



IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE - AGAIN JULY 19, 2024

A NATIONWIDE EVENT
PRESENTED BY
WRITERS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTIONⁱ
www.writersfordemocraticaction.org/ICHH
AND PARTNERS ACROSS AMERICA

{In 1936, *It Can't Happen Here*, a stage adaptation by Sinclair Lewis of his own bestselling novel, opened simultaneously on 21 stages in 17 states across America on October 27th, one week before that year's presidential election. It served as a warning against the rise of fascism in America. *It Can't Happen Here – Again*, by Writers for Democratic Action, is both an homage to the 1936 production and a call to action now, in 2024. Thank you for joining us with your own production.}

**WRITERS RESIST!
VOTERS VOTE!**

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE – AGAIN!

Presented by Writers for Democratic Action

(FIVE PLAYERS with scripts in front of the gathered audience.)

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

It Can't Happen Here!

PLAYER ONE

A statement!

PLAYER TWO

A declarative statement!

PLAYER THREE

An *ironic* statement!

PLAYER FOUR

It Can't Happen Here!

PLAYER FIVE

A provocation!

PLAYER ONE

A warning!

PLAYER TWO

The ultimate denial of reality!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

It Can't Happen Here!

PLAYER THREE

The title of a novel and play by Sinclair Lewis...

PLAYER FIVE

Which perfectly expresses the complicity

PLAYER THREE

And complacency

PLAYER FIVE

Of America in 1936...

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

And now!

PLAYER FOUR

In 1936, the tide of authoritarian dictatorship was flowing.

PLAYER ONE

In 2024, the tide of authoritarian dictatorship *is* flowing.

PLAYER THREE

In 1936, Adolf Hitler's storm troopers reoccupied the Rhineland, a signal of a forbidden German rearmament that went unopposed.

PLAYER TWO

In 2024, Vladimir Putin began the third year of his full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

PLAYER FIVE

In 1936, Francisco Franco claimed totalitarian powers in Spain, and the brutal Spanish Civil War was ignited.

PLAYER FOUR

In 2024, the war between Israel and Hamas splintered the American Left, threatening its ability to defend democracy. (PAUSE)

PLAYER ONE

In 1936, the Great Purge was underway in the Soviet Union, marked by the murders of 700,000 people, a tsunami of blood that secured the tyranny of Joseph Stalin.

PLAYER THREE

In 2024, Xi Jinping crushed feminist movements in China, silencing women who have accused powerful men of sexual assault. In North Korea, Kim Jung Un spurred women to seek refuge abroad at roughly three times the rate of men. And in Afghanistan, the Taliban's victory has erased twenty years of progress on women's access to education and representation in public office and the workforce.

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

And in the United States of America...

PLAYER TWO

On October 27, 1936, in the United States of America, one week before a presidential election

PLAYER FOUR

An election which would determine not only the fate of the New Deal, but of democracy itself

PLAYER TWO

21 coast-to-coast productions of a new play premiered simultaneously on 21 stages in 17 American cities.ⁱⁱ The play was called:

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

It Can't Happen Here!

PLAYER THREE

Based on the novel by Sinclair Lewis, America's first and at that time only Nobel laureate in literature.

PLAYER TWO

That play, like our performance tonight, asks what happens when dictatorship threatens democracy

PLAYER ONE

And, less obviously,

PLAYER TWO

...what happens when complacency begets complicity.

PLAYER FOUR

(BEAT. SHIFT.) In 1936, Hallie Flanagan was invited to do something big.

PLAYER FIVE

(as HALLIE FLANAGAN)

I was asked by Harry Hopkins, my former classmate at Grinnell, to lead the newly created Federal Theater Project. Harry, wouldn't you know, was head of the Works Progress Administration. Director of America's first and only national theatre? Hey, not bad for a girl from Redfield, South Dakota!

PLAYER FOUR

She immediately commissioned Sinclair Lewis to write a stage adaptation of his novel...

PLAYER FIVE

(as HALLIE FLANAGAN)

"'It Can't Happen Here' because it is a play about American life today. The play says that when dictatorship comes to threaten democracy it comes in an apparently harmless guise, with parades and promises, but that when such dictatorship arrives, the promises are not kept, and the parade grounds become encampments. We as American citizens...should like to do what we can to keep alive the 'free, enquiring, critical spirit' which is the center and core of a democracy."ⁱⁱⁱ

PLAYER ONE

The play opened on the very same night in Birmingham and Denver

PLAYER TWO

Omaha and Los Angeles

PLAYER FOUR

A New York production in Yiddish.

PLAYER ONE

A Spanish production in Tampa.

PLAYER TWO

A black production in Seattle...

PLAYER FOUR

...featuring white actors as the villains.

PLAYER THREE

In an article about the 21 simultaneous productions, *The New York Times* wrote, "Thousands of Americans who do not know what a fascist dictatorship would mean now have an opportunity to find out." ^{iv}

PLAYER ONE

And today, on July 19th 2024

PLAYER FIVE

One day after the third consecutive nomination of Donald J. Trump to be the Republican candidate for President of the United States

PLAYER ONE

Writers for Democratic Action invites us to gather for a reading

PLAYER FIVE

And a call to action.

PLAYER ONE

The play you are now watching

PLAYER FIVE

Like the one staged across the country on October 27, 1936

PLAYER ONE

Is being publicly performed across America in bookstores and public squares

PLAYER FIVE

Theaters and coffee house

PLAYER ONE

Churches and bars

PLAYER FIVE

In multiple cities, towns and villages

PLAYER ONE

In multiple states

PLAYER FIVE

We are gathered together to ask:

PLAYER TWO

What's happening here?

PLAYER THREE

What *has* happened here?

PLAYER FOUR

CAN it happen here?

PLAYER ONE

And...

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

What can we do about it?!

PLAYER ONE

Welcome all!

PLAYER THREE

We so appreciate your presence here.

PLAYER TWO

Thank you for coming.

PLAYER FOUR

Together, we can make a difference.

PLAYER FIVE

Together, we can make our voices heard.

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Welcome all! (The CAST briefly and warmly applauds the audience)

PLAYER ONE

The protagonist of Lewis' play is a small town newspaper editor named,

PLAYER TWO
(As JESSUP)

Doremus Jessup. The Daily Informer. Beulah Valley, Vermont.

PLAYER ONE

The populist candidate for President, running against Franklin Roosevelt, is a character named

PLAYER THREE
(As WINDRIP)

Berzelius Windrip. "Buzz," for short.

PLAYER ONE

On the campaign trail, Buzz Windrip makes a speech:

PLAYER THREE
(As WINDRIP)

"I am just a Common Man! A plain man...darn near as plain and common as Abe Lincoln or that old Virginia hick farmer, George Washington [who] chased the red-coats from the land, by golly, with a pitch-fork!

"Folks were wrong when they thought this trip was to educate the people about Buzz. No. It's *me* that got educated. What grand people I've been meeting. And everywhere I have found the true American people DIVIDED...kept apart by the politicians who in their insensate selfishness befool the very constituents who have placed them on their tinselled thrones. We ought to go forth into the great councils of state, not asking for anything but tellin' 'em!

"If you honor me with your votes, I shall not be president...no, I mean that...NOT BE PRESIDENT AT ALL, but the telephone central through whom every man in this great land can get in touch with every other man so that...for the first time since 1861...we can be joined in one unified nation that will sweep the world."

PLAYER ONE

Doremus Jessup...educated, liberal...

PLAYER TWO

...complacent...

PLAYER ONE

Doremus Jessup, whose belief in reason over emotion naïvely extends to his fellow citizens, concludes:

PLAYER TWO
(As JESSUP)

"It's not so much that I trust Windrip as that I trust that!"

PLAYER THREE

(Confused) Trust what?

PLAYER TWO
(As JESSUP)

(Indicating the audience) That!

PLAYER ONE

Quote from the original stage directions, "With a wide gesture he indicates the valley and the far-off hills."

PLAYER TWO
(As JESSUP)

(With a gesture indicating the audience gathered for this event)

"Look! God's own free, open American country! Do you know how big Texas is? Big as any three European countries put together. This isn't any one-horse European country that a dictator could get hold of. No sir! It's too big! Dictatorship...it can't happen here!" v

PLAYER FIVE

(BEAT. SHIFT.) May 10th, 1933. Berlin. In an effort to cleanse Germany of "un-German" books, 25,000 volumes are burned.

PLAYER ONE

Burn Freud!

PLAYER TWO

Burn Einstein!

PLAYER THREE

Burn Kafka!

PLAYER FOUR

Burn Brecht!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Burn Sinclair Lewis!

PLAYER TWO

December 5, 2023, the Fight Book Bans Act is introduced to the House of Representatives. Congressman Jamie Raskin, quote:

PLAYER FIVE

(as RASKIN)

“America is in the middle of an escalating book ban crisis that requires our full attention and strong response. Sinister campaigns to remove books from our schools and libraries are a hallmark of authoritarian and fascist regimes.”^{vi}

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Ban Atwood!

PLAYER THREE

(as MARGARET ATWOOD)

Ban me? Margaret Atwood? Quote: “I had thought America was against totalitarianisms. If so, surely it is important for young people to be able to recognize signs of them. One of those signs is book-banning. Need I say more?”^{vii}

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Ban Morrison!

PLAYER FOUR

(as TONI MORRISON)

Ban me? Toni Morrison? Quote: “I come from a race of people for whom at one time in this country it was illegal to be taught to read...white people who taught Black people how to read were taking the risk of being punished...I think the same sensibilities that informed those people to make it a criminal act for Black people to read are the ancestors of the same people who are making it a criminal act for their own children to read and I don't see a great deal of difference between that.”^{viii}

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Ban Henry Louis Gates!

PLAYER ONE
(as HENRY LOUIS GATES)

Ban me? Quote: "Censorship is to art as lynching is to justice." ix

PLAYER TWO

But can it happen *here*?

PLAYER FOUR

It IS happening here!

(The following three speeches are spoken simultaneously in an attempt to undermine PLAYER FOUR's alarmist statement)

PLAYER ONE

Whoa there, slow down!

PLAYER TWO

Nothing like that is happening here!

PLAYER THREE

It just *looks* like it's happening here, but it's really not!

PLAYER TWO

(Coming over the top of the previous three simultaneous lines) Oh-kaaay *maybe* it's happening just a little bit in "Florida." Okay? And, like, "Texas-or-whatever?"

PLAYER THREE

But this is America!

PLAYER ONE

This is America!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS except PLAYER FOUR

It Can't Happen Here!

PLAYER FOUR

Well, that's a relief! Except...but...really? Why are you so certain it can't?

PLAYER THREE

November 12, 2023...at a rally in Claremont, New Hampshire...

PLAYER FOUR

The former President of the United States, campaigning for his third consecutive nomination to be Republican candidate for President, said:

PLAYER ONE

(As TRUMP)

"We pledge to you that we will root out the communists, Marxists, fascists, and the radical left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country that lie and steal and cheat on elections. The threat from outside forces is far less sinister, dangerous, and grave than the threat from within." x

PLAYER FOUR

Threat from within? What does that mean? Who is he talking about?

PLAYER THREE

(BEAT. SHIFT.) By Act III of "It Can't Happen Here," Doremus Jessup is tortured and imprisoned in a concentration camp for seditious writing, critical of the Windrip administration.

PLAYER FOUR

He dreams of escape to a better place.

PLAYER TWO

(As JESSUP)

"Think of being in a place where you can speak right out without looking back over your shoulder! Think of...*Montreal*." xi

PLAYER FIVE

(As DOROTHY THOMPSON, warmly to assembled)

Hi. Thank you so much for coming. Your concern...your patriotism (and my, *that's* a tricky word!) is deeply...moving to me. To my memory. My name is Dorothy Thompson. I lived from 1893 to 1961 and enjoy the wonderful distinction of being the first American journalist to be expelled from Nazi Germany in 1934. I wrote the book, "I Saw Hitler" (out of print, alas, but quite the sensation at the time!) and described the man thus: "He is formless. He is inconsequential and voluble, ill poised and insecure. He is the very prototype of the little man." Ring any bells?

I was married to Sinclair Lewis. He also wrote a book which was quite a sensation at the time. But *his* is still very much in print, the bastard.

What did I learn from my time in Germany?

"When *our* dictator turns up, you can depend on it that he will be one of the boys. He will stand for everything traditionally American. And nobody will say 'Heil' to him, nor call him 'Fuhrer' or 'Duce.' They will greet him with one great big, universal, democratic, sheeplike bleat of 'O.K, Chief! Fix it like you wanna, Chief! Oh Kaaay!'" ^{xii}

My greatest concern, in 1936 yes, but for all of you in 2024 perhaps even more so, is this: You have moved so far "away from an informed public to a persuaded public."

"When liberty is taken away by force, it *can* be restored by force. [But] when it is relinquished by default, it can never be recovered."

PLAYER FOUR

(as DOROTHY PARKER)

Dorothy Thompson! As I live and breathe! And I don't! Not since 1967, may I rest in peace. I'm the other Dorothy. The funny one. I'm Dorothy Parker. And I hear you. "When editors asked me what I was doing to combat Fascism?...I could only answer...not enough. My last editor asked, 'God damn it, why can't you be funny again?'" ^{xiii}

PLAYER ONE

In 1936, Dorothy Parker helped found the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. When she died in 1967, she bequeathed her estate to Martin Luther King, Jr.

PLAYER FOUR
(as DOROTHY PARKER)

Like so many writers who were anti-fascist activists in the 1930s, I was blacklisted in the 1950s by the distinguished Republican from Wisconsin, Senator Joe McCarthy...

PLAYER ONE
(As MCCARTHY)

"I have here in my hand a list of two hundred and five people that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party..."

PLAYER FOUR
(as DOROTHY PARKER)

One of many times when it *did* happen here. (Beat) God damn it, why can't I make that sound funny?

PLAYER TWO

(BEAT. SHIFT.) Before the internet

PLAYER THREE

And podcasts

PLAYER FOUR

And blogs!

PLAYER TWO

Long before eight-track tapes

PLAYER THREE

And television

PLAYER FOUR

And color movies

PLAYER TWO

There was only radio!

PLAYER ONE

And in 1936, if you wanted to win the presidency, you absolutely had to have the support of

PLAYER FOUR
(as COUGHLIN)

Father Charles Coughlin

PLAYER TWO

“The Radio Priest”

PLAYER THREE

Demagogue and master of the medium

PLAYER TWO

Reaching a quarter of all Americans every week.

PLAYER THREE

In the play, Lewis calls him, “Pastor Paul Peter Prang.”

PLAYER TWO

Today we might call him “Fox”

PLAYER FIVE

Spoiler Alert: FDR did NOT have the support of either Father Charles Coughlin...

PLAYER FOUR
(as COUGHLIN)

Of course he did not have my support. “Democracy in America is doomed. This is our last election. It is fascism or communism. We are at the crossroads. I take the road to fascism.”

PLAYER TWO

Father! What?

PLAYER FOUR
(as COUGHLIN)

“And when we get through with the Jews of America, they’ll think the treatment they received in Germany was nothing.”^{xiv}

PLAYER FIVE

...nor did FDR have the support Pastor Paul Peter Prang, the fictional Father in Lewis’ play whose imitation of Coughlin wasn’t terribly exaggerated.

PLAYER ONE
(as PRANG)

I am Pastor Peter Paul Prang and while “I (have) no quarrel with individual Jews...those subversive international organizations which, unfortunately, are so largely Jewish, must be driven with whips and scorpions from off the face of the earth.”^{xv}

PLAYER THREE

Today we have Tucker Carlson

PLAYER FIVE
(as TUCKER CARLSON)

“(Kamala) Harris is a member of the new master race. She must be shown maximum respect at all times, no matter what she says or does.”^{xvi}

PLAYER THREE

And Alex Jones

PLAYER TWO
(as ALEX JONES)

“Unfortunately folks we gotta help the innocents and face the demons that have taken over. We gotta face it. Most of your top government people are child rapists, murdering scum. I’ve told you everything else, you’ve seen it come true. It’s a pedophile army.”^{xvii}

PLAYER THREE

And a former

PLAYER FOUR

(Drawn out for emphasis) Pre-si-dent of the U-ni-ted States!

PLAYER THREE

Ordered by a Manhattan jury to pay eighty-three million dollars for defaming a woman he *raped* in a department store.

PLAYER TWO

What was the reaction of the former...

PLAYER FOUR

(Drawn out more for even greater emphasis) Pre-si-dent of the U-ni-ted States!

PLAYER TWO

...as he left the courtroom?

PLAYER ONE
(As TRUMP)

"This is not America."

PLAYER FIVE

Actually, it is.

PLAYER ONE
(As TRUMP)

"This is NOT America." ^{xviii}

PLAYER FIVE

It is, actually. Yup. Sure is. Nobody above the law? Mm-hm, yeah, that's pretty much how it's supposed to work actually.

PLAYER ONE
(As TRUMP)

(Tantrum) This is not AMERICA! This is NOT America! It's not, it's not, it's NOT!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Yes! It! Is!

PLAYER FOUR

Fearing for his precarious hold on power, in Sinclair Lewis' play President Buzz Windrip raises an armed militia

PLAYER THREE

An armed militia which is independent of established government agencies

PLAYER FOUR

An armed militia which is directly accountable to President Windrip

PLAYER TWO

An armed militia which imprisons

PLAYER FIVE

Assaults

PLAYER THREE

And murders American citizens who disagree in any way with President Windrip.

PLAYER ONE

An armed militia with the sole function of intimidating dissent.

PLAYER FOUR

In Sinclair Lewis' fiction, they are called:

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

"The Minute Men."

PLAYER FIVE

In America in 2024, they are called:

Army of God
PLAYER THREE

Aryan Nation
PLAYER TWO

Boogaloo Bois
PLAYER ONE

Oath Keepers
PLAYER FOUR

White League
PLAYER FIVE

Proud Boys
PLAYER THREE

Patriot Movement
PLAYER TWO

Imperial Klans of America
PLAYER ONE

QAnon
PLAYER FOUR

All awaiting instructions from their Commander in Chief
PLAYER FIVE

PLAYER ONE
(as TRUMP)

“I am your voice. I am your warrior. I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged or betrayed...”

PLAYER FIVE
Instructions which may be issued on January sixth...

PLAYER ONE
(as TRUMP)

“I am your retribution.”^{xix}

PLAYER FIVE
Or on any other day...

PLAYER ONE
(as TRUMP)

“Stand back and stand by.”^{xx}

PLAYER FIVE
(BEAT. SHIFT.) Sinclair Lewis ended his play “It Can’t Happen Here” with the admonishment: “Remember everything. Remember America.”^{xxi}

PLAYER FOUR
But *what* America, exactly, are we to remember?

PLAYER TWO
In the America I remember, I can check out any book from the library and read all the possibilities. I imagine freely. No books are banned or burning in the America I remember.

PLAYER THREE
In the America I remember, I can seek help when my body and future are in danger. I have choice.

PLAYER FOUR

I remember never having a lockdown drill. Never having heard the words “school shooting.” I can go to school unafraid in the America I remember.

PLAYER FIVE

The America I remember opens its golden door and cries, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

PLAYER ONE

I remember all of our votes being counted, fair and free elections being fair and free. America, I remember.

PLAYER TWO

Remember with us.

PLAYER THREE

Remember everything.

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Remember America.

PLAYER FOUR

But how? (BEAT) How are we going to do that?

PLAYER TWO
(as WALTER WINCHELL)

(BEAT. SHIFT.) “Good evening Mister and Mrs. America, from border to border and coast to coast and all the ships at sea. This is Walter Winchell. Let’s get to press...”

PLAYER ONE

Remember that Sinclair Lewis’ play was seen across the nation one week before the 1936 presidential election...

PLAYER TWO
(as WALTER WINCHELL)

“The election results are in. President Roosevelt has carried every state in the nation, except two...”

PLAYER FOUR

Remember America.

PLAYER TWO
(as WALTER WINCHELL)

“As Maine goes, so goes Vermont.”

PLAYER FOUR

Remember your sacred duty as a citizen of this nation.

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

(To AUDIENCE as 2024 citizens) Vote!

In November, 1936...

(ALL FIVE PLAYERS turn upstage. ALL FIVE PLAYERS mime pulling the lever in a voting booth. ALL FIVE PLAYERS then turn downstage.)

...WE DID!

PLAYER THREE
(as FDR)

This is Franklin Delano Roosevelt and it is my privilege to serve as your newly re-elected president. “I see a great nation upon a great continent...but here is a challenge to our democracy...I see tens of millions of its citizens...denied the necessities of life. One third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished... We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of this country’s interest and concern... I shall do my utmost to speak their purpose and to do their will...to give light to them that sit in darkness and to guide our feet onto the way of peace.” ^{xxii}

PLAYER FIVE

Remember America!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Remember America!

PLAYER ONE

But what do we do?

(ALL FIVE PLAYERS clap four beats together in unison to create a steady rhythm which becomes the tempo for the following call and response section. ALL FIVE PLAYERS repeat every "What do we do" encouraging the AUDIENCE to join in.)

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

What do we do?

PLAYER FOUR

Pay attention!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

What do we do?

PLAYER TWO

Get involved!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

What do we do?

PLAYER ONE

Ask a question!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

What do we do?

PLAYER THREE

Read!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

What do we do?

Listen closely!
PLAYER FIVE

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Give respect!
PLAYER FOUR

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Challenge authority!
PLAYER TWO

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Think!
PLAYER THREE

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Say their names!
PLAYER FIVE

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Believe women!
PLAYER FOUR

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Stay awake!
PLAYER TWO

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Act!
PLAYER THREE

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Open your mind!
PLAYER FIVE

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Get the facts!
PLAYER FOUR

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Show up!
PLAYER ONE

What do we do?
ALL FIVE PLAYERS

PLAYER THREE

Vote!

PLAYER FIVE

What do we do?

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Vote!

PLAYER FOUR

What do we do?

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Vote!

PLAYER TWO

What do we do?

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

Vote!

WHAT DO WE DO?

VOTE!

PLAYER ONE

We are the Writers for Democratic Action and we approve this gathering. Thank you for coming.

PLAYER FIVE

It must not happen here!

ALL FIVE PLAYERS

GET OUT THE VOTE!

=THE END=

ENDNOTES

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- ⁱ Script by Wesley Savick, James Carroll and Rachel DeWoskin for Writers for Democratic Action
- ⁱⁱ Sinclair Lewis & John C. Moffitt, *It Can't Happen Here*, Federal Theater Playscript, September 18, 1936
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/mar/05/i-am-your-retribution-trump-rules-supreme-at-cpac-as-he-relaunches-bid-for-white-house>
- ^{iv} <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-joe-biden-race-and-ethnicity-donald-trump-chris-wallace-0b32339da25fbc9e8b7c7c7066a1db0f>
- ^v Sinclair Lewis & John C. Moffitt, *It Can't Happen Here*, Federal Theater Playscript, September 18, 1936
- ^{vi} Adam Hochschild, "As Fascism Threatened Europe, an Ambitious Play Warned Americans to Pay Attention," *The Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2023, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/fascism-threatened-europe-play-warned-americans-federal-theater-project-180983051/>
- ^{vii} Cited in Susan Quinn, *The Furious Improvisation: How the WPA and a Cast of Thousands Made High Art out of Desperate Times*, Walker & Co., 2008, pp. 120-121
- ^{viii} Adam Hochschild, "As Fascism Threatened Europe, an Ambitious Play Warned Americans to Pay Attention," *The Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2023
- ^{ix} <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/745726-censorship-is-to-art-as-lynching-is-to-justice>
- ^x <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/11/12/trump-rally-vermin-political-opponents/>
- ^{xi} Sinclair Lewis & John C. Moffitt, *It Can't Happen Here*, Federal Theater Playscript, September 18, 1936
- ^{xii} Cited in Helen Thomas *Watchdogs of Democracy?* 2006, p. 172. See also Nancy Cott, *Fighting Words: The Bold American Journalists Who Brought the World Home Between Wars*, NY: Basic, 2020
<https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/nancy-f-cott/fighting-words/9781541699311/?lens=basic-books>
- ^{xiii} Norman Mathews. Citing *Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?* <http://normanmathewsauthor.com/dorothy-parker-on-racism-socialism-and-fascism/>
- ^{xiv} <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/exploring-hate/2022/03/09/today-in-history-the-father-coughlin-story/#:~:text=“When%20we%20get%20through%20with,This%20is%20our%20last%20election>
- ^{xv} Sinclair Lewis & John C. Moffitt, *It Can't Happen Here*, Federal Theater Playscript, September 18, 1936
- ^{xvi} <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/01/17/tucker-carlson-kamala-harris-master-race/>
- ^{xvii} <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1093953/quotes/>
- ^{xviii} <https://news.sky.com/story/donald-trump-says-this-is-not-america-as-he-testifies-for-three-minutes-in-e-jean-carroll-trial-13056443>
- ^{xix} <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/mar/05/i-am-your-retribution-trump-rules-supreme-at-cpac-as-he-relaunches-bid-for-white-house>
- ^{xx} <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-joe-biden-race-and-ethnicity-donald-trump-chris-wallace-0b32339da25fbc9e8b7c7c7066a1db0f>
- ^{xxi} Sinclair Lewis & John C. Moffitt, *It Can't Happen Here*, Federal Theater Playscript, September 18, 1936
- ^{xxii} FDR, Second Inaugural, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos2.asp

= NOTE TO THE PLAYERS =

Thank you for joining our nationwide production of *It Can't Happen Here – Again*. We are very grateful for the generosity of your talent, time and commitment.

The show needs a minimum of FIVE PLAYERS. The show could probably accommodate as many as twenty players if the company involved is willing to reassign lines in a way which makes sense for your production. Whatever the size of your cast, each PLAYER in the show enacts a version of him/her/them-self as well as a variety of characters, contemporary and historical. It would be wonderful if you could recruit *actors* to be PLAYERS, but anyone who is undaunted by public speaking (i.e., teachers, activists, writers, clergy, etc.) and who supports the gesture we are creating is an excellent choice.

We support your creative freedom in preparing your performance of this text. We encourage you to keep your production simple, prioritizing both the connection your PLAYERS are making with the text as well as the connection your PLAYERS are making with your audience.

We make only one request: We urge you to AVOID IMPERSONATIONS of the contemporary and historical characters. Speak their lines in your own voices. We are especially concerned about the depiction of TRUMP. An impersonation, however well-intended, may have the unanticipated effect of creating a comical, endearing character. We appreciate how tempting it is to lampoon him with a well-executed impersonation but we overwhelmingly prefer that his WORDS come through, uninflected, as the authoritarian statements they plainly are. We need the full impact of his rhetoric to land on the audience without being unintentionally softened by comic effect.

Inspire your audiences! Have fun! Thank you!

= NOTE TO THE PRODUCERS =

This text should be embargoed until our nationwide production date, July 19th, 2024. Please circulate only as needed to prepare for committed productions.

A “committed production” agrees:

1. To confirm your plan to produce the piece and to let us know the name and address of the venue where it will be performed. Contact us at WDApresentsICHH@gmail.com
2. To charge no admission fee for the event. We do, however, encourage productions to solicit funds for a get-out-the-vote non-profit organization of their choice.

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3. To use the script to encourage public discussion about getting out the vote.
 4. To report back to us about attendance and audience response.
 5. To provide us with copies of any video or photographic record of the performance for our use in get-out-the-vote social media promotion.
 6. To join us in repeating this event on October 27, 2024, eighty-eight years to the day after *It Can't Happen Here* opened nationwide in 1936.

= ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS =

On October 24, 2011, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the 1936 performances of *It Can't Happen Here*, there were nationwide readings sponsored by Dell'Arte International and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, organized by the actor Darryl Henriques. WDA acknowledge a debt to Mr. Henriques, from whom we obtained the poster reproductions on our title page. We had invaluable advice from Allie Mulholland, Artistic Director of The ReGroup Theater in New York, and from Professor Sally Parry of Illinois State University, Executive Director of the Sinclair Lewis Society. WDA gratefully acknowledge debts to them as well.