**Forum Theater**

**Saturday afternoon**

*Bob Martin*

*Theresa Osborne*

*Rutland Melton*

*Natasha Painter*

*Heather Gross*

*Austin Rutherford*

Thanks to Stanley Sturgill, Terry Reid, others, in crafting characters.

Bob: This type of theater was developed under a Brazil during a dictatorship. It’s a “rehearsal for reality.” “The knowledge that we need is right here amongst us.” I’m going to ask you to participate, maybe even a little beyond what you’re comfortable with. Challenge yourself at whatever level you’re comfortable.

Scene I:

A brother and sister are driving over a mountain, and a landmark sparks a conversation that highlights their different perspectives.

B: So many different colors in those rocks. So beautiful.

S: What?! Those are granny and papaw’s house! Now it’s just rocks!

[reflect on what’s gone vs. how things have to change.]

S: That was our heritage…and now it’s gone. When they stopped using horse and buggies they didn’t cut the horses heads off!

B: I gotta put food on the table.

S: That represents jobs, but also our heritage, and it’s gone. There’s not gonna be a place for our grandchildren!

B: I see your point. You and I together, we’ll figure it out.

What people notices:

* Heart of the issue.
* More than one side
* Divides families and communities
* When it escalates that way it doesn’t usually resolve that quickly.
* It’s easier to come to a resolution with a loved one. (But not always)
* Could have stopped, but kept going.
* Present verses the future.
* Yelling like that doesn’t usually work like it seemed to here.
* Where does the past fit into the future of present
* She talked about heritage in the mountains. But there’s also heritage in those mines.

Three questions put to pairs of participants.

What is that conversation with you?

Why is that hard?

Are there any breakthroughs?

Examples:

* My friend and I don’t have breakthroughs.
* Steve Boyce: My brother would see this as a property rights issues. The breakthrough is that I might start telling him not what I think, but what I’m aware of through the people that I know. What I see from my friends in KFTC.
* “When things get tough you don’t stop you just keep on going.” –Hollis Maxson
* Religion. “My breakthrough was that I listened to what they had to say. Instead of taking it as a criticism of me, I can just be who I am.”
* My dad’s family are all coal miners. They know this is a sustaining industry. There’s no fight about it. “You can go into the mines, but what are you going to do when there’s nothing else left, and you have to change.” Education and leaving, or education and staying.

SCENE II

Leann and Wendy. Leann is a single mom and looking for work. Wendy is a new KFTC member and student at EKU.

W: What are you going to do laid off?

L: They’ll call me back. This is my job.

W: Other opportunities?

L: I can’t even talk with you! Too many eyes are ears.

The room is the local chapter meeting. What do we tell her?

She’s my friend. I want to see her succeed. I want to see her do something that can change how she thinks about this whole situation. I don’t know how to bring all this up. Any suggestions?

* Have you ever heard about the New Opportunity School for Women in Berea? It’s a great program that helps empower women. Trains them; job opportunities; etc. It was started by the wife of a former president of Berea College.
* Prayer. Pray for her and continue to help her
* Let us know if there are ways we can help her out. Do we need to provide childcare at our meetings, etc? Keep us in the loop of ways we can help.
* She could probably collect unemployment while she looks into educational opportunities.
* There are distance learning opportunities. You have to understand it’ll come down hard on her if they see her with you. Sometimes a little patience and prayer. If you nag her, she might get fired.
* It feels so empty to say “just come to a meeting”. You know that they’ll find a community who cares and maybe some ideas. But an invitation to a meeting feels empty. So, in addition to meetings, what else could we encourage her to come too? Something that would give her energy? Are there others in a similar situation? Do we want to get together for a potluck? Maybe get some women together to just talk about the challenges. Create some spaces to talk to other people in similar situations.
* Distance earning initiative. Work from home. There’s a website.
* Maybe offer to pick her up and take her to the meeting. And we can help find a babysitter.
* Childcare: If she goes back to college, at southeast community college she can probably apply for financial aid and the school has free childcare.
* You have to be really careful around here. I was trying to help a friend up the road. Because my car was in their driveway, they were under suspicion. I was reminded “you can’t bite the hand that feeds you.” You know what they said about the folks up Collier’s Creek who tried to join KFTC—somebody’s house got burned down.

Reflection. What were good ideas?:

* Education
* Distance learning
* Creating another proposal that was something she could do.
* Financial aid
* Creating community among other laid off workers and seeing what they’d come up with on their own.

Liz Sanders plays Wendy.

* Starts with Can I help you?
* To job: Like it there?
* If you could do anything in life, what would it be?
* With the gardening, do you sell anything? Ever checked out farmers’ markets? Wouldn’t pay for everything, but it’s a supplement.
* Reflection: “I didn’t go into it like I’m gonna get a job for you. It’s not gonna happen overnight. It’s like transition. I don’t have all the answers, neither does she, but we can figure it out together”

Meta plays Wendy:

* Starts by asking about Jimmy.
* How you been?
* Leann walks away.

Torren plays Wendy:

* Heard you were laid off. That’s hard.
* I can watch them if you’ve got something else to do.
* There’s this really cool program…I can’t recall the name. But they work with women in transitions in their lives…If you came to a place where you thought the situation wasn’t what you want anymore…I’ll get back with you about the name of it.

Who? Plays Wendy:

* Strategy was about “bugging her enough to get her to listen.” Keeping the option open for when they do want to talk about it.

Then: The actors listen as their characters. Participants can ell them what they’d like to say:

* Lower the frustration.
* LeAnn, how sad is it that you have to work in an economt that can dictate who you talk with?
* You gotta think about your kids. My mom worked through school strongest person I ever met.
* I just got laid off too. Come over to my house.
* Find a way to make your art a necessity.
* WE live in one of the most beautiful places in this world. Don’t you see it? Not just the mountains, but how strong family is, how people really care about each other. What would it look like if all five of you sat down and talked together?
* The threat from the coal companies is real. It’s frightening. For those of us who aren’t laid off, it’s our job to step up for you, and invite you to go to the new opportunity class, or a yoga class. When you have children, you have to think twice about what you expose your children to.
* Share your vulnerability.