

of words and water
smog check earth song

A Peoplehood REAL TIME offering from Jaisey Bates for our wounded world
as part of AMERICAN BLUES THEATER's *Ripped: The Living Newspaper Project*

The writer acknowledges the Indigenous original stewards and caretakers of this land and their relations and generations past, present and future. These words have been written within the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of Indigenous peoples including the Tongva, Gabrielino, Chumash and Tataviam (Los Angeles basin area).

If these words might be of interest for nonprofit projects seeking to inspire positive actions and change, please write to the writer via their [website](#) or NPX [page](#).

of words and water¹ *smog check earth song*

CHARACTERS

EARTHLING (THEY) Grieves the mortals' wounded mortally wounded Earth.
Guilt-harrowed by their insufficient climate activism and their resources privileged life especially during this expanded span of time driving endless highway miles as endless nights unwind, trying to reset the sensors on their months' unused car so it can pass the CA smog emissions test.

EARTHSONG1 (ONE) Roles include TIME

EARTHSONG2 (TWO) Roles include TIME

CASTING Global Majority actors, any adult age.
Female-id and/or NB preferred.
Neurodiversity encouraged.

RENDERING Organic, rooted, of the body, of the Earth.
Overlap encouraged.²

EARTHSONG words are alive.³
They are the voices of Earth and Time, one entity.

Rapid fire sharp-sparking grief-wrought hope-filled dialogues stories journeys pleas.

Shared with us with the undercurrent: PLEASE.
Shared with each other with no regard for us.

When THEY drive there is no wheel. No pantomime, please.
THEY sit or rise or move with the words.

¹ Gratitude to Jim Kleinmann (PlayGround-LA) for suggesting this title.

² Words and worlds and we are running out of Time.

³ On text interpretations found rhythms songs repetitions loopings etc. and words-inspired movement and physicalizations encouraged, if of interest and should time allow, especially during THEY's words gatherings

AT RISE:

ONE and TWO as SMOG CERTIFIERS circle THEY.
Rapid-fire. It is as if THEY are prey.

ONE You've gotta DRIVE a car!

TWO You can't just let it SET there!

THEY I thought

ONE You've gotta

TWO You can't

THEY it might

ONE You've gotta

TWO You can't

THEY help?

ONE Help

TWO Help

ONE You gotta

TWO You can't

THEY The Earth?

ONE You gotta

TWO You can't

THEY In a small way?

ONE One car

TWO One car

ONE ONE car

TWO in CALIFORNIA

THEY In one very small way?
ONE HA HA HA!
TWO HA HA HA!
ONE You've gotta you've gotta you've gotta
TWO You can't you can't you can't
ONE HA HA HA!
TWO HA HA HA!
ONE/TWO HA!

*ONE and TWO break away
and join EARTHSONG
as THEY start to drive.*

THEY So now I need to drive and try to reset the sensors. Hundreds of miles of unnecessary emissions expended in the hopes of passing the emissions test by the car's registration deadline Coffee in the cup holder Windows down Highways unwinding Grief rising.

ONE and TWO reenter as TIME.

ONE Ground drying Seas rising.
TWO Ice dying Species dying.
ONE The End
TWO The End
THEY My heart.
ONE as yet unclear.
TWO The End
ONE The End
THEY This world.

TWO draws near.

THEY This mortals' wounded word.
mortally wounded world.

ONE Grief rising Hope dying.

TWO Climate change

ONE a range of strange

TWO greenhouse effects –

ONE ozone, eaten –

TWO atmospheric depletion –

ONE This planet our Mother our home

TWO she's bleeding

ONE pleading

TWO crying

ONE dying.

TWO Her voice

ONE seas

TWO skies

ONE otherwise

TWO choked with pollution

ONE she can't speak

TWO she can't breathe –

ONE Can't breathe

TWO Can't breathe

THEY Can't breathe I CAN'T–

THEY *pull over. Seek air.*

THEY words remember me Desert memories Earth dreams of ancient seas – Black Rock. That night. We watch on the rise for eagles glory blazing sunset skies I stumble as we return to camp “I’ve been impaled!” I joke but these spines have barbs they will not work loose this land claiming me and me sudden sobbing like a child at the wound at the blood rivering down my arm to the sand and – now – this moment – this wood against my back this sky with stars close enough to touch your guitar talking to coyotes singing me somewhere so right such beauty I am beyond words I can't breathe *I can't* –

ONE Sing

THEY I don't want to leave this moment this place

TWO Sing

THEY I hear our Ancestors sing I hear this land sing and something inside me unfolds opens expands in an explosion of fragments images words spiraling within an escalating and unspeakable intensity of love for everyone I’ve ever known – for everyone I’ve *never* known – forever: This.

ONE This.

THEY I can't sing This.

TWO This.

THEY *pull out. Drive.*

THEY I can't sing This and so my crying is my song – a song of grief a song of loss a song with all my love hope rage a song for an as yet unwritten white and aching page a song like waves that rise and fall but how

ONE tell me please

TWO where's the solution

THEY how can we heal this beloved ground where so many of our Relations are dying – that video – that polar bear – so many silenced hearts – all these storms – these fires – Earth rending – stories ending

ONE tell me please where's the solution

TWO when a wounded world can no longer heal itself from humans
ONE because Living has no language to wonder why
TWO Living simply wants to LIVE not die
ONE but there's no Plan(-et) B that we can see
TWO The End's unclear
ONE The End draws near:
TWO drought
ONE fires
TWO encroaching desolation
ONE the desertification of a planetary nation
TWO red skies livid boil
ONE wild winds further strip barren soils they keen
TWO over crack-'
d and life-'
less lands
ONE and where do we stand
TWO how can we withstand
ONE perfect storms polar vortexes
TWO atmospheric rivers
ONE cyclone bombs
TWO flash inferno all-engulfing holocausts
ONE towns flames-tossed
TWO scorched
ONE torched

TWO flames-lost
ONE Almeda Fire
TWO Bobcat Fire
ONE Bootleg Fire
TWO Camp Fire
ONE Hill Fire
TWO Dixie Fire
ONE Woolsey Fire
TWO wildfires ranging wild
ONE flames in rivers – rapids
TWO waves – all ablaze
ONE in a strange opaque hazed day
TWO transmuted into night via a smoke-choking light
ONE in a strange alchemy of time as smoke plumes
TWO skyward blooms
ONE visible
from
space.
TWO As a president texts blame.
ONE As climate change unnames.
TWO As residents pray – choose to stay –
ONE try to get away but there’s no time
TWO there’s No Time – they’re trapped
ONE encircled by encroaching flames

TWO for there's no fire line for those left behind

ONE no safe passage across the suddenly molten earth

TWO no way to breathe the instantly
incinerated
cindered air

ONE no way out of a no-exit tomb

TWO a world on fire

ONE Greenville

TWO Blue River

ONE Vida

TWO Phoenix

ONE Paradise – our world

TWO our world

THEY our world on fire

ONE it burns

TWO it Burns

THEY it BURNS

ONE a funeral pyre
to fire's needs
the fire feeds

TWO it surges forward from its footprint shadow

THEY insatiable
oblivious

ONE it consumes the doomed

TWO in fiery final agonies their stories end

ONE they end – the end

TWO The End

THEY THE END.

[*Beat.*]

ONE Greenville isn't green –

TWO flames leap high – Blue River smolders –

ONE grey and dry – Vida sans life

TWO under a smoking sky – Phoenix can't rise –

ONE burnt wings can't fly

TWO Then: dawn –
morning.

THEY Mourning.

ONE Mute mountains
made of embered ash.

TWO Paradise

ONE Paradise

THEY Paradise

TWO is lost.

ONE Paradise

TWO Paradise

THEY Paradise

ONE is gone.

TWO Earthquakes rending

ONE glaciers ending

TWO rogue waves

ONE Arctic shore villages unsaved –
TWO seas ice-freed
ONE rising ravenous
TWO swallowing Indigenous lands and homes –
ONE thousands of years
TWO lived in harmony with Nature
ONE unremembered by the Earth
TWO after a brief touch of blinded humans
ONE and Time.
TWO Time.
THEY We did this?
ONE Tick tock.
TWO Tick tock.
THEY We did this.
ONE Grief
TWO Hope
ONE Shards
TWO of sunbleached fabric
ONE dancing in thermal lifts
TWO dancing for ghosts
ONE and Time.
TWO Time.
THEY There's no time.

ONE Tick tock.
TWO Tick tock.
THEY We need to heal our home.
ONE You've gotta
TWO You can't
THEY This storied air thick with currents – eddies – tides –
our fingers trailing radiant wakes of words
ONE Words
TWO Words
THEY our ever-outreaching starfished hands
seeking to touch embrace trace
the space and contours of our home
coursing through our beings of water
ONE Water
TWO Water
THEY every breath a bright miracle
a new beginning pulsing
with our blood through
our rivered bodies
ONE Words
TWO Water
THEY for we are made
of words and water

The beginning or
The End
Our choice
Our final chance