

# ***We All Live in Bhopal***

***by Sudhir Selvaraj***



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# We All Live in Bhopal - Community Edition

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This is an ongoing collection of all the materials one would need to stage a performance of the play 'We All Live in Bhopal', written by Sudhir Selvaraj.

You can download a PDF version at <http://www.weliveinbhopal.com/download/BhopalBook/>

## Contributing

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This book has been generated using [GitBook](#) and is open source. Please feel free to contribute or raise issues on [GitHub](#)

If you've never heard of GitHub before and aren't sure how to contribute, check out the video below. GitHub is actually a tool to help programmers collaborate but can also be used to collaborate on any text based document.

[Collaboration with Git and GitHub](#)

## License

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# We All Live in Bhopal: Sketches from a Disaster

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Edmond Saffra Theatre, King's College London July 18th, 2014

## *Notes*

1. Set: An empty stage
2. Actors will be dressed in a single colour (preferably black), using basic props listed in the script to transform themselves into the respective characters.
3. There will be a screen set up off stage showing images from the disaster and change in chapter names.

# Scene 1:

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*The title 'Where Were You?' is projected onto the screen.*

The play commences in darkness. The actors haphazardly scream a combination of phrases such as “run!”, “What is happening?” “Bhagh!” and “Where is s/he?” Five drum beats are heard and on the final beat the lights slowly come on to reveal ‘The Narrator’

**The Narrator:** Where were you when you first heard about 9/11? When news reached you that Osama Bin Laden had finally been caught? How did it feel seeing what was unfolding in Mumbai during the terrorist attacks? Where were you? Think about it.

(Narrator pauses for 5 seconds)

Continuous media coverage, emotional visuals and fiery political rhetoric have crafted a story in our collective memories. It makes us all believe that we know the whole picture but how much do we really know? More importantly, how much do we really want to know?

(Picks up many old looking newspapers and starts reading)

Some excerpts from the newspapers on December 4th, 1984 -Hundreds of people die from effects of toxic gases which leaked from a chemical factory near the central Indian city of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The accident happened in the early hours of this morning at the American-owned Union Carbide Pesticide Plant, 5 kilometres from Bhopal.

... a cloud of lethal white gas to float from the factory over Bhopal, a city that is home to more than 900,000 people.

... more than 20,000 people have required hospital treatment for symptoms including swollen eyes, frothing at the mouth and breathing difficulties. Thousands of dead cats, dogs, cows and birds litter the streets and the city's mortuaries are filling up fast.(Putting down the newspaper)

This is the worst industrial disaster humanity has ever witnessed.

(The narrator quizzes two or three members of the audience.)

Do you remember where you were the night of December 3rd 1984? What were you doing?

(Following the question The Narrator exits. Enter Champadevi Shukla. The actress will use a head scarf or dupata)

**Champadevi Shukla:** I remember where I was. I was in Bhopal. I am Champadevi Shukla and I survived that night. My family lived a peaceful and content life less than a kilometre away from the factory. We always knew that the factory emitted small amounts of gas every day. But that night, that night was different. (Enter Rachna Dhingra wearing a pair of glasses and carrying a jute “activist” bag.)

**Rachna Dhingra:** I am Rachna Dhingra. I don't exactly remember where I was or what I was doing when I heard what had happened. I know I was seven years old and living with my family in Delhi. I vaguely remember hearing about it over the radio. It Honestly, I probably first heard about it when I was 14, twenty years after it sounded boring so I went back outside to play.

(Enter Satinath Sarangi wearing his trademark red turban)

**Sathinath Sarangi:** My name is Satinath Sarangi. I was doing research for my Ph.D. in a village called Papria, 150 kilometers away from Bhopal when I heard about it over the radio. Everything went silent for me. I had no words to describe what I felt. Hearing about the desperate need for volunteers, I arrived in Bhopal the very next day.

(Enter Sarah fidgeting with a scarf)

**Sarah:** I am Sarah, an American born on the other side of the globe in a little town in South Dakota in the U.S. I wasn't even born when the tragedy occurred. Honestly, I probably first heard about it when I was 14, twenty years after it happened. (Sarah and Rachna Exit)

**Champadevi Shukla:**

Earlier that night, my sons returned from a film, complaining that their eyes were burning. I told them, "go to sleep. It would be all better in the morning" (Laughs quietly to herself). In the middle of the night, I heard someone shouting "Bhaag! Bhaag!". The room where all six members of my family slept was slowly filling with a white gas. Our eyes started burning and tearing; our noses and mouths started watering. We rushed out of our home, having no time to fully clothe ourselves, not even to put our slippers on! We kept running despite the immense pain. The pale moonlight felt like needles piercing our eyes. We knew that if we fell, we would be trampled and not get up again. Satinath Sarangi The magnitude of the disaster hit me only when I arrived the next day. Where do you start? What do you do? It was unfathomable. I was helpless. Just outside the railway station I was shocked to see dozens of people walking a few steps and then falling down. As I walked a little further, I saw people huddled in small groups. They just sat there; crying and groaning in misery.

**Champadevi Shukla:**

At the hospital, the scene was horrific. Doctors were perplexed because they had no idea what exactly had happened. They were unable to treat anyone because they were unsure about the composition of this strange white gas. Anyone who fell unconscious was added to a pile of dead bodies resembling sacks of wheat!

**Satinath Sarangi:** Communal graves had to be dug to bury the Muslims and truckloads of wood had to be brought from all over the region to cremate Hindus.

**Champadevi Shukla:** It wasn't lucky that we survived that night. Those who died that night were the lucky ones

(Lights) (Five Loud Drum beats indicate the transition to the next scene)

## Scene 2:

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The title 'A Proportionate Response' is projected onto the screen

(A slow fade to reveal the Narrator, Sathyu and Rashida on stage in a very News Show type stage set-up. The sound of a news cast will start and visuals will reflect the same.)

**The Narrator (As News Anchor):** Good evening and welcome to a special edition of 'Burden of Proof'. We are filming in front of a live studio audience in London. The airwaves are still buzzing with the unprecedented mandate that India's government has won this year. Not since Rajiv Gandhi in 1984, has a single party been voted in with an overwhelming, absolute majority. But 1984...there was something about that year. It was the first time an Indian went into space, and the year when 8000 Sikhs were brutally massacred due to gross police negligence. However, above all, it was the year of the Bhopal Gas tragedy. Today, thirty years later, we wanted to revisit what happened and what is the current state of affairs in Bhopal. We have with us, Sathinath Sarangi and Rashida Bee, two leading activists in the 30 year- long struggle for justice in Bhopal. In recognition of his work with the struggle, Sathyu was named the 'Man of the Year' by The Week, one of India's leading magazines. With him is Rashida Bee, a survivor of the gas leak and a leading voice in the struggle, championing the rights of survivors and extensively advocating for women survivors. She was one of the recipients of the 2004 Goldman Prize. Thank you both for being with us tonight. Rashida, I'd like to bring you in first. And a very direct first question - Who do you think bears the greatest blame?

**Rashida Bee:** The government! The government has been the biggest hindrance to the process of justice from the beginning. They have intentionally reduced the death toll; throwing dead bodies into the Betwa River, burning them, or simply hiding them.

**Satinath Sarangi:** A German toxicologist Max Dauderer arrived on the scene hours after the incident with Sodium Thiosulphate – a drug generally believed to bring relief to people exposed to cyanide.

**The Narrator:** Cyanide? So you mean to say that the gas that leaked from Union Carbide that night was cyanide?

**Satinath Sarangi:** Well, not exactly. The factory was actually built to produce a gas called MIC. The thing is that they hid the composition of this gas as a trade secret. It was only when the Indian Medical Council later proved that Sodium Thiosulphate actually helped that we realized that there HAD to be some cyanide in the gas. The antidote was initially endorsed by the Medical Director of Union Carbide. However, three days later, he reversed his recommendation in a press conference, flanked by Union Carbide lawyers

**The Narrator:** And how did you respond to that?

**Satinath Sarangi:** We still continued to administer it in the make-shift clinics we had set-up around the city, keeping meticulous notes about the positives of the sodium thiosulphate. One night, the police raided us taking with them all our records. That was the last time we saw them. This is just one of the many stories.

**The Narrator:** According to a 1991 settlement, \$470 million was paid to the victims. Shouldn't that be case closed?

**Rashida Bee:** The compensation that the government and courts have recognized is not justice. Where is the justice when the person in-charge is still free? Where is the truth of the suffering we went through? Nobody speaks about the struggle victims and their relatives had to go through for even get this money. Bribes to doctors, no proper check-ups for 90% of the victims and nothing for children as they were minors. No compensation for women because it was calculated based on workman's compensation. Is this justice?

**The Narrator:** (a second of silence) Ok! Moving on to the next question. Numerous reports state that illnesses and ailments are still experienced among new borns in the area. Is this because of the leak itself?

**Rashida Bee:** We see it all over our community. My friend Champadevi Shukla's granddaughter was born with

deformed lips. Many children are born crippled or with cleft lips, missing palates or brain damage. And they are the lucky ones who have not gotten cancer. The water here is not clean enough for us to even wash our hands.

**Satinath Sarangi:** For three years prior to the leak, veteran journalist Rajkumar Keswani warned that the plant was unsafe and the management knew about it, but did nothing. The plant, running under massive losses, adopted cost-cutting strategies such as eliminating the cooling gas in the plant, halving the safety team and saving on transport cost by dumping their toxic waste in a site close by. That night was just the culmination of neglect and utter irresponsibility.

**The Narrator:** Agreeing that more liability needs to be discussed, at this stage, Sathyu, who do we hold responsible? We know that there is no one person willing to stand up and take responsibility for this huge loss to humanity.

**Satinath Sarangi:** It has been impossible to extradite Warren Anderson. The US departments of State and Justice refuse to let him be tried in an Indian court! When he was arrested by the Bhopal police, he was taken to Carbide's luxury guest house under nominal 'house arrest'. He had access to a telephone in his room which he used to extensively call-in favours from his friends in high places. The police released Anderson after three hours on the orders of the then Chief Secretary of the state of Madhya Pradesh. He was freed on a surety of \$1,500, flown to Delhi in the Chief Minister's plane and subsequently to America.

**Rashida Bee:** Till today he remains in the U.S. and lives in his million dollar mansion in the Hamptons. He had connections that prevented his arrest then and he has connections now. Money helps.

**The Narrator:** I know this is unconventional for our show but there seems to be a very insistent member of our audience who wants to ask a question. Yes, Sir?

**The Narrator:** I just had a clarification so the Chief Minister knew about this whole thing? Who was it?

**Sathinath Sarangi:** Of course, Arjun Singh knew about it. In fact he was one of the first to know about it. He was informed what happened and was told to leave the city immediately. In his memoirs Arjun Singh explains that he went to his old school in Allahabad where he sat in the chapel to and I quote, "pray for the welfare of my people and gain moral courage." I find it difficult to fathom that a chief minister needed to go pray 550 kilometres away when citizens were dying left, right and centre in his capital!

**Rashida Bee:** The people's "true leader" was, in all probability, keeping his true distance from the people. That night angry protesters raised the slogan "gas nikli adhi raat, Arjun bhaga ratoon raat". When translated this means "gas leaked at midnight, Arjun ran away under the cover of darkness".

**The Narrator:** We have come to the end of tonight's show. Thirty years on it appears that the battle for justice in Bhopal is still on. As a small editorial note, I would like to urge all our viewers to continue to research more on this topic. Hear stories from all sides and then form your opinions. This is the whole way we can build a well-informed and active citizenry. Thank you, once again to our guests Rashida Bee and Sathinath Sarangi. Join us next week.

(Lights fade out. Five Loud Drum beats indicate the transition to the next scene)



## Scene 3:

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The title 'Official Communiqué: A Message from the CEO' is projected onto the screen

(Slow fade onto The Narrator. He is meant to provide an introduction to the CEO as one would at an important event.)

**The Narrator:** On November 28th, 2002, shortly after the Dow Chemical Company completed its acquisition of Union Carbide, President and CEO of the Dow Chemical Company, Mr. Michael Parker wrote an open letter via Dow' intranet to ALL employees. The letter was titled, "India 18 years ago". Ladies and Gentleman, Mr. Michael Parker.

(Enter Michael Parker wearing a solid maroon or red tie. His hair is well- kept and slick - very corporate. Steps onto a raised platform.)

**Michael Parker:** Dear Colleagues, December 3rd marks the 18th anniversary of the terrible tragedy that occurred in Bhopal, India. It was a tragedy of unprecedented proportions, and no one in industry – especially the chemical industry – should ever forget. On December 3rd, I plan to spend a few quiet moments reflecting on the lessons of Bhopal and also personally recommit to achieving excellence in Dow's environment, health and safety performance, and continuing our drive toward Sustainable Development. I encourage every Dow employee to do the same. Without a doubt, the tragedy changed our industry forever as companies across the globe collectively took on the moral responsibility to prevent anything like it from ever happening again.

(As each actor enters they should position themselves to effectively display the different worlds that these characters occupy)

**Rashida Bee:** Even today more than 20,000 tonnes of chemicals are mixed with the soil. They only highlight the small amount that they are storing safely. Both the Central and State governments claim that there is no toxic waste in the soil or water and protesters are lying about this.

**Michael Parker:** As you know, Dow acquired Union Carbide's stock on February 6, 2001. And that is why, with the anniversary of the Bhopal tragedy approaching, it is very likely that Dow will be the focus of protests and demonstrations. To provide some balance to the claims you'll likely hear from environmental groups over the coming weeks, I wanted to reiterate Dow's perspective on this issue.

In the eyes of the highest courts of India, the Bhopal case is closed. In 1989 a settlement agreement was reached between Union Carbide, Union Carbide India Limited and the Indian government through which Union Carbide paid \$470 million in compensation, covering all claims relating to the incident.

**Satinath Sarangi:** The amount was decided behind closed doors enabling Carbide to go Scott free. The compensation distribution was bad in design and worse in implementation. It is a perfect example of how things should not be done.

**Michael Parker:** The Indian Supreme Court reviewed this settlement agreement in 1991, and concluded that it was 'just, equitable and reasonable'.

**Satinath Sarangi:** It is apparent that people genuinely believe that the value of an American life is higher than the value of other lives. Dow has accepted the liabilities of Union Carbide in the U.S. but not in India. When trying to explain about the meager compensation, Dow's PR Chief replied, "\$500 is plenty good for an Indian."

**Michael Parker:** At that point the legal case was closed. So when Dow completed its acquisition of Union Carbide stock in February 2001, the subsidiary had no remaining liability for the tragedy that had occurred 16 years previously.

**Rashida Bee:** The Bhopal gas tragedy should be an example for companies all over the world. Dow should legally take responsibility for the mess created here. People should be given the right to live respectfully and be allowed to earn two meals a day with dignity.

**Michael Parker:** The black-and-white legal case is one thing. But, there is more for us to consider. We are a company committed to Sustainable Development, and therefore, the very notion of good corporate citizenship.

It is extremely likely we will face a number of protests at our sites around the world during the coming weeks, and into the future. I regret for this distraction – I realize it can be both disruptive and distressing – but I hope you can understand why we will not yield to this sort of pressure. I also hope you will not let this deter your pride in our company and all that it stands for. The products we produce benefit people around the world, improving their lives each and every day

**Rachna Dhingra:** The struggle of Bhopal is not just about the people of Bhopal we are all part of this 'cycle of poison'. The same companies who manufacture the pesticides are the same ones who make the drugs to relieve you from the pesticides and yes, they are the same ones who make the genetically modified crops that we will soon be eating.

**Michael Parker:** So, on December 3rd, take a moment, to reflect on the tragedy of Bhopal, and to recommit to doing your part to moving our company ever closer to that vision of zero harm to the environment. Thank you for your continued support. Sincerely, Michael D. Parker, President and CEO of the Dow Chemical Company

(Five Loud Drum beats indicate the transition to the next scene)

## Scene 4:

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The title 'Campaigns' is projected onto the screen

**Rachna Dhingra:** Rather long for Facebook but I wanted to thank all of you and share my thoughts

(Typing) Dear All, As you may know the results of the 2014 election are available at the Election Commission's website. As per the results for the Bhopal Parliamentary seat the BJP candidate Mr. Alok Sanjar votes won the seat defeating the congress candidate Mr. P C Sharma and I Rachna Dhingra stand at third place.

(looks up from the computer) Phew! It is ironic, really. I often think back to that 7 year old who didn't care enough about some announcement on the radio to even listen to it fully. I heard snatches of the news report, but went back to playing in the garden in Delhi. At that point, I never would have thought then that what happened that night would have had such a profound impact on my life.

My participation in these elections is just another example of how I have been trying to bring about change in the system. In 1999, I was doing my undergrad degree in business from the University of Michigan when I saw activists from Bhopal protesting on campus. On talking to them, I found out that they were there to oppose the merger of Union Carbide and Dow Chemicals, saying that Dow could not accept just the assets of Union Carbide without accepting its liabilities. Bhopal, therefore, was Dow's responsibility. Those activists made me realise how bad the situation was. I decided at that point to bring about change from the inside. But it was only when I was exposed to Dow as a client while working for Accenture after graduation that I found out how hopeless the situation actually was! I learned they would never respond to the environmental or human rights travesties in Bhopal. Corporations don't have a mind or soul. Their bottom line is profit.

At that point, I turned my back on the opportunity of a life of comfort, quit my job, and came to Bhopal to join the movement.

(Sounds of knocking)

**Sarah:** Rachna? Hi, I am Sarah! We were supposed to meet today. I was the one emailing you about the work that we have been doing with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

**Rachna Dhingra:** Of course, I wasn't expecting you to come until the evening but don't worry, come in. I was just posting a thank you note on facebook for our supporters.

**Sarah:** I don't know how you do it, Rachna – manage to stand for elections in the midst of all the other work you are doing.

**Rachna Dhingra:** You study English Literature, right Sarah? I am sure you have heard of this poem by Maya Angelou called 'Phenomenal Woman'. "It's the fire in my eyes, And the flash of my teeth,

**Sarah:** The swing in my waist, And the joy in my feet.

**Together:** I'm a woman Phenomenally."

**Sarah:** (smiling) It is one of my favourites.

**Rachna Dhingra:** I get my strength from the women in Bhopal. I have had a privileged life. But these women have been fighting for 30 years now. Together, we are fighting; ensuring that our stories are heard by as many people as possible. We do this so that no more Bhopals happen anywhere in the world. I will tell you a story that exemplifies this incredible strength of the women of Bhopal that I draw on whenever I feel that all is lost.

(Enter Champadevi Shukla and Rashida Bee)

**Champadevi Shukla:**

In the summer of 1989, Rashida Bee came up with the idea that we should go to tell the Prime Minister of our problems. He is supposed to represent us. He must be very busy and hasn't been able to come see what happened yet. So we must go to him. On June 1st, 1989, our group of 117 people started our 'pad yatra' where we would march from Bhopal to New Delhi.

**Rashida Bee:**

We walked close to 40 kilometres every day. When we got blisters on our feet, we treated it with herbs we found on the road. When our sandals wore out, we tied leaves to our feet and continued walking. We had taken food to last us for only one day and no more than 40 rupees in hand. The women sold their jewelry to be able to buy food and medicine for our children. We rested when we could, seeking shelter in the nights from anyone who offered it. In total, we walked close to 850 kilometers across 4 states in 33 days.

**Rachna Dhingra:** See Sarah, women have been especially affected by the exposure to this gas. It has had a bad effect on their endocrine and reproductive systems. Due to pressures that Indian society places on women they face trauma and mental health concerns that men do not have to contend with. They have to contend with questions such as

**Rashida Bee:**

'Will I get married?'

**Champadevi Shukla:**

'Can I have children?' and

**Rashida Bee:**

'Will they be healthy?'

**Rachna Dhingra:** Yet they came out on the streets and continue to do so; looking for justice not only for themselves but for movements around the world who are looking to them as role models.

**Rashida Bee:**

We finally reached Delhi. We waited near India Gate singing songs in protest against the injustice we were facing. We hoped to meet Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. We were told instead to meet the then Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh who was in Delhi.

**Champadevi Shukla:**

He told us to return home and he promised us our due rights. We should have written it down in paper, but we trusted him blindly. We never knew Chief Ministers lie too. (Rashida and Champadevi Shukla exit)

**Rachna Dhingra:** In 2004, Rashida Bee and Champadevi Shukla were awarded the prestigious 'Goldman Award', Imagine it as the 'Nobel Prize for the Environment' in recognition of their sustained efforts as advocates for victims of the tragedy.

**Sarah:** I read about this... and they used their prize money to establish the Chingari Trust, right? For children born to parents exposed to the gas or the contaminated water.

**Rachna Dhingra:** Yeah. Do you know what 'Chingari' means in Hindi? It means 'spark'. Sarah, women are the backbone of this movement. It is their example that makes me believe that a better world is not only possible but it is coming.

**Sarah:** I agree

**Rachna Dhingra:** Give me two minutes, I just need to finish off something. (Resumes typing) It was a roller coaster ride, the election campaign and I consider myself lucky that I had your support. Do let me know if you would like to know more about my campaign experience or any other aspect. Best Regards, Rachna Dhingra. And...post.

(Lights)

## Scene 5:

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The title 'Olympic Aspirations' is projected onto the screen

**Sarah:** My name is Sarah. I am an American citizen and I stand with the people of Bhopal working with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal. I am often questioned about why I care so much about Bhopal. After all, it happened before I was born. It happened on the other side of the world and has nothing to do with me. Right? WRONG!

Bhopal is something that should matter to everyone, no matter how old you are or where you come from. It should not be bound by "citizenship". Corporate irresponsibility and neglect continues to happen across the world. We may not live in Bhopal, India but if we do not stand up for justice, pretty soon we will all live in Bhopal.

Each year I coordinate a protest outside the Annual General Meeting of The Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan. We picket the premises as shareholders enter the meeting. Our signs read "25,000 dead and counting, "DOW clean up Bhopal" and "Justice for Bhopal".

We obtain shares from shareholders, allowing us to attend the meeting as proxies. In the Midland Center hung a giant chalkboard asking us to answer questions such as "What are the biggest world challenges?" We took the liberty of writing "Bhopal" underneath that question. It was erased by the time we passed that way when the meeting was over. The CEO of DOW, Andrew Liveris' presentation was very focused on their new catchphrase of Andrew Liveris (Walking in wearing a bright solid blue power tie) Solutionism

**Sarah:** Some quotes that I found particularly amusing were...

**Andrew Liveris:** We are Dow. We are Solutionists.

**Sarah:** And...

**Andrew Liveris:** Dow does not simply operate all over the world; it is respected all over the world.

**Sarah:** (Scoffs loudly)

**Andrew Liveris:** Today, Dow is in the business of breakthroughs. We are in the business of solutions. This company is doing well, and profiting greatly in the process.

**Sarah:** (From the Audience) During the Q and A, I asked - how can our company afford to sponsor the Olympics claiming to be sustainable and socially responsible, when we refuse to clean up Bhopal? Isn't Union Carbide a wholly- owned subsidiary of ours?

**Andrew Liveris:** First of all, I want to point out how the fundamental facts are wrong in how you framed your question. Dow never owned or operated Union Carbide at the time of the gas leak. According to the 1991 court case, the government of India was fully responsible for cleaning up Bhopal and this issue is in their hands. Your actions here are misguided and misdirected and you would best be served by flying to India and posing your question to Indian officials.

**Sarah:** Massive protests took place surrounding Dows sponsorship of the Olympics in the UK, India, and the US. The Olympic Games Ethics Commissioner, Meredith Alexander, resigned on air over Dow's sponsorship. A motion to terminate Dow's Olympic sponsorship was only narrowly rejected in an 11-10 vote. This debacle made the Holmes list of the worst public relations crises of 2011.

**Andrew Liveris:** (Sarcastically) Did you have a question or do you just like the sound of your own voice?

**Sarah:** Yes, here is my question. Despite all the positives Dow likes to mention about last year's Olympic

sponsorship, you cannot deny that the backlash from our sponsorship created a public relations fiasco?

**Andrew Liveris:** The Olympics have been a resounding success for our company. We have benefited beyond our expectations from our sponsorship. We are committed to a sustainable Olympics. What we are doing is good for the people of the world and I'm not going to apologize for that.

Activists' attempts to link us to Bhopal are misguided and misdirected. The Indian government owns the plant site and all cases regarding Union Carbide are closed. Go speak with the Indian government, as this is their problem. If I get asked this question again, I will not be responding. (Five Loud Drum beats indicate the transition to the next scene)

## Scene 6:

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The title 'Rabid Optimists' is projected onto the screen

(Lights fade in on the Narrator)

**The Narrator:** Often, historic events can fall victim to becoming a single story - One told over and over again ensuring that it becomes a single truth in public memory. Nigerian Novelist Chimamanda Adichie says that single stories create stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They create one dominant story. How stories are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told are really dependent on power. (Pause)

What do you think? Are the Bhopal activists relentless crusaders for justice? Or is Dow Chemical a victim of the activists? Whichever side you are on, remember it is important to hear both stories. Hearing the many stories enables you to take a more informed position.

**Cast:** Stories matter.

**Cast:** Many stories matter.

**Cast:** We hope our stories have made you more aware about what is happening in Bhopal and around the world.

**Cast:** Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign.

**Champadevi Shukla:**

About the suffering we endured and how we chose to react to it, against all odds.

**Cast:** But stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.

**Rashida Bee:** That you don't need to be famous, influential, or rich to stand for the right. Power is with us when we are "together".

**Cast:** Stories can break the dignity of a people but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

**Sarah:** That people's struggles around the world are not isolated but inter-connected.

**Cast:** You ask us why we still fight.

**Satinath Sarangi:** What makes us believe that after 30 years we will one day see justice?

**Cast:** Justice will be served. We are optimists, rabid Optimists.

**Satinath Sarangi:** Yes, I am a rabid optimist.

**Cast:** For me, Every tree that continues to stand, Every stream that continues to flow,

**Satinath Sarangi:** Is an indication That the battle is not only on, It is being won.

**Cast:** Possibly you will tell me about the nuclear arms race,

**Satinath Sarangi:** And all I can tell you is that An unknown child held my hand with love.

**Cast:** You will try to draw me into the plateau of practical life Tell me that not only God but all the religious and non-religious leaders are dead.



**Satinath Sarangi:** And all I can tell you is that across the forest lives a young man who calls the earth his mother.

**Cast:** You will reason with me

**Cast:** And I will talk nonsense like this.

**Cast:** And because the difference between reason and poetry is the difference between breathing and living life.

**Satinath Sarangi:** I will read poems to you. Poems full of optimism. Poems full of dreams. Maybe poems better than this one

(Lights out and one final loud drumbeat)

# About The Play

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The play was written as a way to education and engage audiences about an important chapter in Indian history. Through in-depth primary and secondary research, the play gives audiences a look at the disaster beyond the headlines. According to Sudhir Selvaraj, the playwright, *"Often we feel content in knowing about the facts of a tragedy. We feel like we know the whole event. This play takes you beyond that to hear directly from what has happened in the past thirty years in Bhopal."*

The play focuses on five pivotal events in the thirty year long struggle and is told by those involved in these occasions. It analyses what happened on that night and the repercussions that continue till today. Exploring topics of environmental damage, the role of civil society, and corporate irresponsibility, the play is constructed based on first hand accounts from survivors, activists and corporate executives

Conscious of the fact that a majority of Indians were born after the disaster occurred, the play is primarily devised to target young people who consist of a majority of our audiences. The unique aspect of the performances is a discussion that follows each performance where audiences are also challenged to think about what other calamities that are in the making. As such this play serves as a bridge between the past and the present.

Selvaraj has travelled extensively around the world leading workshops and hosting readings of this play. After successful theatrical readings in King's College London, Concordia College, Minnesota and the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore among others, this will be the fourteenth and final performance of the production in this season.

The performances are a product of workshops held with participants. Participants are not professional actors, rather are community members who are trained by the Renegade Arts and Theatre Society to become facilitators to use theatre as a means to spark conversation in their community.

# Credits

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