it. The "little democracy."

ROB. You...finished your call?

LANCE. Yeah. So. I gather you are not all in complete agreement here, is that fair to say?

HANK. You mean that discussion we were having?

LANCE. Yes. That "discussion."

HANK. We are, we're trying to be very, very careful about every aspect of this process, so naturally, when a point of, when a particular point needs to be clarified, we...

ARLETTA. There are some differences within the group.

LANCE. Oh, yes. What would you say they are, exactly?

HANK. Nothing that impacts on this action to oppose tuition hikes. Of course, there are minor issues of, of wording and of...

LANCE. (*To ARLETTA*) But you were saying...?

(ARLETTA hesitates a moment.)

HANK. I think you'll find that the written statement we've...

ARLETTA. Differences.

LANCE. What differences?

HANK. This isn't what we're...

(LANCE holds up his hand, and HANK stops talking. LANCE nods to ARLETTA.)

ARLETTA. Racism.

(ROB, MELANIE, and HANK all speak at the same time, loudly.)

ROB. Oh, for Christ sake, Arletta, what are you...

MELANIE. This is about the most stupid, the most...

HANK. I said, this isn't what we came here to...

LANCE. Please. Just a minute. I'm very interested in hearing what she has to say.

HANK. But that's not what we...

LANCE. Please. *(Nods again to ARLETTA.)*

ARLETTA. *(Slowly, reflectively)* I know that you all think I shouldn't be, that this isn't the time to talk about this, but, I, uh, I...

MELANIE. I thought you had more, more sense, more control than to...

RICARDO. Let her talk.

ARLETTA. *(To LANCE)* Minority students, women in particular, who may not have...

(LANCE's cell phone rings.)

LANCE. *(Answering it)* Yeah? Great! *(Hangs up.)* Listen, thanks, you guys. I gotta run.

ARLETTA. But minority students need to have...

LANCE. Maybe I'll catch up with you later. 'Bye.

(LANCE leaves. THEY all remain motionless for a moment.)

HANK. Small groups.

RICARDO. What's the point of meeting now?

HANK. Process. Good process. Because we agreed to.

ARLETTA. The Governor speaks in ten minutes. Small groups don't need to meet. Everything's running fine.

ROB. Yeah, right.

ARLETTA. What?

HANK. Thomas, we can meet in the other room.

(THOMAS and HANK, and ROB and JULIAN go into the outer office.)

RICARDO. So. Communications.

(No one speaks for a moment.)

Well, I, for one, am not happy with this reporter guy coming in and...

(No one acknowledges his speaking.)

Isn't that why we're meeting, to talk about what's not working? Arletta?

(No response.)

Don't you think we could maybe...

(The phone rings. ARLETTA answers it.)

ARLETTA. Yes?

RICARDO. ...talk to Lionel, and see if he can...

ARLETTA. Ricardo. Phone.

RICARDO. *(Takes phone)* Hello? Que bueno! Dime todo lo que dijo el medico. Pero esperate—deja cambiar de telefono en el otro cuarto.

(RICARDO pushes a button on the phone, hangs it up, goes into other room. MELANIE and ARLETTA sit for a moment, silent.)

ARLETTA. I don't think I'll be needing that ride to Boston.

MELANIE. Mmm-hmm.

(Another silent moment.)

I might not have any extra room where I'm staying.

ARLETTA. Fine.

(Another silent moment.)

MELANIE. I don't understand this.

ARLETTA. Oh?

MELANIE. How could you think that I...that I don't...how could you think that?

ARLETTA. You mean, just because we happen to be friends, it

shouldn't...

MELANIE. Happen to...? You have my friendship.

ARLETTA. You had mine.

MELANIE. But I didn't have your trust?

ARLETTA. I guess you didn't earn it.

MELANIE. Three years? More. How long does it take?

ARLETTA. I guess you never really know a person's politics until it...

MELANIE. This is, you think it was, this was more than politics to me. I thought, I don't know, I thought we'd be friends for life.

ARLETTA. Well, I suppose you never know.

MELANIE. My God, listen to you. Where are...where does this coldness come from to me. You never did that with me.

ARLETTA. I never knew you before.

MELANIE. Yes, you did. Of course you did.

(Beat.)

ARLETTA. I did trust you. I did trust you. And all that time...something, this thing was inside you.

MELANIE. It's not. You're wrong about that.

ARLETTA. Haven't you been listening to yourself for the past...

MELANIE. It's not what you think. Yes, I do believe...why are we even talking about that. This is not about that.

ARLETTA. Of course it is.

MELANIE. No. It's not. It's about...it's about my friend, who is so, so quick, so...willing to think something really bad about me, without even...I thought we had a kind of...that we could go past that kind of thing, and...that we'd give each other the chance to, not to just believe that the other person was just like everybody else, and...

ARLETTA. But, you are.

MELANIE. I believed in it. I do believe in it. All of it.

ARLETTA. Until the moment it affects you personally. That's always when the truth comes out.

MELANIE. You are wrong. You are so wrong. God! You seem so...willing to believe this.

ARLETTA. I have a lot at stake here, and now I find that the one person I...look, I can't do this any more. *(Stands; to the others)* Gather around the TV! I'm going to call Elizabeth and see if she's heard what the Governor's really up to.

(ARLETTA goes into the other room. The OTHERS move to the television. MELANIE slowly gets up, goes into bathroom, closes door.)

JULIAN. Who's she calling?

THOMAS. Dean McGarry's receptionist.

(ARLETTA finishes her call.)

ARLETTA. It looks good! It looks very good! He might turn it into a campaign issue, something about how the economy will never...anyway, he's going to postpone the increase!

(All four together:)

JULIAN. It worked! I knew it would work!

RICARDO. Bueno! Bueno! Finally! Success!

ROB. Thank God! Thank God!

THOMAS. Brilliant! Now they have to listen to...

HANK. I knew it! I knew it! Students! United! Will never...

(THOMAS, HANK, JULIAN, and RICARDO join in:)

...be defeated! Students! United! Will never...

HANK. Turn the TV on!

(JULIAN turns the television on. It faces upstage.)

HANK. That's his press secretary.

FEMALE VOICE. ...received a great deal of attention since

yesterday. However, the Governor will only have time to make a brief statement about the tuition increase proposal, and the striking students. He will take no questions following the statement. Governor?

(MELANIE comes back into the room.)

MALE VOICE. Since yesterday afternoon, when students began a sit-in at six locations, my office has received hundreds of calls regarding the proposed tuition increase at state colleges. Let me make one thing crystal clear: I will not be forced to take any decision of any kind as the result of illegal, terrorist activities. This administration will not be held hostage by the court of public opinion.

RICARDO. We lost.

HANK. Quiet.

MALE VOICE. When I was elected to this office seven years ago, I made a commitment to higher education. I believe now, as I did then, that this state, and indeed this nation, will not be able to compete economically without a well-educated workforce. And to that end, I am committed to the ideal of higher education for all those who deserve it, regardless of their economic status.

ROB. Alright!

MALE VOICE. However, every ideal must contend with certain realities. I am fully aware of the students' position. I have heard from many of them, and from their parents. I have also been informed that the striking students have upped the ante, that they have other "demands" they are making. Let me repeat: I will not be blackmailed, or intimidated. I do not negotiate with people involved in an illegal activity. Therefore, I have made the following decision: I am today issuing a statement to the legislature, recommending that the proposed increase be reviewed, rather than ratified, and that the students' position be given a full airing at a new set of hearings in two weeks. This procedure will only be enacted if the students have removed themselves from those locations on campus by this evening, at ten p.m. Further, I will not permit any other "demands" of any kind to be linked to this decision. Students who do not comply will face expulsion.

FEMALE VOICE. Thank you, Governor. I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen, but the Governor will not be...

(JULIAN turns off the set. THEY all sit silent for a moment. HANK wheels himself into the other room. Then, both phones ring. Blackout.)

Scene 9

(Two hours later. The only thing on the oaktag tablet is "support for decision.")

THOMAS. Alright, now. The issue is: do we accept the Governor's ultimatum to end the occupation, and drop all of our other demands. Any objections to three more minutes' discussion before agreeing to the Governor's conditions or not. And on whether the entire group supports the vote.

HANK. I, uh... *(Raises his hand.)*

THOMAS. Hank.

HANK. Please. I apologize for this, but will you please permit me one minute to make a phone call? It's...it relates to this, directly.

THOMAS. Any objections?

(No one speaks.)

You can make your call.

HANK. Thank you.

(HANK goes to the phone, dials, speaks quietly.)

RICARDO. Ya no puedo mas! Let's get moving, so I can get back to my personal life.

THOMAS. This is not the time to discuss our personal lives.

RICARDO. Thomas, you don't even have a personal life.

THOMAS. I don't have a...is that what you...two nights ago, my best friend since eighth grade OD'd. I had to call the ambulance. I had to call the police. I had to tell his parents. But I'm here.

RICARDO. Well, I'm here, too. But my daughter's in a sick bed. Maybe it doesn't matter to you if you get expelled, or suspended, or

whatever. But I have a family to think about, you know?

MELANIE. Ricardo, in the long run, holding the line on tuition...

RICARDO. The “long run”? My entire life is on the line here. Not just my tuition, my life. And my baby’s life. It’s so simple for people like you. You want something, you get it. Not all of us can snap our fingers, and...

JULIAN. I got, I got an email from my, from my lover—and he said that the news about what we’re doing here has galvanized their campus. They’re planning to support us, and they’re behind us all the way.

ROB. What does that have to do with...?

JULIAN. This isn’t only about what we’re doing, here, any more. It’s about integrity versus compromise. We have to look beyond our own personal situations, and see that...

ROB. Fine. My “personal situation” is that I will be \$47,000 in debt when I—\$47,000—when I graduate. And that’s *if* I can hold on to two jobs while I’m in school. So you tell me, will your parents write out a check to cover my tuition, and my rent, and my books, and my...

MELANIE. Relax, will you? Nobody’s throwing you out in the street yet.

ROB. That’s easy for you to say, sitting there with your trust funds, and...

RICARDO. That’s right!

ROB. ...and the gold credit cards, and...

JULIAN. You think having money makes a difference in things like this?

ROB. Yes, I do.

JULIAN. I grew up rich. Rich. And still, it’s guys like you, who are...

ROB. Like me...?

JULIAN. White guys, drop-out security guards following me

around when I'm in a store. This is about being on the outside all the time, all the God damn time, wondering when it's going to hit again.

ROB. I know that.

JULIAN. No. No, you do *not* know that.

ROB. Look, I'm on thin ice here. You guys are all, you people are all, you know, the leaders from your groups. I'm a last-minute fill-in. I don't know if I can...

(HANK finishes his call, re-enters the group.)

MELANIE. Who were you talking to?

HANK. Gail Cook. She works in the Lieutenant Governor's Office. She went to school here four years ago. Here's what she says. The Governor is pissed. He thought he was being fair, recommending a small increase. He thought that'd keep us happy, and obviously, we're not happy. He's getting it in the neck about budget deficits, no money for anything, and college kids enjoying a free ride. He thought he...

ROB. A free ride? Sounds to me like he...

HANK. Can I finish? He thought he was doing us a favor, and we thank him by pulling this. Plus, he was double pissed when he heard about the other demands. The conservatives are pushing him to call out the state police and close the school down, which he doesn't want to do, but he says he will if he has to. And...he will definitely expel anybody still here after ten o'clock tonight.

RICARDO. Will he grant amnesty for all of us?

HANK. She didn't say.

ARLETTA. What about the hearings? Are they for real?

HANK. He will wait on the hearings until they poll the voters. If we give up, he wins. If he expels us instead of calling in the state police, he looks tough but not extreme. Whatever we do, he wins.

ARLETTA. That's why he's still the Governor.

ROB. Shit!

JULIAN. We're no good to anybody if he expels us.

ARLETTA. What?

HANK. Welcome to the real world.

JULIAN. The "real world"? Your real world is not the same as mine.

HANK. Look, all I meant was, for the good of what we're trying to...

JULIAN. Fuck! I'm always responding to that stuff. My whole life. "For the good of..." I fight for poor black kids, because I'm black. I fight for gay kids because I'm gay. My "real world" is Julian. The person. Excuse me, but regardless of who I fuck, or what I look like, don't try to define my reality based on yours.

(THEY are all silent for a moment.)

THOMAS. What time is it?

ROB. It's...ten after nine.

THOMAS. I will take hands for the discussion.

(HANK, ARLETTA, and ROB raise their hands.)

THOMAS. Hank, then Arletta, then Rob.

HANK. We've come a long way here, and it's counterproductive to throw it all away. We got press coverage, we raised the issue, and the Governor responded. Personally. And, we have an offer to bring it before a public hearing, so the politics of the situation are that...

ARLETTA. Forget the politics. I'm tired of hearing about...

THOMAS. Arletta.

ARLETTA. ...tired of hearing about how we...

THOMAS. Arletta? Hank.

HANK. The politics of the situation are that he is not going to completely back down. However much he wants to be fair to students, he's got other pressure groups to deal with. He's up for re-election. We've got to face facts.

ARLETTA. Finished?

HANK. For now.

THOMAS. Arletta.

ARLETTA. Face facts? There's only one real fact—once we stop, all these issues die. All of them. Not just the tuition issue, but all the other concerns we brought out here. The next time around, we're old news. We're an "again" story. "Students again attempted to change policy this week." "The campus was once again the scene of demonstrations."

ROB. I never thought of it that way.

ARLETTA. We finally got their attention here. Act now. That's what I say.

THOMAS. Other comments. Rob?

(ROB thinks a moment, shakes his head "no.")

THOMAS. The issue is: do we accept the Governor's ultimatum to end the occupation, and drop all of our other demands. All those in favor...?

(HANK, ROB, and JULIAN raise their hands. THOMAS then raises his hand. After a moment, RICARDO slowly raises his hand, looking at ARLETTA as he does so.)

THOMAS. Anyone else?

JULIAN. Uhhh...

(JULIAN slowly lowers his hand. Then, ROB slowly lowers his hand.)

THOMAS. Is that it? Three?

HANK. Christ!

ARLETTA. Alright, now.

THOMAS. All...those who oppose?

(ARLETTA, JULIAN, and MELANIE raise their hands. THEY all look at ROB.)

ROB. I'm still not sure.

(They all react with exasperation, anger, or weariness.)

THOMAS. We need to contract for more time. Three minutes?
(*Hearing no objections*) Hands.

(*ARLETTA and HANK raise their hands.*)

Arletta, then Hank.

ARLETTA. Look, I admit that I may have been wrong about fighting for open admissions now.

HANK. Oh.

ARLETTA. But what is at stake here for us...for all of us...is legitimacy. We are, at this point, being treated as a legitimate political factor in the overall budget equation. Our demands have been heard, albeit in a limited way, I grant you. The threat of expulsion is the only real threat they can throw at us. I mean, think about it. When does a person ever really get expelled?

MELANIE. Maybe, if he's been involved in a rape.

ARLETTA. Not even then.

MELANIE. Thank you.

ARLETTA. This is an empty threat, to keep us from building our political influence as students. If we can get them to deal with any of these other issues, any of them, we've gained a foothold that can't be taken away.

HANK. Your strategy is one hundred percent wrong. Of course they take us more seriously now. We told them we had demands, specific demands, written demands, that had to do with tuition increases. But then, we got carried away. We forgot that what a coalition does is focus on one, common...

ARLETTA. You just can't get past your coalition dream, can you?

HANK. What?

ARLETTA. Coalition politics is not the wave of the future. It's the wave of the past. Today...

(*All four together:*)

HANK. If something worked in the past...

ROB. How else can we hope to...

THOMAS. Building alliances with other...

RICARDO. Arletta, no one is saying...

ARLETTA. Today, the objective is power. Look at how your Democrats keep trading away our...limited representation, to appease the conservatives in their party, because they're so sure blacks will stay within the grand "coalition." I'm a pawn, who gets moved around, to suit the political needs of the moment. This is about empowerment. Nobody gives you power. Students, poor students, black or white, will never have any power unless they take it.

ROB. That's probably true. That *is* true.

ARLETTA. And that's what I'm here for. My agenda is to empower students.

HANK. Your agenda is to empower Arletta.

ARLETTA. What do you know about trying to get power? What have you ever known about trying to get power? Okay, you're in a chair. But you're still a white...man...in a chair. I'm trying to get power for students who want a fair chance, who might not have the financial resources, or the opportunities...

HANK. You're trying to reshape this coalition and put yourself at the top of it. I know you too well, Arletta. You have a résumé mind. All you can think about...

MELANIE. Oh, Christ!

RICARDO. That's not fair.

ROB. I don't think you should be...

JULIAN. Making it personal is not the...

HANK. She needs to distinguish herself a little more before she leaves here. And here's her chance. You dare tell me this is about power, about building political influence? You know better. They don't. Everybody else in this room might have some idea of what's going on, what's at stake for you here, but I'm the one who really knows. Yeah, I know about power, about looking for it, about getting it, about holding on to it. You want to aggrandize yourself, okay. Fine. You want to "speak for the powerless." Okay. Fine. But

don't feed this crap about political strategy to these people. Don't try to convince them you've got their interests in mind. Let's admit it, out loud. You know, and I know, that the game here is electoral politics. Who votes, who influences votes, who influences voters. We chose to play that game. Now, now, instead of playing it out, like other politically influential groups, taken seriously, you want to turn this into a protest group, that changes the rules at the last minute, that goes after headlines instead of results, that, that serves as a mouthpiece for the ideas of a few eloquent leaders who can generate a lot of heat, but very, very little light. Well, not on my time, lady! Jesus! This kid stands to lose his financial aid. This guy's got a sick daughter. And you're still trying to lead them into some crusade, and get expelled, and change the whole course of their lives? I'll tell you something. I was about ready to chuck this whole deal a little while ago. This experience has really changed me, much much more than I thought it would. Sure, I want power, just like you. But I don't want to get it the same way. There is a line—and you crossed it. I learned something here. The next time I do this, I'll know better who to work with. It's not single-minded leaders who make up a coalition. It's leaders who know when to put aside their own special interests to make some progress. People who know when to talk, and when to listen. And, lady, that ain't you.

ARLETTA. *(Coldly)* Enemy.

MELANIE. Rob, make up your fucking mind.

(There are a few moments of silence, then ROB slowly gets up, walks to ARLETTA's side, shakes her hand weakly, then walks to HANK's side, and offers his hand.)

ROB. I'm with you, Hank.

(Blackout.)

Scene 10

(The office is empty.)

LANCE. *(Off-stage)* ...have just learned that the students have sent word to the capital, to the Governor, that they will testify at the hearings which will reconsider the tuition hikes. The occupation has

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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