

**FASCISM: A political philosophy that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.**

# **CAN'T HAPPEN HERE**

**WRITTEN BY JESSE DESROSIERS**

**INSPIRED BY THE PLAY BY SINCLAIR LEWIS**

**2017 NEW WORKS PROPOSAL**

**CATEGORY 2 (ONE ACT)**

## Production Team

**Playwright, Director:** Jesse Desrosiers

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Experience: Assistant Director, Florida Players, *Raised in Captivity*, 2017

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**Stage Manager:** Elizabeth Bellersen

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Experience: Stage Manager, SoTD, *The Seagull*, 2017

Stage Manager, Fla. Players, *Motherfucker with the Hat*, 2017

**Scenic Designer:** Kayla Palmer

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Qualification: Architecture Major, University of Florida

**Props Master:** Raul Duran

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Experience: Director, Florida Players, *Raised in Captivity*, 2017

Assistant Stage Manager, SoTD, *The Divine*, 2017

**Costume Designer:** Brigit Ryan

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Experience: Costume Designer, Florida Players, *Raised in Captivity*, 2017

**Lighting Consultant:** Jordan Lindquist

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Experience: Lighting Designer, Florida Players, *Raised in Captivity*, 2017

**Sound Designer:** N/A

\*Due to the show's unique situation given its proposed location, I have compiled a production team of my own, listed here. However, I am willing to instead use the shared New Works production team, should this be preferred by Production Management.

## Character Breakdown

### **June Vada:**

Journalist for a city newspaper. Well informed, a politically passionate liberal, unafraid to pick a fight. She is willing to fight to protect justice and freedom. (Visual representation to the right)



**Mary Vada:** Also a passionate liberal. She has grown used to the new America and is kinder and less fiery than her wife, June. Though she believes in defending freedom, she is uncomfortable with June's intensity. (Visual representation to the right)

# REVO.UTION

**Sarah Bennet:** The owner of a coffee shop, she is friends with June and Mary. She is also a proud liberal.

**Shad Greenhill:** A firm supporter of the (conservative) president. He works for a government agency tasked with suppressing dissent in the populace. He thinks very highly of himself. His time is coming. (Visual representation to the right)



**Henry Flick:** Works at the same paper as June. He is a political centrist who tries (but finds it impossible) to serve his country without betraying his morals.

## Synopsis

June and Mary Vada are at their friend's (Sarah) coffee shop. June has lost interest in just about everything except the news, obsessing over the injustices of the new president's administration. She and Shad enter an argument that ends in his use of slurs and his promise and his eviction from the shop by Sarah. He leaves with an ominous promise that things are changing. Months later, Sarah's shop is closed by the government on questionable grounds. When June tries to report on the suspicious closure, she is blocked by her editor, who has received government orders to censor certain things from the press. She confides in her coworker, Henry, her frustration and anger with the government. He is sympathetic, but uncomfortable with her bad-mouthing the government. When she asks him to help her get the word out that freedom of the press is being infringed, he reluctantly agrees. However, Henry is later convinced by Shad to reveal her plan. The show ends a month or so later in June and Mary's home, where it is revealed June was in fact fired from the paper not long after the previous scene. Shad then appears with a police warrant for her June's arrest, on the charge of attempted slander and conspiracy against the government. She is arrested, while Mary watches helplessly. The show ends with June being led off by Shad, but not before he gives Mary his card and suggests she find a man, insinuating homosexuality may not be tolerated by the state for much longer.

\*The script is currently unfinished (scene 1 alone is written at this point), but I am furiously finishing the script, which should end up with 3 or 4 scenes total.

## Themes, Ideas, and Emotional Response.

This show focuses on the importance of vigilance in America today. It has become normal for political scandals to be addressed and then forgotten as if they never happened. This gives politicians de facto permission to betray their constituents and serve their own interests. This can lead to a powerful state that protects the interests of those in power, instead of a state protecting the interests of the people it represents.

To prevent this, it is important today to pay attention. To demand justice be served, even when it is uncomfortable to do so. To fight for what is right, even when those around you lie down and accept that the new reality is simply how it is. That mentality allows those in power to abuse that power, a dangerous position. **How it is is not how it has to be.** Once the populace has willingly let go of their authority over their government, it is easy for the government to begin taking away freedoms – even without popular consent.



Especially in wartime, entirely possible considering the current tensions with North Korea, it is far too easy to rile up the populace with nationalism and convince them that the nation must be prioritized over the individual. This “greater good” mentality is the strongest tool used by fascist governments to restrict freedoms and persecute minorities. **The individual must always be protected. Freedom must be preserved. Justice must be served.**



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This play is meant to be in-your-face and jarring. It is meant to inspire discomfort and anger. It is meant to inspire thought and reflection on our times and the possibilities of the future. It is meant to intellectually arm us against the threat of those in power.



## Vision and Execution

This show is meant to be simple. It is a piece of political critique and meant as a warning to stay conscious of what is happening around us and to speak up before it is too late to do anything about it. As such, it is geared less towards world-building and more towards relaying a point. That point, I think, is clear from the text. Most meaning comes directly from the text, as opposed to the world physically created onstage.

As such, the set should be bare and very minimal, only using what is required by the text. Props, similarly will be used as necessary, but not superfluously, as this would only distract from the core of the production. Set present-day, costumes can also be designed without much meaning behind them. Light and sound design is unnecessary for the show, as explained below.

This show is highly politicized to the left. Because theatre-goers tend to lean politically left, I feel it is important to put this production where it is viewable to a large group of people, not just those that choose to go to the theatre. This is why I propose this production be performed in a found space – specifically the brick square in the Plaza of the Americas on UF campus – during afternoon hours, when foot traffic is at or near its height (preferably directly after Krishna Lunch, so students are already nearby, but the noises made by Krishna will not be an interference). If this is not possible, then as early in the day as possible is the preferable time to perform, as the point is that there will be a relatively high number of passers-by who will be confronted by the piece. Whether they stop and watch the rest of the performance or only catch that moment is up to them. This I feel would significantly widen the impact of the show and make it's more relevant to students on campus. If this is not at all possible, I am open to the idea of keeping the performance indoors, but perhaps having a full run or two instead outdoors in the proposed location during rehearsal, leading up to the festival.



Because of this, I have designated no sound designer, as there would be no microphones, nor recorded music or tracks. However, I have considered the idea of live music, perhaps a guitarist/vocalist, to perform during scene changes and before/after the show.

Also due to the proposed location, I have a lighting consultant, not a lighting designer. This is because the performance should ideally be done during daylight hours, making design unnecessary. However, it would still be useful to have a lighting consultant with whom the logistics of using natural lighting can be discussed.

I have also considered the idea of editing down June's factual political rants and instead punctuated various moments with dated events of political controversy that has happened leading up to and since President Trump's election. This would be done by all actors in the cast and would be out-of-character moments. Perhaps done between scenes, perhaps before/after the production, perhaps in the middle of scenes, where appropriate.

### Unusual Technical Requirements

No lights or sound will be used, as the show is to be performed outside during daylight hours, without microphoned amplification, and without recorded music or sound. Aside from this note, there are no unusual technical requirements.

*If what happens seems such that  
human beings would not allow  
it to happen you have not read  
the histories of your times*