

Dear Colleagues,

This is an invitation to take part in a nationwide reading of *It Can't Happen Here*.

We hope you will join us in hosting a staged reading in your own community on the evening of Monday October 24th. We have made arrangements with the Lewis estate to allow one-night readings of the play to be mounted without payment of any licensing fee during that week.

In 1935, Sinclair Lewis wrote *It Can't Happen Here*, a novel that imagines the rise of fascism in America. Concerned about race riots, a huge income gap between the rich and the poor, the stigmatizing of immigrants, global terror, and a right-wing extremist running for president, Lewis' novel reads like it was ripped out of today's headlines. Whether he's describing Buzz Windrip, the demagogue who wins the presidency based on the promise of making our country great again, or Doremus Jessup, a liberal newspaper editor who simply waits too long to take Windrip seriously, Lewis' understanding of our political system was precise and far-reaching. Reading the book now is somewhat shocking, if only because it's impossible to dismiss our current situation as an aberration. As one of the characters in the book says, the problem's not Windrip [read: Trump]; "it's the sickness that made us throw him up that we've got to attend to."

Shortly after publication of the novel, Lewis wrote a play by the same name for the Federal Theatre Project. On October 27, 1936, the play opened in 21 cities across the United States. It created a sensation, not because of its dramatic value (which is unfortunately lacking), but because of its message.

We hope to reclaim the excitement of the original production and rectify the shortcomings of the script. Berkeley Rep is opening our season with an **entirely new adaptation** of the novel, created by Tony Taccone and Bennett Cohen. Lisa Peterson will direct. It will run September 23, 2016 through the election. We have uploaded the rehearsal script to a drop box for your perusal. Please go to the Dropbox at... <http://bit.ly/2cxhjns>

If you decide to participate we ask that you notify us. We will provide a sample press release, editable artwork for a poster, horizontal and vertical ads, cast breakdown and an updated script. If you would prefer to use the original Lewis play, that is in the public domain and you are welcome to use that as well. What is most important to us is that *It Can't Happen Here* should happen in as many communities as possible!

No admission may be charged per the arrangement with the Lewis estate. We hope to generate local and national press.

Please consider being part of this project. Let us know if we can add your date, time and location to our calendar.

You may respond to **Sarah McArthur** at smcarthur@berkeleyrep.org / cell **415-307-3374** to signify interest, ask questions, and receive access to the Dropbox that will contain material to assist you in producing and promoting your reading.

Sincerely,



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