

Life is Improv

The real person within a character is like a tesseract...if the shapes match.



IMPERCEPTIBLE RELICS

JUN 26, 2025



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What is improv? It's a way of thinking about actions, before they become actions. By some extensions, it could be thought of as a lifestyle, especially when no reason is needed to avoid improvising. One does not just *become* an improviser, unless that person innately improvises and merely had no word for it. In many ways, improvisation is a natural state, only inhibited when norms and rules are signalled. It then becomes an act once it becomes conscious, either for the actor or the subjects, or both. Improvisation has not been a major part of my life, but I did take a year of classes at a couple theater schools in the late 00s (08-09). One was the Annoyance Theater, and the other was Theatre Momentum. Thousands of people annually take an improv class, but very few remain as lifetime improvisers (on stage). Some of [Del Close](#)'s students were my teachers.

I would love to share some stories about what fun it was to act there, and maybe some other time, but right now I'd like to write about an idea that's been on my mind for some time. I often wonder why I changed careers so many times post-graduation: sometimes it was voluntary, other times it seemed less voluntary (job market, hiring trends, failing grad school, being young and foolish, etc) While I still feel like I regretted some career mistakes/misses, I've grown to become more open to alternative career paths. I realize that even though I technically accepted new positions and failures in my original career goals, I have thought about different careers ever since I was in the [7th grade](#). I can still recite almost every profession I've wanted to become since then, of the top of my head. In the 7th grade (Computer Animator for Disney after seeing Toy Story). In the 12th grade (without anyone telling me- accountant and I

had dabbled with Architecture since the 8th, when my math teacher asked the class to draw a colored illustration of the Chicago Skyline, and I rebelled by turning in a highly detailed pencil sketch with extremely fine lines (notably on the Aon building), and I didn't get any points off for that (in fact the teacher was really impressed and I was relieved she didn't mind that I just used one pencil color- graphite). By senior year of high school, however, exactitude in measurements probably led me to pass on architecture. Sure, I know numbers, but all the time, perhaps consistency bored me to an extent, and perhaps it is fortunate that ceilings in many buildings are level at 8' in all four corners of a room. If I was an architect, or a bricklayer, I might round off one or two dimensions somewhere in the wrong place, and I might have such an incongruous design that might make a Cubist painting look like a blueprint. By freshman year of college, I still wanted to expand my English lexicon, but dipping my toes in the waters, I felt like I wasn't cut out for it. The first time I remembered I wasn't a great writer was in my Intro to Fiction course, when the TA asked what yellow symbolized in the text. Many of the students would suggest something faded or symbolic, but I raised my hand and said, "banana." This was after like 5 or 6 other intelligent responses. The TA, rightly so, said, "Oh, come on." There were probably some groans in the class that I've blotted from my memory- this was like 2002 or early 2003. I wasn't really thinking at that time, and it didn't really have any relevance to the story. I don't know why I said it- I didn't have trouble interpreting symbolism later on, but I was young then, and was more interested in partying, socializing or studying other things. I've heard jokes that most men don't mature at an early age, and I think it's 100% true. It's also true that men can mature when they reach adulthood, but just choose not to. I wasn't a class clown in the same way a full-time clown might be. I also wasn't a Ferris Bueller type either, but in high school I remember talking to lots of different subcultures – "the [sportos](#), the motorheads, geeks...wasteoids, dweebies...they all adore him."

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (2/3) Movie CLIP - He's a Righteous Dude (1986) HD



Ferris Bueller is like a Congressman meeting with his constituents. That is how he builds his popularity. Max Fischer's numerous extracurricular activities is a way of getting to know many people (even a guy in South America who supplies him piranhas). Wasn't it his father who in *Rushmore* imagined he would go on to become a diplomat? The DVD has an extra scene /short movie where Max plays a high level national security official.

I made a lot of jokes in my Italian class, sometimes unwittingly- like arriving from gym class and not realizing my t-shirt was on backwards, and a classmate next to me telling me, "your shirt's on backwards!" and me responding just above my breath so everyone could hear, "Well, isn't that the style these days?" "No? That's inside out!" he said and "What are you, an old man!?" and "Nice save," I could hear over a classroom of laughter, some of which I earned, and some I couldn't tell if it was at me or with me, but that's how I prefer it. I reversed the shirt by tucking my arms in the shirt and not needing to leave to change it- I think that since it was the last or 2nd to last class of the day, I just planned to wear it backwards because it wasn't much time til school was out, and didn't care if someone noticed, or subconsciously wanted to see what reception it would get against the other competing and "cool" alternative style: the

inside-out shirt. Because, on a certain level, shirts on backwards *can* be *kind of* artistic cool. Sometimes, I like to imagine I'm a painter sometimes wearing a smock because they look like they're shirts that are always on backwards. I'm not a trend setter, but I can be a norm-breaker, simply for wanting to know how long people can tolerate an innocuous faux paux before they feel the need to comment.

This wasn't a private school, either, so the Max Fischer dynamic didn't apply- though that appeared to be more of the impression by others once I attended college- the average income of the student's families at the *flagship midwestern state university* was higher than in my high school. Interestingly enough, every so often people would speak Spanish to me in high school, seeing my brown hair and eyes, once when doing yard work at home or more often, at school, but I did not learn Spanish. In college, around my junior year, a cafeteria student-employee attending the buffet asked if I was looking for kosher meat, and I thought it was funny that it was the first time someone mistook me for a culture other than Spanish speaking. I must be moving up in the world, I thought.

"Once you go improv, you can never go back" (to "acting" and not acting). This is a belated observation, but I don't think it's always true. Improv helps acting- it's more of a tool than its own thing, except for the purists who like to take it to an art form, like my teachers did and that is perfectly fine. In fact, there probably isn't enough appreciation of pure improv, much like high art. I got close enough to understand and appreciate the art form, and continued to look for applications in the wild. There is a higher prestige often associated with scripted acting, and one thing I remember from one of the classes, is that "your strengths become your weaknesses and your weaknesses become your strengths." Improv requires flexibility and a jack-of-all trades mentality. It requires accepting the gift that other actors define (gift is an improv term for plot device where each actor cannot deny the other's contribution, but can edit it; in other words, all statements are treated as fact. For example two office workers on the 27th floor of a building are sitting near a window and one says, "oh look, a pig is flying across the sky," the other person in improv etiquette/"rules" wouldn't say, "no, that's impossible, **let me rewrite the scene.**" They would only be able to edit it, with something like, "Oh, flying south for the winter?" or "ooh, they're flying higher than

the Wright Brother's first attempt!") for the most positive scene building. While I have welcomed most gifts in scenes, my hearing loss would sometimes mistaken them and introduce a non-sequitur and I would occasionally reject ones arbitrarily or immaturely, overdoing some absurdity. With a pair of hearing aids properly tuned and fitted, I would likely be able to demonstrate more awareness and prompt responsiveness- even an audition I did in college was off because I didn't hear all the cues.

The idea of improvisation scares a lot of people, because many people live on a fixed income, have a set number of opportunities, and aren't always able to change jobs (or at least aren't willing to work for less pay than their previous job). But thinking deeply about improv, and it can very much be a way of thinking, if not a lifestyle, whenever a moment can benefit from an additional makeshift change of plans. Like the economic term, "sunk cost." many people wish to stay invested in a career they hate because they invested so much time into it, only to realize later on that accepting one's losses may be a better life goal. Although I wouldn't say that happens often- everyone is different and I've been mixed on this idea too- a few months ago I recall getting an emails for QA chemist/lab tech positions- job postings that I haven't seen in over a decade when I was a fresh graduate. Was it AI or human recruiters that might not have even looked at my resume and haven't seen that I've been out of a lab in more than 15 years. Like, do they think I want to do gas chromatography like I last did in my Biochemistry Lab course in 2005? If so, wow. Maybe I do want to talk to them (if they are a real person). Maybe this is why improvisation has metastasized across my degree and all of my thinking. Am I driven more by the unknown, by perks and adequate compensation, than a rational and straightforward career plan, like something that is considered more stable? (to be fair, gas chromatography is probably a more stable position than other jobs in tech, that might not require as much retraining.) But I really don't remember much about that, other than it is a mass spectrometer that weighs atoms by their displacement on a blotter paper. Kind of like a horse race for chemicals. But doing gas chromatography every day for every year for even a number of years sounds tedious, and potentially I might miss out on something else I might want to pursue- after all, there are so many hours left in the day after working 9-5 to pay the bills. As

Jimmy O. Yang would say in his [standup](#) tour “[Good Deal](#),” his father told him that “everyone does what they hate for money and use money to do what they love.”

Over 30 Minutes of Jimmy O. Yang: Good Deal



Yang calls it “Old school Chinese mentality.” It’s probably also old school Italian mentality, because that’s very similar to what I’ve been told. Of course, no sane person would ever suggest that they hate their job to their employer, and I am not implying that about myself (because I don’t), but in the past there were many jobs where I held that it was much less than ideal. It was like I became even more under qualified for unlearning things I knew in high school, and the overqualification became a double penalty. Low pay (not enough to afford living in Chicago or have any savings left over) and underutilized intellectual capabilities. One thing I learned in college after the fact was that I spent too much time getting to know people who attended schools like in *The Breakfast Club*, had [garages](#) like Cameron’s dad (The Ben Rose House, with windows in a canopy-like view), then envying them that I didn’t get to spend a Saturday in detention in a slightly nicer library (which I just found out today didn’t even exist at that school, but was [constructed](#) inside a gym). In retrospect, none of that mattered in college, because I had more libraries than I could spend in at once.

My first job out of college was a temp job. Three weeks in a frozen foods factory was the most unintellectual job I ever had. I was hired alongside one other temp co-worker, who was an immigrant and he needed job ten times more than me. It was also the first and only job that I was offered and started the same day, something fairly rare nowadays, but it was a different labor sector, so it's not really a signifier of anything other than the staffing levels.

My second and third jobs were also at temp agencies- one for 8 months and another for three weeks. The 2nd was a cosmetic company QA lab that closed its manufacturing facility a few years ago. It wasn't a bad job, but I was immature and quit out of frustration, not all which were entirely related to the job. I did want to become a permanent employee, but I had also hoped to work on research rather than applied QA, although cosmetics wasn't a particular interest of mine before that nor after. A third temp job was part of a planned short term contract, since the tasks of the job involved digitizing alumni records which, had a finite number of papers which staples needed to be removed, which were then fed into an office scanner, and digitized for all time. I recall reading one of the alumni letters from a person who replied to a request for a donation, and, this letter was typed in the 1970s (since requests for donations were sent out back then too), and the recent graduate (who was in their 20s most likely), had said that they were declining to make a donation to their alma mater because they had not been yet or consistently gainfully employed. And by then, I started to realize that this great recession-era job, albeit a temp one, in early 2008, was an experience that was not unique, and becoming gainfully employed after college was not as universal as I assumed it to be. Of course, some candidates were just not looking hard enough, and might not have missed a few opportunities on their own faults, but even a little bit of unemployment would have not have been considered abnormal, since there was an increased level of unemployment in the late 70s, at around 7.9%.

By 2009, I wanted to do research, and took an internship, opting to reside with parents to obtain research experience, because I did not get any paid offers for a position like that. Eventually I left, because I didn't know what I wanted to research next, and wasn't sure I wanted to study that particular sub-field. Months later, I applied to

another lab, this time getting paid, but still being frustrated that I wasn't doing research full time, and not being happy with other things going on in my life, and quit that one too, after just four months. There was some irresponsibility on my part and being unhappy with the jobs I accepted. I needed to invest more time in applying to jobs I wanted to do all-around, or at least could see myself doing for a long time. Not careers. Jobs. Did I stop pursuing a career? I felt like I was being forced to settle with jobs, because none of the jobs I applied to paid and could allow me to pursue some big idea. Even when I applied to grad school for the 2nd time, I had a notion of studying the Ribosome, because there was something interesting there, and probably something undiscovered. And I was still training myself the way studious people study things and continue to do so when they succeed in grad school and can continue along with pursuing research topic X. Is it because successful people pursue careers, right and non-careerists aren't successful? No, that's crazy! It implies so many negative things when suggesting that, and the concepts are not mutually exclusive. There needs to be a more positive sounding word for a person who has moved laterally from one entry level job to another for the past 19 years, because that more accurately labels the path I've taken. Even if it's not a career. Even though I didn't know what I wanted to be when I was 18, and changed my major twice, and still wonder about what went wrong, I still think that there could be a career for myself. But I think I tended to sabotage that on more than one attempt because I don't like to consider myself an expert on things I'm very knowledgeable about, and have spent more time reading about than a person who might be an expert in a related specialty. As if I am more interested in the outliers of universality and the anomalous occurrences in nature while making fun of the strongly anti-universalists because they feel the universalists have too much airtime while unnecessarily antagonizing pluralistic same party voters yet working for institutions called "universities" when in practice pretend as if only their single world exists. I think if someone is so adamant identifying with an alternate reality, one should at least accept that the establishment they work in represents a "multiversity." In a multiversity (the current university), opposing opinions exist but often are unacknowledged, and perhaps thought leaders try to pass off their solipsistic reality as universal (but only in an alternate universe that few people agree with- not the right, and not even most center-lefts!).



You are entering the gates of the University of Neverending Grievances. Enter if you
dare...and our grievances become your grievances! No exchanges!

The Neverending Story (5/10) Movie CLIP - Through the Sphinxes' Gate (1984) HD



It's not silence that is deafening. It's silence that is stupefying. Many people live by this woefully inadequate truism: "*It is better to remain silent at the risk of being thought a fool, than to talk and remove all doubt of it.*" I don't abide by this belief because it leaves a lot of assumptions left unexamined. While it is true someone might reveal lack of awareness in a statement that implies incomplete knowledge, it also is closer to a dialectic than never opening ones mouth. This isn't to say that one should intentionally say foolish things, but all too often a silencing atmosphere is created in an environment where adults are to learn and mature, even if they have not yet fully matured emotionally, are still in an environment were it is most conducive to do so. In some cases, it is less about protecting one's innocent notions of youth than siding with a like-minded crowd that is more interested in a fad or fitting in than understanding a truth. It also makes me realize how ignorance is immaturity prolonged by intentionality, and that immaturity is not a just a left or right issue, but an individual's issue.

The Decemberists - 16 Military Wives (Official Music Video)



“Sanctions were imposed.” Adult politics can sometimes be school cafeteria-like.

And I have been wondering whether it is immature to overstay one's career, even if no one in an industry has the time or interest in building something together, or to leave the field and develop other skills while the sector evolves or opportunities improve. For example, many people have left acting careers to pursue more "ordinary" lives, such as real estate, or insurance, or simply family life, and not for a lack of trying. People like Juliette Danielle (*The Room*), Will Tiao (*Formosa Betrayed*), and Rick Moranis (*Honey, I Shrunk the Kids; Ghostbusters, My Blue Heaven*). I think that even an A-list actor who has made it has to have a certain ambition or adaptability to want to star in so many diverse roles, because even a stable bankable name still requires taking risks - even if one doesn't do their own stunts, travelling constantly, being away from partners/family. There's changing into a million different costumes, getting makeup put on and off daily, learning method acting to be a pilot, a doctor, and lawyer, sometimes all in the same movie:



"How did you pass the bar exam?" "I studied two weeks and passed the test"

In a lot of ways, being an A-list actor is like the ultimate temp job, working for a permatemp agency, being called for various roles that do not require a specific skill, except maybe a curiosity for solving only the strange medical case that no one else wants to diagnose:

Marvel's Doctor Strange Teaser Trailer



What keeps some scientists away from the arts, away from unpredictability, irrationality, romanticism, and anomalies? What Avitall Ronnell calls [*The Test Drive*](#) (2005) suggests that experimentation, exploration, and discovery are broader aspects of human nature, and most consistently, by academics. All drives can be seen as a pursuit of something, whether it is ethereal and religious or spiritual wisdom, carnal knowledge, or some other materialistic gain.

“Dreams and beasts are two keys by which we are to find out the secrets of our nature. They are our test objects. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“But what contributes most of all to this Apollonian image of the destroyer is the realization of how immensely the world is simplified when tested for its worthiness of destruction. This is the great bond embracing and unifying all that exists”. – Walter Benjamin

“I always want to test everything to the point of death. Beyond.” – Kathy Acker

Not only improvisation but the scientific method has metastasized across my outlook on specialization, or my retreat towards generalization, like a stem cell that can reversibly differentiate into a new speciality with enough deprogramming and

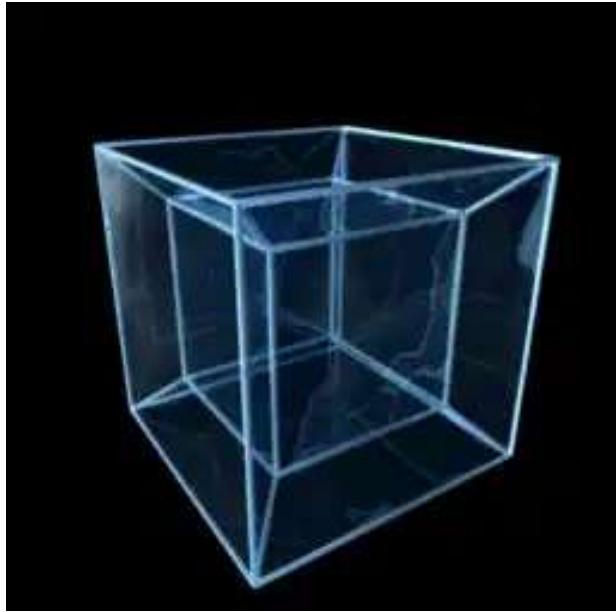
reprogramming, histone modifications that unravel idle genetic functions that the art studio does not have space for, and the electrophoresis bench for pastels. And strengths become packed into weaknesses as the heterochromatin of costumes and stage props all get sent into storage as production completes and a new film begins. Now Tom Cruise trades his suit and leather briefcase in *The Firm* for a bomber jacket and helmet in *Top Gun: Maverick* because “*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*”

[The Shining \(1980\) - All Work and No Play Scene \(3/7\) | Movieclips](#)



and does make me wonder whether some writers spend disproportionate time writing and not doing other things. In that case, an unhappy writer should try to act or at least direct more, and an actor should continue to act, because it's the most diverse profession there is.

It's also the most one of the most scalable, bankable and jobs (potentially), although if one isn't talented, it isn't a job that can be substituted ersatz with money and fame.



How is improv like a tesseract? According to the Stanislavski and the Strasberg method, one's personal experiences projects onto the character they are performing. The inner cube is the resource that the actor draws from- memory, experiences, identifiable knowledge, and the outer cube is the character they portray. The “star” is emanating or “glowing” outer rings A discerning eye can tell a good actor from a bad actor, by noticing how uncommitted they are to the scene/character/act. But acting involves some amount of pretending the shape outside is like the shape inside- the good actor can convince people that the cubes are the same shape, and sometimes even the same size. If an actor is thinking like a pyramid, or a sphere, inside the outer cube, they are not “one with the universe” of their character.

“Do you have a dorsal fin?”

Jim Carrey as The Crazy Dolphin Trainer from "Ace Vantura: Pet Detective"



"In order to train the dolphin, one must think like the dolphin." (Who says method acting should be limited to human thoughts?)

The tricky part is, not every day one wants to be a cube, or a pyramid, or act like a sphere. So even though a person may be seen as a cube by their labels, their internal edges or faces might not always mesh like like a [homeomorphic](#) sphere.



Sometimes the upstairs gets bored of being upstairs and like to bunk with the downstairs. In Gosford Park, the help says that one can only be on one team at a time:



Imperceptible Relics Dec 22

Gosford Park (2001) tips for parvenus (regardless of the team one enjoys playing on).



A bartender at the Annoyance around 2007 (who didn't appear to be actor off-shift, but just his gig), asked me why I was taking improv classes. I didn't plan my response, but I knew what to say by then: that "improv is like real life." Other than the fact that stage improvisation is fake in the sense that one plays an actor officially, the off-stage versions involves as much, if not more improvisation than ones on stage. Purists of the art form have provided decent feedback- I do not plan my skits days or even hours ahead of time- if anything I might have tried to prepare a few skits just minutes before the scene began, but even then if the instructions are to create a new scene- which often times it was an exercise to do so, to get out of the habit of baking a sketch that's even seconds old, the most experienced teachers could tell when the improvisation wasn't based on the co-actor's signals or cues. With practice, one can do full time improvisation and keep the art form free of SNL-prepared skits. There are some standups who have new material every open mic or tours/show, although it's a bigger risk experimenting with jokes that might not get a lot of laughs or practice.

There is also an anti-[memetic](#) component of improv. While some shows are recorded, the idea of pure, unreplicable scenes are part of the impermanence of the art form. Other times it is because it is a class setting. One of my teachers said something along the lines of, “the scene you enact in will only happen once and never be re-enacted.” It reminded me of those art prospectors who would search for Banksy [street graffiti](#) art to sell and then cut the stencil art out of a wall by [removing part of the actual wall](#) behind it. That’s what film and TV is like, packaged and resold. I think with improv, there were fewer people interested in monetizing every recordable act. In a way, it helps one focus on acting and less on marketing a sketch or routine, or even a character. This isn’t to say there are many people who don’t see improv as a source of training towards a improv career, but often times it becomes a dead-end as a profession since the roles for improv acting are limited (and even if there were, it’s not everyone’s cup of tea). Therefore, after graduating the schools, I had to think about how I wanted to use improv in my life. I am also not sure I wanted to continue joining a troupe, as it felt more of a self-development exercise than something I wanted to do for a weekly show.

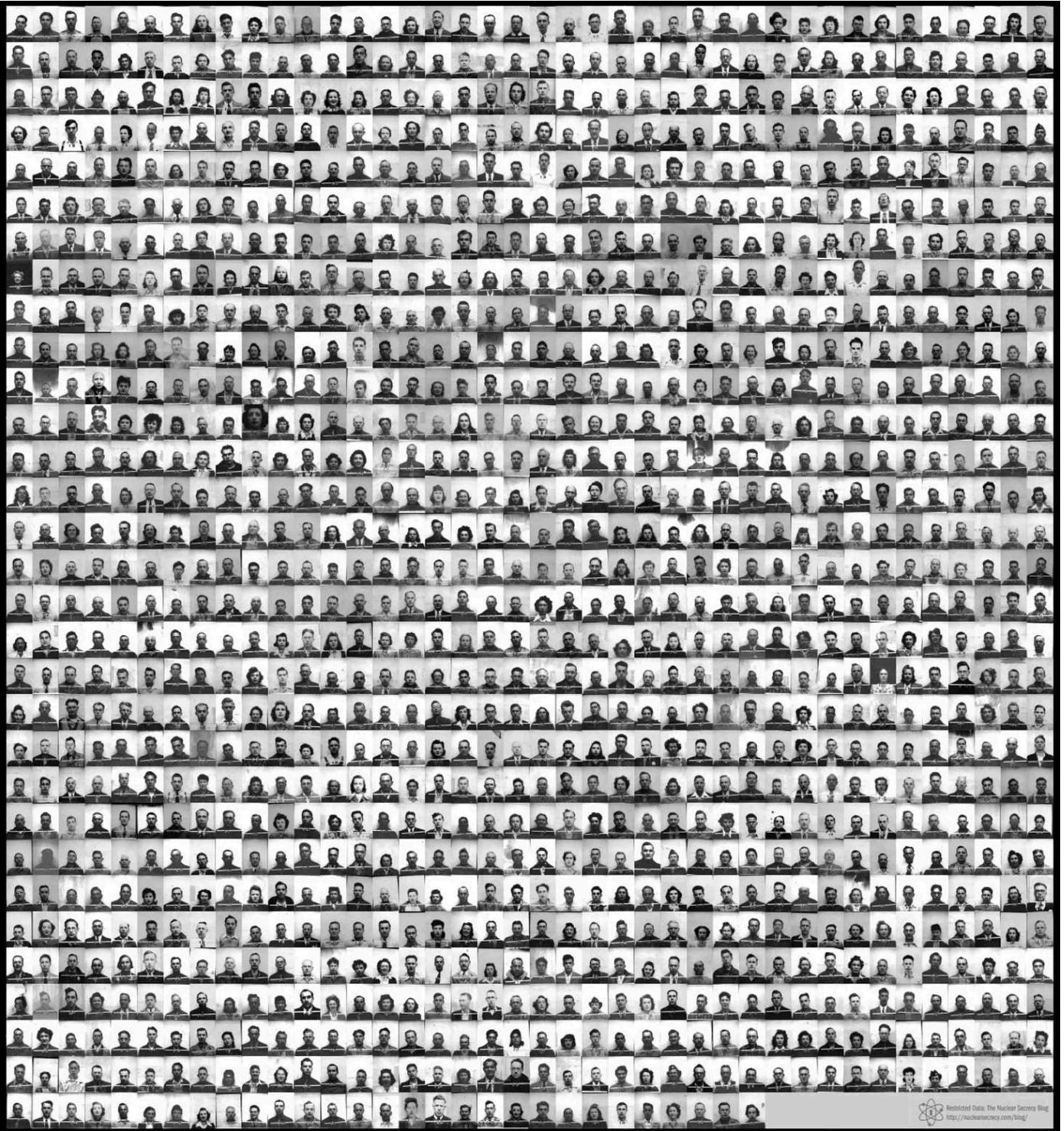
Open mics, improvisation, jazz have in common the element of spontaneity. I remember during a class break/intermission a classmate and I walked across the street of Lawrence Avenue and my classmate wanted to walk into a store- I don’t remember if it was a record store or a smoothie bar. I didn’t even glance at the store, but I was not only taking a break from the class exercise, I was subconsciously taking a break from improvising, planning that I was only going to walk down the block and back, not entering another establishment. I was well acquainted with the classmate, and it wasn’t anything out of the ordinary, but I told him, “I’m not feeling spontaneous right now.” Even for myself, every decision *can* be spontaneous, but usually I allot some amount of regularity to better understand spontaneity during preallotted and future allotted times. Maybe I believe in spoon theory- the idea that I have a finite amount of physical or mental energy to dedicate towards an idea, and won’t make too many plans, or try to change too many plans that I already made.

I’m pretty aware of the many reasons improvisation isn’t more popular. New, impromptu ideas do not mesh with large bureaucratic organizations with limited open-

mindedness or official channels to consider some random idea or solution. It also challenges the security of regularity and comfort of professions, even though a consultant can sometimes complete a task in less time than a permanent employee. Improvising too much can be dangerous or appear to threaten the routine of one's life. And yet a lot of history is made from spontaneous moments, which isn't to say they are all peaceful or smooth or pleasant, but that sentiments that often lead to insularity, such as the recent NYC mayoral election primary, often result in somewhat surprising election results. If it's not clear that much of NYC is tired of being overpriced, despite what the *New York Times* might endorse, the primary election results should be a clear indicator that New York is too darn expensive for an ordinary person, because I ran out of money in little over a year the last time I lived there more than a decade ago. It would be nice if the town was affordable that anyone could live there (which hasn't been the case since the early 80s, before I was even born) and the only idealists still attempting that is the party who won the election.

So when people complain of the election results, I ask what the status quo has delivered. I can say one thing. A life of temp and entry level jobs, AI-screened hiring managers on LinkedIn, codeswitching more dialects and technical lexicons than AOC, Google translating more websites than there are headsets at the UN, sending unsolicited emails to tenured professors who might actually have some clout with the NSF, getting nowhere, then finally receiving my first [research grant](#) from the Netherlands a few months ago (and am thankful for!) , trying to build a coalition of exiled academics who actually care about intellectualism, spending months debating whether I should feign outrage at the loss of funding of some academics who have ostracized many “normies” for years, trying to recommend solutions to civic institutions not preoccupied with just ideas or ideology but applied science and engineering, realizing that whenever a company expresses interest in me signing an NDA on research projects they might actually just want to shut me up, and making freedom* available to everyone.

This is a picture of all the employees who worked on the [Manhattan Project](#):



 Restricted Data: The Nuclear Secrecy Blog
<http://nuclearsecrecy.com/bury>

I have a wry sense of humor, so I recently thought, "Teamwork!"



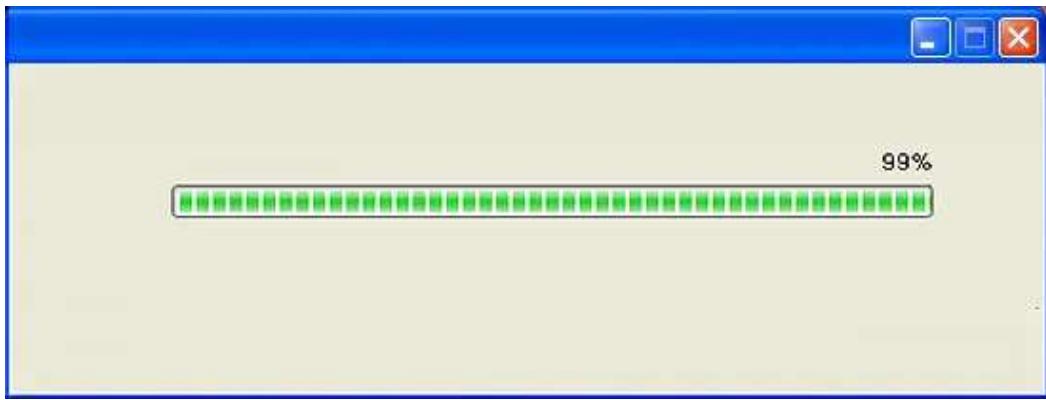
Since it wasn't a cause for a universal celebration, one wouldn't find it right to be so smug. But I also recall that tens of universities collaborated on the Manhattan [project](#), and it was completed in five years.

When was the last time more than a handful of universities and national labs worked a single, solvable problem affecting a widespread world issue that wasn't encumbered by a levy of patents, trade secrets and NDAs?. I can think of a few, but the one I like to bring up the most is this:

One Laptop Per Child | The New York Times



In [2012](#), this is how close Intel came to marketing a solar powered Pentium chip:



"[Intel](#) was a member of the association for a brief period in 2007. Shortly after OLPC's founder, Nicholas Negroponte, accused Intel of trying to destroy the non-profit, Intel joined the board with a mutual non-disparagement agreement between them and OLPC. Intel resigned its membership on January 3, 2008, citing disagreements with requests from Negroponte for Intel to stop [dumping](#) their [Classmate PCs](#).^{[14][15]}"

Despite reaching out to several sympathetic Intel employees, former CEOs and product managers, some of who worked on the solar powered chip, none of the CTOs

in charge of product releases have ever tried to improv on the battery problem by implementing an Intel Claremont chip in a next gen OLPC the nearly 5 years that I began this campaign (October 2020), but it has been an idea since 2011. Furthermore, harshly critical [books](#) have been written on the topic, game systems and Chromebooks have been prioritized with lots of distracting AI tools. It's as if the intellectual elite have decided to wash their hands of the OLPC and never attempt to improve upon the minor deficiencies it had, because it was just a tech bro's nostalgic dream. We've gone from "Yes We Can" in 2008 to "No, We Won't" (not that we can't) with an aimless, blank check CHIPS Act grant that has resulted in questionable [layoffs](#).

In the 2016 film *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, by Ang Lee, Vin Diesel's character tells Billy, "*Make it about something bigger than yourself:*"

BILLY LYNN'S LONG HALFTIME WALK - Official Trailer #2 (HD)



Now, it might sound cringe to quote a corny line from a sentimental movie no one remembers or even saw, including myself but the loss of national and international interests in the average person has led to a loss of community and belonging. I know a lot of people like to feel proud of their ethnic heritage, almost to the extent or especially to the extent of excluding others, but I write about everything because there

is a fine line between modest, natural ethnic pride and factional grandstanding. And oftentimes prestige articles I read (whether it is the Atlantic, Salon, or the Guardian) sound little more than the latter. I write this unilaterally, and in light of a recent Atlantic article on Jane Jacobs that I actually read and [liked](#), I have always agreed in principle with the ideas the West Village preservation. But it turns out that Robert Moses wasn't the villain that everyone claims him to be. So he deserves a little bit of credit too, and so I am pre-emptively and defensively inclined to label factional, ideological opponents of this sprawling essay the same way he described the Bureau International des Expositions when they designated Seattle the official site of the 1962 World's Fair over New York, which hosted their own in 1964, as "three people living obscurely in a dumpy apartment" in Paris."

"jump on the bandwagon" and become active supporters. He dismissed the bureau, which has refused to sanction the fair, as "three people living obscurely in a dumpy apartment" in Paris.

"The fair will get along without them," he added.

Mr. Moses made his observations at a luncheon meeting of

By this statement, Moses seemed to describing BIE officials as if they were apparatchiks, defined by James Billington as "a man not of grand plans, but of a hundred carefully executed details." There's also a saying, "Go Big or Go Home," which I think resonates more with ambitious New Yorkers, who aren't interested in low ceiling ideas (umpy can refer to short height). When I used to work at the Museum of Science and Industry for 5 short months in 2008, I would take the 151 Sheridan bus from my apartment in Uptown to a downtown bus transfer. There was a large billboard across the street from the bus stop on Wacker Drive, near the Christian Science Reading Room, that occupied a small part of the skyline as I waited for the MSI-bound bus. It said, "*Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood.*"

Googling it recently, it was a quote by Daniel Burnham, who designed the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. I would not be surprised if Robert Moses was partly inspired by that.

Defunctland: The History of the 1964 New York World's Fair



I'd like to be a part of something bigger than myself, but it shouldn't require a Manhattan Project-like imperative to accomplish something.

The Death and Life of Great American Cities - 1961 by a Progressive Crusader

Charisma Machine: The Life, Death, and Legacy of One Laptop Per Child -2018

Cities experienced a rebirth at least. Is the next generation only going to read about the OLPC's legacy, or could it experience Life after its Death?

I know what I want to title a book, if I ever write one. *Light At The End Of The Lincoln Tunnel.*

*According to Sartre, “there is only freedom in a [situation](#).” And if improv is acting in situations, then there is freedom in improv. If life is a series of situations, then it is the

maximalist version of freedom.



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