

Listen To Me

Written By

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Characters:

Victor Volunteer, host

Mike Beercan, guest

Frank MacDonald, guest

Phyllis Kumquat, guest

Wayne, phone caller and guest

Officer, female police officer

Carol, phone caller (voice only)

Professor Ezra Pound, phone caller (voice only)

On the stage is a small rectangular table with four metal folding seats around it. On the table are four microphone boom stands, with microphones attached. There are also four headphones on the table, attached individually to a small black box on the table. Cables lead from the microphones and black box, onto the floor. The equipment all looks a little old and worn.

The walls of the “studio”, including its windows and the door, are imagined. Or would a few walls, a door and the window to the control room be a good idea?

*Enter **Victor** stage left. He is a little nervous but has the air of someone who has done this many times before. He has some paper notes with him, which he puts on the table. He checks the microphones, adjusts the wind socks, puts them into position. He checks the cables, then looks to stage rear. Then puts the chairs into position.*

Victor

All ready in here from the last show. Could you tell them it's time to rock and roll?

*Victor moves the papers on the table to the place stage left front. Enter from stage left, **Mike, Frank and Phyllis**. Victor is very familiar with the set-up, they are unfamiliar and a little nervous. Mike is the most confident and relaxed. Frank is very self-confident. Phyllis is the most nervous, to being reluctant.*

Victor welcomes them in.

Victor

Hi again. We have two minutes to air time. I sit here, so I can face our technician. You see him through the window. Mike, if you sit here, Frank there, and Phyllis, yes there you go. Thanks.

Frank sits in the chair stage right rear, Phyllis sits in the chair stage right rear left. Mike sits in the chair stage

right front, and Victor sits in the chair stage left front. He puts on a set of headphones.

Victor

I'll remind you to have your cell phones off, avoid touching the microphone. You don't have to wear the headphones but if we have callers, you need the headphones. Usually we don't get callers. You adjust the volume on this box for your headphone.

Mike, Frank and Phyllis put on headphones.

Victor

Okay, I'll introduce the show and then each of you. This is going to go great, I just know it. We have controversial topics and great guests.

Phyllis

Controversial?

Victor

Our mikes are going live. We're on the air.

Green Onions Theme Music

The music plays for twenty seconds. Victor prepares himself, as do the guests. He then starts to talk, and then Theme Music gradually fades out.

Victor

Hi, hello and how are you? I'm Victor Volunteer, as I call myself, today's host and producer of Soapbox Radio. We're broadcasting live on 100.5 FM on your radio, and streaming live on our station's website, www.coopradio.org, on your computer. CFRO is nonprofit and volunteer run. I and everyone else who does this and other CFRO shows is a volunteer. Consider becoming a member today! Get involved! Are you ready to get involved? Today's Soapbox Radio is special! Our theme is: do we listen to people who have disabilities? We have three guests here in the studio to stand on their soapboxes and say what they think. Remember, you can phone in at 605-555-1212. Our technician will take your call and put you on the air. Let's get started. I tried to get a wide variety of viewpoints around today's Soapbox table. Sitting next to me, let's start with you, is Mike Beercan.

Mike

Hi. Thanks for inviting me.

Victor

Thanks for being here. What do you do for a living, Mike?

Mike

Long hauling. I drive a truck.

Victor

And how long have you been doing that?

Mike (laughs)

More than a few years. It pays the bills.

Victor

And you are here from the BC Disability Caucus?
Community advocates on disability issues?

Mike

That doesn't pay bills, but I do it anyway.

Victor

Another volunteer! Our second guest is Frank
MacDonald. Welcome to the show, Frank.

Frank

Thank you, Victor. A pleasure to be here.

Victor

You are an architect whose work includes disability
access issues.

Frank

Yes, I also specialize in green homes. They are tiny, the
size of a bachelor apartment, and completely
environmental. I bicycle to work and do not eat gluten.

Victor

I offered you a tuna sandwich and you would not eat it because you did not know if it might contain dolphin parts.

Frank

I eat nothing that has ever been alive. Respect nature or you won't eat it, it will eat you. Look at global warming.

Victor

But you're here because of disability issues.

Frank

Eliminating barriers is a personal commitment. I've designed barrier free doorways, washrooms and kitchens. None of my tiny houses have barriers. Also, more bicycle lanes should be a community priority.

Victor

Okay, we can talk about that, but first I'll introduce our third guest. Welcome to the show Phyllis Kumquat.

Phyllis

Hello everyone. It is an honour to be here, and thank you for having all of us.

Victor

Phyllis, you are the Executive Director of a Foundation, it's called Charles And Heloise Rasmussen for the Indisposed, Troubled and Yucky.

Phyllis

In the community we go by the abbreviation, CHARITY. We fund many organizations.

Mike

No offense, but could I object to the name?

Phyllis

Yes, I know. Charles and Heloise insisted because they wanted to spell that name. I always ask that people ignore what CHARITY means and look at what we do.

Victor

And your main purpose at CHARITY is to do what?

Phyllis

When Charles and Heloise Rassmussen passed away, they bequeathed twenty-five million dollars to CHARITY. That is, us. I have been the Executive Director for seventeen years.

Mike

Who gets the money?

Phyllis

Well Mike, we do not give money directly to the indisposed, indigent and yucky. You just cannot hand

out money. Recipients will misspend it. Instead, we fund organizations which work directly with them.

Frank

Life has given them a raw deal. I'm not sure about the name either but money is good. And that you seek green solutions. You do, don't you?

Phyllis

Oh yes. Everything is recycled. And we do a lot digitally. One of our organizations featured an inspiring video on You Tube just last month, about a man raising funds to buy a special wheel chair so he could play soccer.

Frank

That is inspiring. Those chairs use batteries which are not very green, though. It is an issue.

Mike

So's the cost. Isn't that type of video called inspiration porn? My cousin Billy, he gripes about it. He's in a chair. He says the real point of stories about people who got disabilities is we should all be grateful we aren't them. I agree. They're more about making abled bodied people feel good. They cover up the real issues.

Phyllis

Such as?

Mike

Take that story about the guy in the chair who plays power football. The story is, he's succeeding, getting stuff done. It's all great. So why worry about why he has to fundraise for a power chair? Why worry about better health care?

Frank

You have a point, Mike. It's the same with climate change.

Mike

It is?

Victor

One second, everyone. We have a caller! Hello, this is Soapbox Radio on CFRO FM, 100.5 on your dial, live streaming at www.coopradio.org. You're on the air.

Wayne

Good. I'm Wayne. I'm listening and I'm in a power chair.

Victor

Thank you for calling, Wayne. What do you want to say, or ask our guests? The theme is not listening to people who have disabilities.

Wayne

For starters, that video you mentioned was about me. It was part of a Kickstarter campaign. Still don't have the new chair, by the way.

Phyllis

So we are connected! Welcome!

Frank

It's a small world, isn't it? Nice to meet you.

Wayne

Do any of you have a disability?

Phyllis

I beg your pardon?

Wayne

Uh huh, you heard me. You're talking about disabilities. Any of you on the radio got any?

Phyllis

You do not have to have a disability to be concerned about challenges.

Frank

I'm on a disability committee.

Wayne

You got one yourself?

Frank

We meet once a month.

Wayne

Uh huh. What about the truck driver from the Disability Caucus?

Mike

What about me?

Wayne

Do you have a disability?

Mike

Do I need one to talk about it?

Wayne

On the street or in your truck or maybe in meetings, no. On the radio, you don't have the right.

Victor

You sound angry. Can you come down to the studio to talk about it, or tell us more on the phone? It would make a better show.

Wayne

You all make me sick.

Victor

The caller hung up. And the theme of our show is, do we listen to people who have disabilities?

Frank

He has to listen to us first, doesn't he? He was rude but he also had every right to talk with us like that.

Phyllis

One must be tolerant, Frank. There are, I am sorry to say, many such people in the disabled community. Or rather, the community with disabilities. Or I should say, the community of people who have disabilities.

Mike

Keep trying, you'll get it right.

Frank

He was angriest at you.

Mike

What right do I got to talk about disabilities, there should be someone here who has one.

Phyllis

This is why we work with organizations, not people. You cannot have such people in your office. They get angry, you get guilty, nothing gets done. It is a vicious circle. We funded the publication of a leaflet about it.

Front door buzzer sounds

Mike

Billy is angry, sometimes. So's my granny, who's in a home. My wife, she can be, well, upset. She has this scoliosis thing. Her spine is curved.

Victor

What would she say if she was here?

Mike

Mary would say people respond to what they see. And all they see is her bent back. Actually, I get angrier than she does. We've done leaflets too, for all the good they do.

Victor

The front door buzzer sounded, and I see our technician's gotten up. We're on auto pilot when he is out of the control room. The CBC, I'm sure, has two technicians!

Frank

And security.

Phyllis

There are organizations which can help you and your wife.

Mike

I don't think so.

Phyllis

We fund a group which provides weekly counselling sessions for non-abled-bodied people to accept how able bodied people act. People attending the sessions are making real progress and say they are not as upset when they go outside. We all know it is difficult to change attitudes.

Victor

The technician is talking with someone at the front door. It's a man in a wheelchair.

Phyllis

You can change attitudes, though. We have achieved great success.

Mike

Sorry, things still seem the same to me. How do you measure great success?

Phyllis

By the number of leaflets and brochures distributed. I am glad to say that we have filled many shelves. Also by the number of people filling slots in courses. We also help produce thirty second tv commercials about being tolerant. Tolerance is a two-way street. We should tolerate the disabled, and the disabled should tolerate us.

Mike

They could have a tough time, tolerating some of us.

Footsteps, sounds

Wayne enters stage left. He is in a power chair and cannot move his arms much or his legs at all, which are heavily bandaged. His feet are purple. He is on a ventilator, with a tube in his throat. He is confident and angry.

Wayne

Is this the show about listening to someone who has a disability?

Victor

Yes.

Wayne

I spoke with somebody on the phone, and here I am.

Wayne moves his chair close to the table.

Victor

Okay. We now have five people and four microphones.

Wayne

Anyone up for sharing? You're next to me.

Frank

Of course. I'll move the microphone between us. How is that?

Wayne

Am I on the air?

Victor

Yes. The technician is waving the microphone is okay and I hear you through my headphones. We'll have to leave the door open, there isn't room to close it. But this will work.

Wayne

That's life, making it work. Well hello radio land. I'm Wayne.

Victor

How did you get here so fast?

Wayne

I live across the street. Did I hear her talk about being tolerant?

Phyllis

Me?

Wayne

I'm looking at you, kid. I don't want tolerated. I want accepted. Accepted. Can you spell accepted?

Frank

Did you come here just to argue?

Wayne

Yes. Is that Mr. Gluten Free? Your big issue is bike lanes. How many people with disabilities ride bikes?

Frank

Uhm well, one moment here.

Phyllis

Wayne, I am so sorry. I used the wrong word and I know you are offended. But I did not mean tolerate you as a human being because you are inferior. I am sure you know that.

Wayne

What the hell did you just say?

Victor

Wait a minute everyone! We have another caller! Frank, can you lean over and share your headphone with Wayne, so he can hear?

Frank

Certainly.

Victor

Hello, CFRO FM, 100.5, broadcasting live from downtown Vancouver. You're on the air.

Carol

Tell me about it. I'm Carol. I've been listening, and what I have to say is: zombies.

Victor

What?

Carol

Zombies. Like the undead. I mean like, that's what I think when I see some of these people shuffling down the street. Listen to them? They stagger around like they have no brains and want some.

Victor

Are you talking about people who have cerebral palsy?

Carol

Those are some, right!

Victor

People who have cerebral palsy look like zombies?

Carol

Didn't you hear me? Are you deaf? Or just a retard?

Phyllis

Caller, you are being disparaging.

Carol

Yada yada yada. So, I mean, really. You see one of them shuffling down the street. Maybe they're drooling. Their eyes rolling around. It's creepy. I'm sure I've heard them say 'brains.'

Mike

Not around you. I have an uncle with CP.

Carol

Wow. A *lot* runs in your family. No wonder you're a trucker. You *want* to get away from them.

Mike

It's the only job I could get to feed my family. And I love being by myself on a long haul. For some reason, most people bother me.

Phyllis

Caller, you are not being politically correct.

Carol

That's another thing. Nobody can make a joke anymore.

Frank

Political correctness is important. Words can hurt, little lady.

Carol

Little...you called me what?

Victor

She hung up.

Frank

I'm confused. You told me the show would be about attitudes towards disabilities and I'd talk about physical

barriers. I thought this would be about ramps and door knobs.

Victor

I don't think I misled you. Hold on, there is another caller! Hello, CFRO FM, 100.5. Welcome to the discussion.

Professor

Am I on the air?

Victor

Yes. And, you are?

Professor

Professor Ezra Pound. I have been listening and wanted to contribute to the discussion.

Victor

Please go ahead, Professor Pound.

Professor

I myself was accused of mental health challenges. They inspired my life's work. Currently, I chair the Department of Disability Studies at the University of the Lower Mainland. I have specialized in disability studies for nearly forty years and have published many radio broadcasts and, of course, poetry.

Phyllis

I've read some of your poetry, Professor.

Professor

Thank you. I called because the word tolerance was mentioned. We live in a world of many races and religions. There is no need to discuss my opinions, they are well documented. With respect to people who have disabilities, we tolerate them but must do more. We must study them and write research papers. That will help future generations.

Victor

Interesting, Professor. Is your department a big one?

Professor

Yes, we have twelve professors, thirteen adjunct professors, three visiting professors and fourteen assistant professors. Then there are the teaching assistants and support staff. We are all dedicated to studying people who have disabilities.

Mike

How much do you get paid?

Professor

I beg your pardon?

Wayne

Yeah. You study poor people. Do you get paid more than the Social Allowances benefit?

Victor

We seem to have lost our caller. I think he hung up. Good pointed discussion so far. Now, let's....

Wayne

You call this a discussion? Look, about this political correctness stuff.

Mike

Yes, let's talk about political correctness and how it's used here.

Wayne

I totally agree people should respect other people. That isn't what this type of political correctness is about.

Mike

It's about avoiding the issue.

Phyllis

I am not avoiding anything. We have funded organizations which publish leaflets about how to speak to disabled people.

Victor

By the way, isn't that *people who have disabilities*?

Wayne

At least that caller, Carol, was honest. There *are* some people out there who walk around like zombies. She wasn't just talking CP.

Mike

Street people.

Wayne

Yeah. They get drugs that zone them out. It makes them easier to deal with. That's what society wants. That's what you all want. For anyone yucky to be easier to deal with. If we become zombies, that's our problem.

Frank

Wayne, you are *not* a zombie.

Wayne

Thanks for the compliment. But Frank, all you know about me is I use a power chair. And I have this ventilator tube stuck in my chest.

Phyllis

All we are doing is arguing, not solving.

Frank

Look everyone. Here's what Wayne and Mike are missing. They want to get able bodied people, people like me, to act differently. People don't want to change. If you want to change them, first figure out what they want, and how what you are selling gives it to them. Then they'll buy what you have to say. You have to dial it way down before anyone will listen.

Wayne

If I dialed it down, you wouldn't hear me.

Mike

Frank has a point. How you convince people is a good question. Advocates have been working on it for years. Centuries.

Victor

Now *this* is a spirited discussion! This is what the media should be!

Phyllis

We all feel guilty, but playing on that does not work.

Frank

Nor does talking about it out loud.

Phyllis

Exactly.

Mike

I'm a little lost here.

Wayne

Me too. Help me out.

Frank

Sure. I've got it very good, compared with some people. No secret there. I see someone with a disability and I say, honestly, I'm glad that is not me. That is natural. I feel guilty for thinking that, but I understand and am okay with it. So I'm guilty but we don't talk about that, but just move on.

Mike

Sorry, buddy. Still a little lost.

Phyllis

In the past, no one wanted to talk about the troubled, indigent and yucky. They were hidden away, a known, guilty secret. That was then and this is now. The guilt is there but is no longer secret. We can talk about it, although we shouldn't, not directly.

Wayne

Yeah yeah yeah. Look, I should have said I'm glad you put on that zombie woman. I didn't get a chance to say anything.

Victor

And what would you have told that caller?

Wayne

To shut up.

Mike

Would that work?

Wayne

For both of us. Someone talks like that, you can't change her mind in ten seconds. You have to consider her brain dead. Like a zombie. Her ideas want to eat your mind, man.

Mike and Victor laugh

Wayne

Seriously, I've met people like her. Not many. When I'm around, they keep it to themselves. But you always see it in their eyes. They're glad they're not me, but I don't see any guilt.

Frank

I am not completely comfortable with this.

Wayne

You can't change her mind. So don't bother. I treat people like her like *they* were zombies. When I see one shuffling towards me, I turn the power chair the other way. Speaking of which, how come there aren't special lanes for wheelchairs?

Frank

What?

Wayne

I brought it up before. There are lanes for bicycles. Probably more people are in chairs or use walkers than use bikes. How come there aren't special lanes for me? Why only for people like you? Am I not green enough?

Frank

Uhm, well, sure, sure you should have a lane. And there should be one for walkers. But we don't have enough money, except for more bike lanes. They are good exercise and are very green. I never thought about it, to be honest.

Wayne

Feeling guilty? The question is, will you act on your guilt? Or is feeling guilty an excuse to do nothing?

Phyllis

Our discussion is all over the map.

Mike

Actually, it's starting to get interesting. Starting to cover some territory.

Wayne

I suggest the discussion was brightened by my presence.

Phyllis

Anger does not achieve goals. However, I understand your anger, both of you. I empathize with your anger. How much more air time do we have, by the way?

Victor

Plenty.

Phyllis

Oh well then, good. Wayne, do you have a job?

Wayne

You mean, am I indigent?

Phyllis

Unemployed.

Wayne

My job since I was 19 turns out to be getting government grants, getting training and going to courses. None of it pays much. How about you?

Phyllis

Me?

Wayne

Yeah. Aren't you paid to help people like me? Bet you make more than I do.

Phyllis

I am with you in your anger, Wayne. But it is inappropriate to discuss incomes. Except yours, of course. Our audience should hear what your income is.

Wayne

I get less than a thousand bucks from the Province and dribs and drabs elsewhere. The Social Allowances benefit didn't increase for nine years. When I did get an increase, it sucked. After the bus pass, I got 25 more bucks a month.

Mike

Enough for popcorn and a movie.

Wayne

Depends on the movie.

Mike

And it has to be a small popcorn.

They laugh

Frank

It's good to get out.

Wayne

I'm gonna yell at you, pal. I feel like blowing something up. I'm gonna get people down here and we'll take over the station.

Phyllis

Wayne, you may not believe me—

Wayne

--probably won't--

Phyllis

--but I am glad you are here. We hear your anger. Tell us more.

Wayne

I warn you. Kissing my butt isn't easy in this chair.

Phyllis

There was an increase in the Social Allowances benefit.
Not that I have anything to prove—

Wayne

Sure you do.

Phyllis

But it was not nearly enough. I will stick my neck out,
because you are inspiring me. The Province could have
done better. There! I said it!

Wayne

Said what?

Mike

Not much of anything. Is there any beer?

Frank

Let me get a word in.

(pause, silence)

Okay then. Let's talk about disabilities and being green.

Mike

He wants to know if you recycle.

Wayne

Recycle rhymes with bicycle. How about we talk about that?

Frank

I appreciate your joking. Tell me, is your apartment ergonomic? Could your power chair and ventilator run on solar power?

Wayne

If I could raise my arms, I'd punch you. What would you do if I had a bomb?

Frank

Bomb?

Wayne

In my backpack. Maybe today is the day, man. I get more tired all the time. What the hell's the point?

Frank

Violence is not green. We should all sit and talk together and solve our problems. People have problems from their upbringing, from chemicals in the environment. We are all in this together.

Wayne

I wish this chair had rocket launchers, like Bruce Cockburn. I'd blow you all away. Why do I keep doing this to myself? Why did I think any of you would listen?

Mike (calming)

Hey buddy. Don't let them give you a fit. You're angry, you have a right to be, and they don't know how to deal with it.

Wayne

I don't need to be patronized.

Victor (calming)

We're on the air. I wish listeners could see Wayne. He is dead serious. We welcome any callers with suggestions.

Wayne

I can't punch you, Frank. I can spit on you, but you have to get closer.

Police siren in distance, quickly gets louder

Phyllis

We understand that that your anger gets in the way of your speaking to us. And that is because, due to your condition, you cannot do what you want to do.

Wayne

Is that it? You don't know what I want to do. Come over here, I want to spit on you too.

Mike

Everybody, let's take a breather. Nobody's going to spit on anybody. Our talk can be our spit, it has been so far.

Wayne

Anyone listening should come down here, just like I did. Let's take over the station. Mike, can you take my cell phone out of my shirt pocket for me? I'm going to make some calls.

Mike

Sure.

Victor

Okay, as host I have to remind everyone that no one is taking over the radio station. However, anyone who comes down here to take over the radio station should become a member and donate.

Mike

Let's calm down.

Victor

I just wanted to remind listeners.

Wayne

You're a volunteer. You put a lot of hours into doing this show. What do you get out of it?

Victor

....I get the satisfaction putting people like you on the air.

Wayne

You could produce and not host. You do both. Like complete control? Aren't you on the air because you love hearing yourself? Aren't you standing on your soapbox saying, look at me?

Victor

I'm an advocate raising awareness.

Wayne

You're a mirror with a megaphone.

Mike

Say, Wayne. He invited you here.

Wayne

No he didn't.

Victor

Yes, I did. And I'm on the defensive, and that's good. I want to talk about me. I volunteer. I work hard and put a lot of myself into this show. I spend hours phoning and emailing, arranging guests.

Wayne

That's a lot of 'I's.

Victor

...Is that a siren?

Siren very loud, then stops

Victor

Let me see...there are police outside.

Phyllis

We guessed, from the siren.

Victor

The technician is letting them in.

Mike

How many of them are there?

Victor

As he said in *Terminator 2*, all of them, I think.

Sound of door footsteps

Enter uniformed police Officer (woman) stage left.

Officer

Everyone keep perfectly still.

Victor

I'm the producer. Is there a problem?

Officer

We have a report there is a terrorist incident underway here. You in the chair. What're these things?

Wayne

My ventilator and backpack.

Officer

You're the one who made the threats. Do you have any weapons?

Wayne

Only my brain.

Victor

Officer, there is no problem.

Mike

Wayne was just letting off steam.

Officer

He threatened to take over the station.

Phyllis

That is not the situation at all. We love Wayne.

Frank

Yes, we love him.

Officer

Andy, call head office. We got Stockholm Syndrome here. We need a psychiatrist.

Victor

This is ridiculous. Officer, we are not suffering from Stockholm Syndrome.

Officer

Of course you're not. Calm down.

Victor

I am calm, damn it.

Officer

Calm down. ...Wayne, is it? We are here to help. What are your demands?

Wayne

Will you pretend to get me a helicopter?

Officer

Absolutely. First, put your hands in the air.

Wayne

I cannot raise my arms. I can move my hands.

Officer

...okay, could you raise your hands a little then?

Wayne raises his hands.

Officer

Good. Do you mind if I check your clothes and things?

Wayne

Thank you for asking. Actually, yes.

Officer

No problem.

Officer goes through Wayne's backpack and his pockets.

Officer

Okay, thank you. Is this a bomb or your ventilator?

Victor

Look Officer. We don't have Stockholm Syndrome. He doesn't have a bomb and he hasn't threatened anyone. Well he has, but he wasn't serious. He's just angry.

Officer

We have been trained about angry people. Anyone else here who is angry?

Mike

Not me, brother.

Victor

Officer, I appreciate a report was called in and you are trying to help. But seriously, Wayne has made no threats and he has made no demands.

Wayne

I have my demands ready.

Silence, the rest are all surprised.

Officer

Go ahead.

Victor

He doesn't have demands. Wayne, this isn't a good idea.

Wayne

The voice of the community. Here are my demands. First. I want somebody to recognize my skills and give me a job. I'm tired of short term grants. Okay, I have trouble fitting in. Fit me in, that's my first demand.

Officer

No problem. Get you a job.

Phyllis

We have organizations that...

Wayne

Yeah yeah yeah, I've been to them. Second. I want the Social Allowances benefit to go up to something decent, like double.

Officer

We can do that.

Wayne

Third, for the lousy benefits increase and clawback, I want Premier Christy Clarke to apologize.

Officer

The helicopter is easier.

Wayne

Apologize in *public*.

Officer

I can't even pretend about that.

Phyllis

If I may. Wayne, embarrassing politicians is not the path to success in British Columbia.

Wayne

Kissing butts hasn't me gotten anywhere yet. I'm tired of kissing Christy Clarke's butt. I want her to kiss mine for a change.

Mike

Wayne, you are creating images you will regret.

Wayne

Fourth. I want wheelchair lanes next to all the bike lanes.

Frank

I'm with you, fella. You should also demand solar powered chairs.

Wayne

Shut up. Fifth. Fifth. Well, a helicopter sounds pretty good.

Officer

I can pretend about a helicopter.

Wayne

Two helicopters?

Officer

Sure. Wayne, let's get serious. Do you really have any demands? Looks to me like an argument has gotten totally out of hand.

Wayne

I do have a bomb.

Officer

Where?

It's inside my ventilator. See this cell phone? I press this button, we all go up.

Officer

I don't believe you.

Wayne

Try me.

The Officer steps away, and says over her shoulder:

Officer

...Andy, get Christy Clarke. Yeah yeah, I know.

Officer exits, stage left.

Frank

Wayne, we got off on the wrong foot.

Wayne

I can't move them either.

Mike

There is no bomb. Come on.

Wayne

I *could* have a bomb.

Mike looks at him.

Wayne

They don't know that.

Mike

Stepping off a cliff rarely turns out well. Let's pull you back.

Victor

Listeners? Did you hear that? He says he has no bomb.

Wayne

I never said exactly that.

Victor

Listeners? Is anyone listening?

Mike

The police are.

Phyllis

As the only woman here...

Wayne

Why *aren't* there more women here?

Victor

Uh well, I'm only a team of one. I try to get gender balance. I can't think of everything.

Wayne

Gender balance is thinking of everything?

Victor

I'm not here to answer questions.

Wayne

Why not? Everything is up for grabs right now. What was the theme of this show again? Do we listen to people who have disabilities?

There is silence. No one knows what to say, including Wayne.

Officer enters from stage left.

Officer

We had Christy Clarke's office on the phone. When you said there was no bomb, they hung up.

Wayne

There goes the helicopter.

(Wayne looks strained)

Mike

I've seen that look before.

Wayne

I need suctioning. It's getting hard to breathe.

Phyllis

I've taken a course on CPR.

Wayne

Can you take the tube out of the hole in my throat and clean it?

Phyllis starts to say something but says nothing, embarrassed.

Officer

(over her shoulder)

Gary, call in the paramedics from outside.

(Turns back to Wayne)

I know the bomb's all talk. You're not going to hurt anyone. Help's here in a second.

Wayne's hand is shaky, he drops the cell phone.

Mike

So now you can back off? You knew all along he was no real threat.

Officer

Not until I got here. And if we weren't intimidating, we wouldn't get respect. We need respect to do the job. This show's about listening to people who have disabilities. How about one about listening to police officers?

Frank

You came to arrest him and now you're saving him.

Officer takes chair but cannot move it. Wayne moves the control knob on the chair and together they back off towards stage left. The Officer looks over her shoulder.

Officer

Okay, the paramedics are in the hall. We'll get you out of here and to a place where there's more room.

Wayne and Officer exit stage left.

For a moment, everyone on stage is quiet and thoughtful.

Frank

What now?

Mike

He'll be okay in a few minutes. I've seen it plenty of times before. Looks like he needs it every few hours.

Phyllis

That entire incident was disturbing.

Victor

We are still on the air.

Phyllis

Yes, and that is disturbing. Shouldn't we play music or something? How about one of those musical breaks?

Frank

He is so in your face. Maybe he has a point about wheelchair lanes. He's right. How many people have a motor impairment? How many of those people use a bike? None of them. At the bike meetings, we don't talk about anyone else. I'm beginning to wonder how green I am.

Victor

He challenged all of us.

Phyllis

I thought I would go on the show and talk about CHARITY. I do not want to talk or think about myself. All you should be concerned about is what I do.

Victor

This started out so well. Now there's something wrong with all of us. Except maybe you, Mike.

Phyllis

You should play music until the end of the show. I am very uncomfortable with this discussion.

Mike

He was pissed off at me but he was right. When you called, I was the only one available and willing. I don't like doing this stuff, but you have to. So I'm here but I don't have a disability.I really enjoy being alone in the truck.

Phyllis

I have to move around.

*Phyllis stands and walks around, stretching her legs.
Frank follows.*

Mike

I'm used to sitting.

Victor

Listeners, this is CFRO FM, 100.5, broadcasting live, and streaming live at www.coopradi.org. Right now, we're all kind of on hold, wondering about Wayne. And, well, wondering what we are doing with our lives.

Phyllis

What about you? You volunteer doing this show. You could volunteer in many other ways. Why a radio show? Was Wayne right?

Victor

What? That I'm doing this because I'm full of myself?

Mike

We don't have to be tough on each other.

Phyllis

Why not? Isn't that what he wanted? Wasn't he waiting to spring some trick question? Are you doing this because you're full of yourself?

Victor

Well, if I have to be full of something, I'd rather it be myself. That said, Phyllis, the media isn't supposed to be the story.

Frank

Are you kidding yourself? We're all *so* progressive. I design barrier free homes. I'm proud of that. Does being on this show help anyone, really? I don't know. Why do you do it? Is it really because you like to hear yourself talk?

Victor

I'm retired. I don't think I got much done in my job. This was a chance to make a change. Okay, yes, I could have found a host but I like doing it. I like people listening to me, for a change. My wife doesn't listen, my children don't listen, my friends don't listen. I've been in conversations where no one notices I haven't said a word. I'm kind of like you. My experiences with people aren't great. I love doing this because when I meet people, I play a role. I'm not me, I'm the host. People listen. And then they're gone and it's over.

Phyllis

We are all actors, whether on the stage or not.

Frank

I have all these drawings. I use them with clients like they're like make-up.

Victor

Okay, everyone. This conversation appears to be losing its focus. We are here to talk about whether people listen to people who have disabilities.

Frank

Well, something happened.

Phyllis

Wayne tried to turn a mirror on us. I am very uncomfortable with him and this discussion. I am comfortable when I look in the mirror. Yes. I am. I am. I am.

Wayne and Officer enter stage left and come up to the table. Wayne looks much better, though tired.

Wayne

Great conversation. I heard most of it on the speaker down the hall.

Mike

You okay?

Wayne

Living the dream.

Victor

Glad to have you back.

Wayne

From what I heard you're happier talking about me than yourselves. Let's switch your theme. I'm listening to able bodied people. Keep talking.

Phyllis

Oh my goodness. Look at the time! An interesting and productive discussion. I am glad it ended so soon, so I can get to work on all these ideas.

Mike

After this show, when I get home I'm not sure if they're gonna pat me on the back, laugh at me or slap me silly.

Victor

Your family members who have disabilities?

Mike

Oh yeah. They're all listening. They'd want listeners to hear people with disabilities say—

Wayne

Maybe *I* should say it.

Mike

Couldn't agree more.

Wayne

Stop feeling sorry. Look at the person. Feeling sorry is a lot of crap. And raise the benefit and Christy Clarke should apologize.

Officer

If the show is over now, I have to arrest Wayne and take him downtown.

Victor

What? After being suctioned? Why are you arresting him? He didn't have a bomb.

Officer

What does being suctioned have to do with it? He said he had a bomb. And threatened to blow us up. That is against the law.

Victor

So?

Officer

You broadcast it. Maybe if it was private, but no, it was live on the air. Very public. I already arrested him in the hallway, but thought he should finish up here.

Wayne

Thanks.

Officer

No problem.

Phyllis

Officer, everyone heard what happened, yes. But they also heard that Wayne was very upset and caught up in the moment. He could be let off with a warning.

Wayne

I don't want to be let off.

Frank

He was invited onto the show during a call, and he came here. And it became...theatre. Can't you see it as theatre?

Phyllis

He thought we were pretenders. That we didn't and wouldn't listen to him.

Frank

I'm thinking, we are.

Phyllis

I never pretend. I wake up every morning and tell myself, I will pretend nothing today. I will be real.

Mike

Give me a break.

Wayne

I want to be arrested.

Victor

You should not arrest him. He needs a lawyer.

Officer

I advised him of his rights in the hallway. And for what else you said, this isn't catch and release.

Victor

Why not?

Officer

For one thing, everyone is still listening.

Phyllis

That's right, they are. Officer, you cannot arrest this man.

Wayne

I want him to arrest me.

Officer (to Phyllis)

You do not want to get involved.

Phyllis

I definitely do.

Officer

Interfering is an obstruction of justice.

Frank

You have to stand up for something.

Officer

Everyone, calm down.

Mike

I can't afford to be arrested.

Phyllis

We should all stand with Wayne.

Wayne

I can't stand.

Victor

Listeners. This is Soapbox Radio on CFRO FM, broadcasting live on 100.5 and streaming live on www.coopradio.org. Call in and tell the Officer she is wrong. Show Wayne some community support!

Officer

Enough. I'm taking him out of here. You been downtown lately?

Wayne

You'll give me a lift?

Officer

Rely on it.

The Officer and Wayne start to go. Phyllis moves to block the exit.

Phyllis

We cannot allow this.

Wayne

You haven't listened to anything I said. Officer, let's go. I'll get more done as a martyr. And the food in jail will be better.

Officer

Don't count on that.

Phyllis

No.

Frank

I'm not sure what's going on.

Mike

What's going on is that we have an audience and she knows it.

Victor

No one's calling. Don't we have listeners?

Officer

At least one. Our report came from a listener named Carol.

Wayne

I want to be arrested.

Phyllis

No, it is an outrage.

Wayne

The outrage is you are blocking me.

Phyllis

This is an opportunity to make a public statement.

Mike

For who? You or him?

Phyllis

I'm doing the right thing.

Frank

For who?

Phyllis

What is this?

Mike

This is all about you, not him.

Phyllis

How can you say that?

Victor

Maybe you thought you did not look so good. Maybe you thought you had to show you did more than fund leaflets and courses about acceptance.

Phyllis

You're ganging up on me. He needs us to make a public statement.

Wayne

I can make my own public statement.

Phyllis

Yes of course, but we have to show our support.

Wayne

By not listening to me?

Victor

Hold on, we have a caller! Someone is listening! Hello, this is CFRO FM, Soapbox Radio and you're on the air.

Carol

This is Carol. Yeah, I phoned in the bomb threat. I think Wayne wanted that so I decided to give him a shot. I'm listening. And eating popcorn. You guys are better than the *Walking Dead*. Wayne, you there?

Wayne

Temporarily.

Carol

You were right on, man. I wouldn't talk to me either. I like your sense of humour. Maybe we should have a fruit smoothie together when you get out of the can.

Wayne

That seems so unlikely.

Carol (laughs)

And Phyllis.

Phyllis

You want to say something to me?

Carol

Yeah.

Phyllis

What?

Carol

Show some respect for Wayne.

Phyllis

I also have to show what I and CHARITY stand for.

Carol

No you don't. Okay, that's it. It's hard to talk on the phone and eat popcorn at the same time.

Victor

She hung up.

Officer (to Phyllis)

Look, I have been patient. Step aside. Now.

Wayne

Yeah.

Phyllis

I was the Executive Director of an agency. We helped people with employment insurance problems. When I saw the ad for the Foundation, I saw a new life. We never had money, we never could really change anything that created problems. But \$25 million could do a lot. In my interview, I talked about the different problems in society and how we could work to improve them. I got the job, that was almost twenty years ago. Yes, Charles and Heloise had some odd ideas, but they gave me free reign with the money. I have given away millions. I have...filled shelves. Nothing has changed. I wanted to make a difference. I did. To shelves.

Phyllis steps aside. Wayne and the Officer exit stage left.

Victor

Wayne has been arrested and taken away, and now we are out of time. Thank you again to all of our guests and callers. The next show is waiting to go on. We have to leave, and leave a lot of dangling threads. Sometimes not everything is wrapped up in a neat package. I say, we've had a great radio show. I am very pleased, except of course for Wayne needing a suction and the police arresting him. This is Victor Volunteer, which is not my real name, for Soapbox Radio. Well. My real name is Victor Wankowich. You can imagine what they called me in high school. It's time for us to go home. You, make tomorrow a better day than today.

Mike

It would have to be.

Frank

Hey! My bike is gone! Somebody stole my bike!

Frank runs out, exit stage left.

Mike stands, looks at Phyllis, who sits by the table, looking drawn and exhausted. He looks at Victor and says to him, ignoring her:

Mike

I'm going to go down there with them and make sure he has a lawyer. Thanks for having us on, it's been a ride.

Mike exits stage left.

Victor and Phyllis are alone on the stage. A lot of his vitality is now leaving him. The show is over. She looks up at him. He is reassuring.

Phyllis

I'm sorry.

Victor

For what?

Phyllis

Everyone knows what, now.

Victor

What what?

Phyllis smiles, a little.

Phyllis

You don't understand. You go onto the next show. I go back into my office, to my staff, to the people I meet with. What happened today, it's, I've stepped onto the wrong path, a long time ago. I've, I've said that. They've all heard it, or will. I'll meet with all of them and I will think, this is worthless. And they will talk me out of it because the pay is good and we fill shelves and courses. How can I face them or myself?

Victor

Roads are only paths if you allow them to be. Walk off the road. See what's in the field along the side of the road.

Phyllis

So easy to say. Seventeen years.

Victor

I understand. So make the next seventeen mean something you are proud of.

She smiles a little more but wanly. She stands, getting her things.

Victor

Come back in a month and tell us how you are doing. You can set a whole new impression. You should come back.

Phyllis

Thank you. Good-bye.

Phyllis exits stage left.

Victor sits alone. All of his vitality, now that he is alone, drains away. He looks exhausted and not fulfilled or happy. He picks up his papers from the table and slowly rips them into small pieces, eyes staring off. He puts the pieces in his shirt pocket. He looks up.

Victor

Okay, I know. The next show.

He stands slowly, visibly tired. He looks around the stage, sighs, and then quickly exits, stage left.

This play is fiction. None of the characters are real people. Any reference to an actual person is not intentional.