

The Real American Dream: A Play for the Take Back Your Time Movement

By Katy Fitzpatrick  
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*A MAN stands holding a sign that says "The End of Time is Here!"*

MAN

The end of time is here! Time is gone! Sped up faster and faster by technology until it disappeared! No time to eat, no time to read, no time to exercise, no time to talk, no time to vote, no time to recycle, no time to care! To live without time is to live without free will, chained to the merciless march of digital clocks! A death march!

MICHELLE

Oh, get a life!

MAN

You don't believe me?

*12 CHORUS MEMBERS are arranged in a large circle which takes up the entire performance space. They should be masked and gender-neutral to make the journeys around the circle as symbolic as possible. Twelve different "stops" are placed at the places where the numbers of a clock face would go. At each of these twelve numbers a different activity takes place and the chorus members hold signs with the following:*

1. Birth
2. Infancy
3. Childhood
4. Elementary School
5. College
6. Career
7. Sex
8. Marriage
9. Parenthood
10. Retirement
11. Divorce
12. Death

*A sculpture of a dollar sign stands in the center of the circle. A pipeline runs to it from offstage. The pipe is clearly marked "CHEAP OIL".*

*MICHELLE enters and stands in the middle of the circle.*

MAN

This is your life, Michelle.

*MICHELLE, attached to the center of the circle by a piece of rope fastened around the sculpture of a dollar sign, walks to number one.*

MICHELLE (at number 1 – her speech is fairly slow)

I was born in 1957 in Seattle, Washington, where my grandmother is descended from the original Mercer girls who helped to civilize the port. My father once caught a giant octopus in Puget Sound but I don't remember what he did with it. I went home from the hospital to the Ballard neighborhood.

(at number 2)

Mom always said Miss Eleanor from across the street was the one who taught me how to walk by holding out a penny for me to come after as I scooted across the floor. Miss Eleanor was a darling neighbor, always had a plate of home made cookies.

(at number 3)

Before long I was digging starfish on the beach and making bamboo forts in the backyard with my gang of neighborhood kids, running around playing squid and fisherman before

(at number 4)

I started at elementary school and life got more serious, learning the three rs, plus one more for recess.

(at number 5)

But then I knew I needed to get into the best college, so I was studying really hard

(at number 6)

For my impressively lucrative technology consultant career.

(at number 7)

Then I lost my virginity with John,

(at number 8)

Got married to Alex,

(at number 9)

Had a baby,

(at number 10)

Roth or traditional?

(at number 11)

Got divorced.

(at number 12)

Died

*Collapses on the ground.*

MAN

See for yourself.

MICHELLE

Get a job, buddy.

MAN (*points to LISA*)

At least listen for the sake of your children! It will be worse for her!

*LISA also begins from the center of the circle with the rope attached to the dollar sculpture. Like MICHELLE, she also travels from number to number with increasing speed.*

LISA (at number 1)

I was born in a hospital somewhere in Minnesota.

(at number 2)

Walked when the books said I should.

(at number 3)

Had nice playdates.

(at number 4)

Learned 3 rs,

(at number 5)

Studied hard ,

(at number 6)

Job.

(at number 7)

Ahhhhhhhhh.

(at number 8)

Uh-huh.

(at number 9)

Ahhh!

(at number 10)

Ahh!

(at number 11)

Ah!

(at number 12)

*Collapses on the ground.*

MICHELLE

Stop! Just stop! You should be arrested, you –

*The circle swirls around her and she awakes with a start. The man is now a newscaster for a morning news show.*

MICHELLE

Ugh! What a bad dream! Oh, shoot, I overslept! I'm gonna be late for work!

BROADCASTER

And finally this morning, a story on the increasing speed at which Americans live their lives. A recent study by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average American spends over 1800 hours a year working. This daily time crunch creates the perception that our lives are moving at an ever increasing speed. Many Americans speak of the increasing competitiveness of all aspects of life, from preschool to Wall Street. The fear of falling behind in an already sluggish economy motivates many to run faster and faster.

MICHELLE

Lisa, honey, are you up yet? Lisa? Come on, I'm going to be late for work!

LISA

Oh no, Mom, I have a problem!

MICHELLE

What's the matter?

LISA

I forgot to do my math after ballet and softball last night!

MICHELLE

Lisa!

LISA

I'm sorry, I forgot and then I went to bed without thinking –

MICHELLE

Lisa, you can't forget to do your homework, that's so irresponsible!

LISA

Mom, I-

MICHELLE

You know better! You'll have to do it in the car on the way to school.

LISA

Ok, but –

MICHELLE

No buts, that's what we'll do. And hurry and get dressed, Mommy's already running late!

*The twelve chorus members of the clock begin lightly jogging in a circle around the dollar statue. MICHELLE and LISA are "in the car" behind a steering wheel in the middle of the circle.. As the CHORUS moves they continually expand the circumference of the circle. As the circle expands they are forced to move faster.*

CHORUS MEMBER 1

Quarter earnings .1% better than this time last year.

CHORUS MEMBER 3

We've just opened our Republic of Palau office to compete more effectively in the South Pacific market.

LISA

Oh no!

MICHELLE

What?

CHORUS MEMBER 2

We need to say ahead of German and Japanese companies

LISA

They're word problems!

CHORUS MEMBER 4

So we're expanding

CHORUS MEMBER 7

and streamlining

MICHELLE

Lisa, quit whining, just do them!

CHORUS MEMBER 11

which means more work

CHORUS MEMBER 12

for a smaller staff

LISA

I am but these are hard! They even have decimals!

CHORUS MEMBER 5

Cut labor costs! Stay ahead of the Brazilians!

CHORUS MEMBER 6

You thought globalization would make it easier?

CHORUS MEMBER 1

Banker's hours are now 24-7!

LISA

If Gordon makes \$1.50 an hour and works for 3 hours a day, how much does he make in a week?

MICHELLE

Think it through, Lisa. How many days in a week?

LISA

Seven.

MICHELLE

Ok, so three times seven is...?

LISA

Twenty-one.

MICHELLE

And how much does he make in one hour?

LISA

One-fifty.

MICHELLE

Ok, so –

LISA

Mom, I didn't eat any breakfast!

*Michelle slams on the breaks. The circle reverses direction.*

MICHELLE

Why not?!

LISA

I forgot!

MICHELLE

How did you forget to eat breakfast?!

LISA

Because I was thinking about my math problems!

MICHELLE

Lisa, you are going to be grounded for the rest of the week! Do you know how late I'm going to be for work because you keep forgetting your responsibilities?

LISA

I'm sorry, Mom, I really am –

MICHELLE

There's a McDonald's, we'll get you some breakfast.

*MICHELLE runs from the circle, which continues to spin, to the center, where the \$ sculpture is. SHE throws down some money and takes a Happy Meal from behind it. SHE gives it to LISA, who leaves the packaging at the front of the stage and rejoins the circle.*

LISA

Thanks, Mom.

MICHELLE

I'll see you after school, ok? Don't forget to let the dog out when you get home!

LISA

Ok, bye!

*LISA joins the running circle. MICHELLE also joins the circle. SHE is now at work.*

CHORUS MEMBER 3

You're late!

MICHELLE

I know, I'm sorry!

CHORUS MEMBER 10

The London exchange waits for no one! They're nine hours ahead of us already!

CHORUS MEMBER 9

Hey, nice purse? Where'd you get it?

MICHELLE

The Luis Vuitton in Short Hills.

CHORUS MEMBER 9

Yeah, the overtime at the end of last month was nice!

CHORUS MEMBER 4

Did you hear the latest numbers from China? Unbelievable market!

CHORUS MEMBER 8

The service managers' meeting is starting now!

CHORUS MEMBER 3

You're late!

CHORUS MEMBER 2

Is the report on the closed accounts finished?

CHORUS MEMBER 11

You haven't finished the agenda for the next meeting!

CHORUS MEMBER 5

You had the whole weekend, Michelle!

MICHELLE

I'm sorry, I'm working on it, it won't happen again!

CHORUS MEMBER 12  
Did you see this report on production costs?

CHORUS MEMBER 8  
The budget meeting started ten minutes ago, Michelle!

CHORUS MEMBER 3  
You're late!

CHORUS MEMBER 7  
You're unprepared!

CHORUS MEMBER 4  
You're never on top of your game!

MICHELLE  
I'm so sorry, I'll be done in a second, I just forgot –

CHORUS MEMBER 2  
Where is she?

CHORUS MEMBER 8  
The security meeting is starting!

MICHELLE  
I just need ten minutes –

CHORUS MEMBER 3  
We need you now!

MICHELLE  
To finish what I've started –

CHORUS  
NOW!

MICHELLE  
I'm sorry! I'm coming!

CHORUS MEMBER 1  
These changes will need to be implemented as soon as possible –

CHORUS MEMBER 6  
To better serve our customers with greater efficiency.

MICHELLE

Goodnight, see you tomorrow.

*The circle runs. MICHELLE gets in the car. SHE puts down the steering wheel in the trash pile.*

MICHELLE

Lisa? Lisa I'm home!

LISA

Mom! (*SHE comes running to the center of the circle*). Mom, the TV broke!

MICHELLE

It broke? What do you mean it broke?

LISA

All the color goes away sometimes.

MICHELLE

What?

LISA

I'll just be watching my show and then all of a sudden the color's gone!

MICHELLE

Well, we've had that TV for three years and it was cheap to begin with –

LISA

Can you fix it?

MICHELLE

Ha ha! No honey, I think we'll have to buy a new one.

LISA

Really? Can we get a flat screen?

MICHELLE

I don't know, maybe.

LISA

Morgan has one and its really cool because they can store the video games behind it.

MICHELLE

Wow. Are you hungry for dinner?

LISA

Yeah. Is Dad coming home?

MICHELLE

No, he's still on his business trip, remember?

LISA

Yeah.

MICHELLE

How does pizza sound? And then we can go TV shopping before your violin lesson, ok?

LISA

Ok!

*They get in the car. The circle runs.*

CHORUS MEMBER 9

Save now! Two extra large pizzas with extra topping, only nineteen ninety-nine!

CHORUS MEMBER 5

You don't want to miss out on these incredible savings!

*They get a pizza box and put it in the trash pile*

CHOURS MEMBER 10

All regular and flat screen TVs on sale now!

CHORUS MEMBER 2

Get HDTV now for a fraction of the original price!

*They get a TV box, put it in the trash pile.*

CHORUS MEMBER 6

These prices won't last, so buy now and save big!

*MICHELLE'S cell phone rings. SHE answers*

MICHELLE

Sorry, Honey. (to phone)What? At 4.8%? In two weeks? That's ridiculous, how can - Now? I'm about to eat dinner. Are you sure? Ok, yeah, I'll be there. (*SHE hangs up*) Sorry, Lisa, I have to go into work. Can you call your violin teacher and tell her we'll have to skip this week?

LISA

Yeah.

MICHELLE

Thanks, honey, I really appreciate it. I'll be home in a few hours.

LISA

Ok, bye, Mom!

*MICHELLE rejoins the running circle. LISA rejoins the circle. It runs for a moment before MICHELLE gets to the front of the stage and jogs in place.*

CHORUS MEMBER 4

We need that earnings report tonight or the Sony deal isn't coming through!

CHORUS MEMBER 8

Where's last quarter's file?

CHORUS MEMBER 3

We don't have time for mistakes, people!

*MICHELLE'S cell phone rings.*

LISA

Are you there, Mom?

MICHELLE

What? Of course, honey.

LISA (*from downstage*)

I'm sorry, but I feel really sick.

MICHELLE

You're sick? What's the matter?

LISA

I just puked my pizza.

MICHELLE

Ohhh, honey.

LISA

Can you come home?

MICHELLE

I'll do my best, sweetie. (*as she tries to leave the circle*) Excuse me, I need to – Sorry, but I have another - Uhhh, when I get there, I can't – excuse – hey, I just –

CHORUS MEMBER 3

Where are you going?

MICHELLE

My daughter is sick –

CHORUS MEMBER 1

But the report isn't done!

MICHELLE

I'm sorry, it'll be done by lunch tomorrow, I need to take care of my –

CHORUS MEMBER 7

We don't care about your daughter!

MICHELLE

But I do!

*MICHELLE begins to move less efficiently than her counterparts. SHE continually looks around, causing her to stumble and slow down. Various chorus members react*

MICHELLE (throwing cell phone into trash pile)

I can't do it anymore!

CHORUS MEMBER 10

Can't do what?

MICHELLE

This! This running around faster and faster in bigger and bigger circles like a chicken with my head cut off!

CHORUS MEMBER 11

What will you do?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

How will you make any money?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Think about what you're giving up! Two cars, a boat, nice dinners out, a closet full of shoes – it's the American dream!

CHORUS MEMBER 4

Do you know how many people drown in the Rio Grande every year trying to get here so they can have a shot at your life?

CHORUS MEMBER 2

What if everyone did what you're doing, huh? Then the economy would crash and we'd be poor like the rest of the world!

MICHELLE  
I quit! I'm exhausted and I quit! I only get four hours of sleep a night –

CHORUS MEMBER 1  
Take some caffeine pills.

MICHELLE  
I'm overweight –

CHORUS MEMBER 3  
Take diet pills!

MICHELLE  
I never see my husband -

CHORUS MEMBER 9  
Get a divorce!

MICHELLE  
My daughter is home alone all the time -

CHORUS MEMBER 11  
Put her in day care! Put her in sports!

MICHELLE  
My house is completely cluttered –

CHORUS MEMBER 5  
Buy a bigger one!

MICHELLE  
I'm afraid I'll die in my tiny car on the I-5 –

CHORUS MEMBER 11  
Buy a bigger one!

MICHELLE  
I can't. I'm too far in debt!

CHORUS MEMBER 4  
Get a new credit card!

MICHELLE  
I just want to be happy!

CHORUS MEMBER 8

Take Prozac!

MICHELLE

I am! It's not working!

CHORUS MEMBER 7

You're living the good life!

MICHELLE

I'm living in a garbage pile!

CHORUS MEMBER 2

You're thinking too much about it all!

CHORUS MEMBER 5

Just go back to work. Do something productive.

MICHELLE

Isn't thinking productive?

ALL CHORUS

Does it grow the economy?

BROADCASTER

A small percentage of the American workforce is frustrated with their hyper-paced lifestyle. Michelle recently downshifted, quitting her job as a technology consultant and opting instead to work part time as a school secretary. Her reason is simple.

MICHELLE

I just didn't have time to think anymore.

*MICHELLE and LISA sweep off the trash pile to a corner of the stage where they bag it up themselves and play with the TV box. The remaining runners skittishly begin moving again, talking as they do so:*

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Strange.

CHORUS MEMBER 12

Weirdo hippie.

CHORUS MEMBER 10

Liberal snob.

*MICHELLE and Lisa are separated from the circle.*

Crap!  
MICHELLE

What's the matter, Mom?  
LISA

Oh, it's ok. I'm just balancing the checkbook.  
MICHELLE

What's that mean?  
LISA

It means paying all the bills and trying not to overdraw the bank account.  
MICHELLE

Oh. Like what?  
LISA

Like the house payment, the car payment, the credit card company –  
MICHELLE

Can you help me with my homework?  
LISA

In a little bit, Lisa. Ok, if Mommy makes 1600 a month at her new job and has two grand in bills to pay, will she get nasty phone calls from the bank or not?  
MICHELLE

Is that like missing recess because I didn't do my homework?  
LISA

*The CHORUS runs faster as they work each other into a frenzy, insulting the dissident.*

Welfare-state lover!  
CHORUS MEMBER 3

We defeated communism you know!  
CHORUS MEMBER 7

Idle hands are the devil's workshop!  
CHORUS MEMBER 1

Ok, now you add the chocolate chips.  
MICHELLE

LISA

How come we never made cookies before?

MICHELLE

Didn't have time, I guess.

LISA

Can we make them again tomorrow?

MICHELLE

Tomorrow! Lisa, these won't be gone yet by tomorrow!

LISA

Oh. Can we make something else then?

MICHELLE

Sure. Lisa, would you like to go camping this weekend?

LISA

Like in the realio trulio woods?

MICHELLE

Yup. In the realio trulio woods.

LISA

Cool! But I have my soccer tournament on Saturday!

MICHELLE

Ohhh, you're right. Shoot. Well maybe you can just play the morning game.

LISA

Ok. But Mom, then I won't be in the top 5 goal scorers anymore.

MICHELLE

You never know. You might still be if you only play in the morning.

LISA

But everyone who's there will have a better shot than me in the afternoon.

MICHELLE

I understand, honey. But I think you need to take the chance and go camping.

CHORUS MEMBER 9

You're giving in to the terrorist demands!

CHORUS MEMBER 3

If you don't like America we won't be sorry to see you go!

LISA

Whoa! This is soo cool, Mom!

MICHELLE

C'mere and get the sleeping bags, ok?

LISA

Are we goanna see bears? I really wanna see a bear!

MICHELLE

No, you don't, Lisa. Trust me.

LISA

Have you ever seen a bear, Mom?

MICHELLE

No.

LISA

How come?

MICHELLE

I haven't been camping before.

LISA

Why not?

MICHELLE

Never had the time, I guess.

LISA

Are we going to Disneyland when school's out like last year?

MICHELLE

Not this time, honey.

LISA

Why not?

MICHELLE

Well, you know how Mom works at the school now?

LISA

Yeah, so we can go longer than just a weekend, right?

MICHELLE

Well, no, because I make a lot less money.

LISA

Ohhhh. But isn't camping really expensive?

MICHELLE

Nooo, actually it's a lot cheaper than Disneyland.

LISA

But there are so fewer people!

MICHELLE

Yeah, that's true.

LISA

Can we go camping a lot, Mom?

MICHELLE

I don't see why not. Oh my god, Lisa, look!

LISA

Wow! Is that a deer, Mom?

MICHELLE

Yeah.

LISA

Wow!

ALL CHORUS

We are the biggest! We are the best! We are the biggest! We are the best! We are the biggest!  
We are the best! We are the biggest!

BROADCASTER

When we get back, a story on –

CHORUS MEMBER 4

State leaders hope mail voting will encourage higher turnout as –

CHORUS MEMBER 3

Congressional leaders debate drilling for oil in the Bob Marshall wilderness in –

CHORUS MEMBER 6

The number of minors behind bars continues to rise as parents continually rely on schools to –

CHORUS MEMBER 12

American health ranks last behind all other industrialized nations –

CHORUS MEMBER 7

A record number of arts organizations closed their doors last year –

CHORUS MEMBER 11

Oil prices continue to rise –

CHORUS MEMBER 2

Oil prices continue to rise –

CHORUS MEMBER 5

Oil prices continue to rise –

MICHELLE

Something isn't working here!

LISA

What's on the news, Mom?

MICHELLE

Oh, the usual.

LISA

There's somebody at the door.

MICHELLE

Oh. Hello?

KIM

Hi, I live across the street and I was wondering, I've noticed you don't seem to be working now that school's out, and I have an eight year old daughter, my babysitter just moved and –

MICHELLE

Oh, you need someone to watch her –

KIM

Would you be available? I'll pay you of course, I unexpectedly lost my vacation time so I'm kind of in a jam –

MICHELLE

Sure, no problem. We'll call it a playdate. What's your name again?

KIM

Oh, I'm Kim. Thanks so much. You are –

MICHELLE

Michelle. (*THEY shake hands and remove masks.*) And your little girl is...

KIM

Landon. Could I bring her over at 7:30 tomorrow?

MICHELLE

Sure, sure.

KIM

Thanks again, I'd love to spend the time with her myself, she's such a good kid, I just –

MICHELLE

No problem. Lisa will enjoy the company. We'll see you tomorrow, then.

KIM

Thanks, Michelle.

LISA

Cool! Can we go to Green Lake tomorrow, Mom?

MICHELLE

Sure, I don't see why not.

*BROADCASTER stands in front of the circle holding a stop sign in place of a microphone.*

BROADCASTER

Cheap oil, the fundamental fuel of our economy, continues to disappear rapidly. While scientists have been warning that the demand for oil has continued to double, but not the supply, American policymakers have been living in denial.

*MICHELLE, LISA, AND LANDON are in the car.*

CHORUS MEMBER 2

Expect traffic delays of up to an hour as road crews work on expanding southbound I-5.

LANDON

How far is Green Lake?

MICHELLE

Not very, but we'll be stuck here for a while. Geeze, what a waste of time!

LANDON

I think I went to that park when I was littler.

LISA

Really?

LANDON

Yeah, with my dog.

LISA

You had a dog?

LANDON

Yeah, Murphy.

MICHELLE

What kind of dog?

LANDON

I don't know. But he was really big!

LISA

You don't have him anymore?

LANDON

No. My mom gave him away because she didn't have time to go running with her new job.

CHORUS MEMBER 8

Delays continue as road crew members continue work on the freeway...

MICHELLE

Lisa, will you change the radio station, please?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

Gas prices hit summertime highs as –

MICHELLE

It doesn't make sense!

LISA AND LANDON

What?

MICHELLE

We're running out of gas so they make us sit here for hours while they expand the freeway?! Doesn't anyone have time to think about this stuff?

*Silence. A car horn blares.*

CHORUS MEMBER 1

Come, on lady, move it!

MICHELLE

Ok, ok, I'm going! I guess not. Nobody has time to think about anything.

LANDON

Does your mom take you to Green Lake a lot?

LISA

Yeah. Sometimes we go to Lake Washington, too.

LANDON

That's really cool that she has time.

MICHELLE

That's it! Nobody has time to think about anything!

LISA

What, Mom?

MICHELLE

That's why we do stupid and illogical things that cause huge problems for our society! We never have five minutes to think it through!

CHORUS MEMBER 2

I-5 crawls to a dead stop as road work continues. Expect delays for the next several hours, possibly through this evening.

MICHELLE

Sorry, girls, looks like we'll be stuck for a while.

LISA

By the time we get to the park it won't be light anymore!

MICHELLE

I know, I'm sure everyone who's trapped out here feels the same way.

*THE CHORUS makes lines of really bored/frustrated people hunched over imaginary steering wheels.*

MICHELLE

Wait! I bet they do feel the same way!

LISA

Huh?

MICHELLE

All these people! They feel trapped too!

*SHE starts to get out of the car.*

LANDON

What are you doing?

MICHELLE

I'm goanna take a survey.

LISA

Of who?

MICHELLE

Our neighbors. Be right back. Oh! Can I have your coloring book? Thanks, hun.

*MICHELLE, armed with coloring book and pencil, gets out of the car.*

LANDON

Is your mom always this crazy?

LISA

Ever since she changed jobs. But she's way more fun too.

*MICHELLE taps on the window of the car next to hers.*

MICHELLE

Hi! Hey! Hello there! Hi! Hi, I'm Michelle, I'm from the car in the next lane.

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Ok...

MICHELLE

And, uhhh, I'm doing a uhhh, survey and I just had one question: what would you be doing if instead of being trapped here you could do whatever you wanted?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

What?

MICHELLE

Just what would you be doing with your time if you weren't stuck here?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

I'd be stuck somewhere else, lady, what is this?

MICHELLE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, let me rephrase that. If you had more time, what would you do?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Uhhh, read more, I guess. Why do you care?

MICHELLE

Like I say, I'm conducting a survey. And your answer is read more?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Yeah, yeah, it's been a long time since I read a book. I mean, newspaper's one thing, but ...

MICHELLE

What would happen if you started a book? Tonight?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Look, it's not that simple, I run my own business, I'm always a day late and a dollar short –

MICHELLE

What's your name?

CHORUS MEMBER 6

Barton.

*HE removes his mask.*

MICHELLE

Just think about it, Barton.

*MICHELLE runs to the next vehicle.*

MICHELLE

Excuse me! Excuse me, hey! Hi! Hi, I'm Michelle from car behind you – I'm doing a survey and I just wanted to know what you'd do if you had more time.

CHORUS MEMBER 12

What? Who are you?

MICHELLE

Michelle from the car behind you. What would you do if you had more time?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

I don't know!

MICHELLE

So you have all the time you want in life?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

What do you mean? Lady, why don't you get back in your car?

MICHELLE

What am I going to do there? Sit there, just like you're sitting over here and be bored and frustrated and angry that I'm wasting my time!

CHORUS MEMBER 12

Ok, ok. What's your question?

MICHELLE

What would you do if you had more time?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

I'd...I'd go fishing. (*Removes mask*).

MICHELLE

Go fishing?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

Yeah. Yeah, I haven't done that since I was in high school.

MICHELLE

What kind of fishing?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

Silvers, over on the other side of the state. My grandparents had a cabin on the Pend Oreille River...course I don't think you catch silvers anymore, they've all been fished out...

MICHELLE

Why don't you go?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

And catch what? A backache and a sunburn?

MICHELLE

What's your name?

CHORUS MEMBER 12

Dan.

MICHELLE

Just think about it, Dan.

DAN

Hey, hey where are you going?

MICHELLE

To the next car.

DAN

I'll come.

MICHELLE

Thanks.

*THEY progress to the next car.*

MICHELLE

Hey! Hi! Hi! I'm Michelle, and this is Dan, from the car over there. We're doing a survey and we're wondering what you would do if you had more time.

CHORUS MEMBER 9

More time?

DAN

Yeah.

CHORUS MEMBER 9

What do you mean, more time? There's 24 hours in a day, and that's it, there is no more.

MICHELLE

Ok, but what do you do with that time? Is it your own?

CHORUS MEMBER 9

I work.

MICHELLE

So if you had more free time, what would you do?

CHORUS MEMBER 9

I'd go back to school. *(Removes mask).*

MICHELLE

Where do you work?

CHORUS MEMBER 9

I'm a janitor. It's not glamorous, but it pays the bills. Sometimes, anyway.

MICHELLE

What would you go to school for?

CHORUS MEMBER 9

I'd like to be a nurse. I think I'd be pretty good at it, I mean, whenever my son gets scraped up I think I put him back together ok.

MICHELLE

What's your name?

CHORUS MEMBER 9

Maria.

DAN

Why don't you come with us?

MARIA

What are you doing?

DAN

Talking to our neighbors.

MARIA

Ok. But why?

MICHELLE

Because I'm tired of sitting by myself alone and frustrated in my car.

MARIA

Ha ha! Yes, I was cursing the traffic, too.

*THEY procede to next car.*

MICHELLE AND DAN

Hi! Hello! Yoo hoo!

CHORUS MEMBER 4

Hi....

DAN

We're doing a survey and we just wanted to know what you would do if you had more time?

CHORUS MEMBER 4

A survey?

MICHELLE

Yup!

CHORUS MEMBER 4

On I-5 at rush hour?

MARIA

It's a captive audience.

CHORUS MEMBER 4

Ha ha! Somebody screwed that up big time!

MICHELLE

So what would you do if you had more time?

CHORUS MEMBER 4

More time? Oh, I'd travel. (*Removes mask*).

MICHELLE

Travel?

CHORUS MEMBER 4

Yeah, I've always wanted to go to Europe. But I don't get that kind of vacation time. Or that kind of paycheck!

MARIA

What's your name?

CHORUS MEMBER 4

Rachel. So, who are you and what are you doing out here again?

MICHELLE

I'm Michelle, this is Dan, and Maria. And we're tired of being stuck in our cars getting frustrated –

RACHEL

So you're taking back the freeway?

MICHELLE

It's more than that. We're taking back our time.

RACHEL

Huh. Interesting thought.

MARIA

Want to stretch your legs, get a walk in with us?

RACHEL

Yeah. Yeah! Hey, maybe we should split up, we'd get to talk to more people. Can I have some of your paper?

MICHELLE

Sure.

DAN

Hey, my kids have the same coloring book.

MICHELLE

Really?

DAN

Yeah. Yeah, that's something else I'd do if I had more time. Play with my kids.

MICHELLE

I'll be right back.

MARIA

Where are you going?

MICHELLE

To get the kids, they need a walk too! Be right back!

*MICHELLE meanders back to her car. DAN and MARIA go to various other cars taking notes on people's responses, as RACHEL works on other cars. As MICHELLE works her way back to her car, we hear the responses of other CHORUS MEMBERS and see them remove their masks.*

CHORUS MEMBER 2

Plant a garden!

CHORUS MEMBER 1

Run for the school board!

CHORUS MEMBER 11

Learn to play guitar!

CHORUS MEMBER 5

Train for a marathon!

CHORUS MEMBER 7

Teach Sunday school!

CHORUS MEMBER 8

Cook for my family!

CHORUS MEMBER 3

Learn Spanish!

CHORUS MEMBER 10

Sleep!

*MICHELLE has reached her car. SHE smiles at BARTON, who is sitting in his car reading a book.*

MICHELLE

Come on, girls! We're going for a stroll!

LISA

Mom, how come nobody is in their car, anymore?

MICHELLE

They're taking back their time.

BARTON

Hey! Hey, Michelle!

MICHELLE

Hi, Barton!

BARTON

I found a book in my glove box!

MICHELLE

That's great!

LANDON

Mom!

KIM

Hi sweetie! Hi, Michelle. Gosh, this is just crazy out here, running into you! And all these people going nuts on the freeway!

MICHELLE

Actually, I think for the first time in a long time we're all doing something that makes sense.

*The entire ensemble forms a march onstage and out through the audience as the BROADCASTER gives the final lines.*

## BROADCASTER

Today in Seattle, hundreds of people left their daily lives behind to “Take Back Their Time”. Citing overwork and time poverty as the root cause of many seemingly divergent social problems, from environmental destruction to juvenile delinquency, these individuals are committed to improving the quality of life for all citizens by reclaiming that single precious element of life: Time.

