

**AUDIO TRANSCRIPT**  
**AUDIENCING by NIKITA GALE**

OH I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY  
I WANNA FEEL THE HEAT WITH SOMEBODY  
YEAH I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY  
WITH SOMEBODY WHO LOVES

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“Listening” is a term that looms large in the language of everyday contemporary politics. Politicians, particularly when on the back foot, pledge to ‘listen’ to the people, and initiate “listening projects” and “big conversations.”

Public life was once lived out entirely in acoustic space. Civic participation in the public debates of ancient city republics was largely confined to the space within which citizens could be within earshot of other public speakers—the auditorium. Without the means for further amplification or dissemination, the physical constraints of audibility within a given space were a contributing factor to the political constraints on inclusivity.

The press (together with other communications technologies like the roads and the railways) enabled the communication of ideas to travel more easily across time and space and gave communities an expanded repertoire of recording the events of public life and extending their reach. In the process, the public was constituted as a collectivity in the moment of representation, in the moment when it was represented back to itself.

No longer do citizens appear before each other in shared acoustic space. It is precisely the mediation of the public sphere which makes possible the imagining of a collective subjectivity and which serves as a common frame of reference. The move from the ear to the eye in public affairs was, then, literally a dislocation—a dislocation from embodied physical space to the disembodied, abstracted and imagined community. The fact that this space, this public, was imagined does not make it any less real.

**WE ARE TURNED OUTWARD BECAUSE WE HAVE TURNED INWARD**  
**AUDIENCES ARE PARADOXICALLY MAXIMIZED BY A PERSONALIZED ADDRESS**

...the less than ideal experience of living in a mediated world itself stimulates a nostalgic fantasy of a golden age of unmediated and effortless interaction, and a longing for “presence.” This in turn is a sublimation of a longing for things like trust, authenticity, reliability, reciprocity, equality and accountability—things that have widely been seen as under threat in modern conditions of mediation—or rather, nostalgically re-imagined in the media age... only in an age of phantasmatic representation could there be any currency in the phrase “appearing in person.”

Okay, so...

I’m always looking around and ignoring people.

I’m not afraid of other people, I just feel very anxious in crowds. Like when I’m in the audience in a movie theater or at a music show or in a classroom... you know I was in high school when Columbine

happened? Can you imagine? And my mom made me go to school the next day, like *what the fuck?* I cried and begged her to let me stay home. I feel like I was the only one on the bus to school that day and then when I got there it seemed like half of the school wasn't there—all of those empty desks.

When I go to the movies or I'm at a music show, just after the lights go down sometimes I find myself strategizing about what I would do if some guy just came in and started shooting up the place. I'd get down on the ground and play dead or I'd try to crawl to an exit.

There should really be more exits in standard movie theaters you shouldn't have to walk all the way to the front to get out.

There's another game I like to play where I try to figure out who in the room would benefit most from my suffering or death. And then I invert it, so, like, whose suffering or death would most benefit me.

It's kind of tricky because you have to make a lot of assumptions to get there.

Being in an audience I'm always hovering between amusement and implication. Whatever I'm witnessing is there because I'm here or because someone or something thinks I want to experience it and... maybe I don't really want out because I like the feeling of being worked over sometimes, you know?

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The little white dome on the northern slope of Mauna Loa is a bumpy one. Mauna Loa, the "Long Mountain," is a colossal volcano that covers half of the island of Hawaii. The rocky terrain, rusty brown and deep red, crunches beneath car tires and jostles passengers. Up there, more than 8,000 feet above sea level and many miles away from the sounds of civilization, it doesn't feel like Earth. It feels like another planet. Like Mars.

For the past five years, small groups of people have made this drive and moved into the dome, known as a habitat. Their job is to pretend that they really are on Mars, and then spend months living like it. The goal, for the researchers who send them there, is to figure out how human beings would do on a mission to the real thing.

Hawaii Space Exploration Analog and Simulation, or hi-seas is a social experiment, and the participants are the lab rats. They wear devices to track their vitals, movements, and sleep, answer countless questionnaires about their own behavior and their interactions with others, and journal several times a week about their feelings.

Psychology researchers take all that data and use them to tease out information about what works and what doesn't when you stick people in a tiny space they can't escape.

"You really do get the sense, when you're going to sleep and you're closing your eyes at night, that this could be a distant planet," says Ross Lockwood, a physicist from Edmonton, Canada, and one of the members of mission two. "This could be Mars."

But sometimes, Earth finds a way of sneaking in, of breaking the fuzzy boundary between simulation and reality.

Kim Binsted, the HI-SEAS principal investigator and a professor at the University of Hawaii, told me that "The kinds of things that you can hurt yourself doing at home are also the kinds of things that you can hurt yourself doing at the hab... [but] I have never thought... that maintaining the simulation is more important than the safety of the crew."

During their training, HI-SEAS crew are told often that their well-being comes first. Safety is paramount. But so is maintaining the simulation. No one involved in hi-seas wants to jeopardize the data by breaking the sim, as they sometimes call it. They don't want to give up before it's over, either. Leaving the habitat would mean throwing away hours and hours of physical, social, and emotional investment. For participants who came from outside of the United States, it even means visa troubles.

The thought of abandoning the simulation becomes more painful the longer the mission goes on. During a real Mars mission, crew members will face a panoply of risks. People can, and probably will, get injured. They may die. Simulations like HI-SEAS attempt to forecast reactions to some of these threats, ranging from the things we cannot control, like the poisonous air outside, to those that we can only intuit, like the ideal way to organize a crew.

"We have things that we know we don't know," said Jenn Fogarty, the chief scientist at NASA's Human Research Program, the office that provides financial grants to hi-seas. "The 'I don't know what I don't know' is the scary space."

Long before we send the first humans to Mars and keep them happy and healthy, we'll have to figure out how to do that here—and it starts with deciding who should be on the mountain, which isn't easy.

Steve Kozlowski, an organizational psychologist at Michigan State University who studies team effectiveness, said HI-SEAS finalists are scored on five personality traits, known in the field as the Big Five: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Kozlowski said they want conscientious people, but up to a point. Conscientiousness can veer toward passivity. Some degree of extroversion is valuable, until it's too much. Outgoing people can morph into domineering people. In other words, it's all about balance.

Round-trip communication between Earth and Mars will take about 40 minutes. Astronauts won't have the luxury of sitting around and waiting for commands or approval from Earth. HI-SEAS has mission *support*, rather than mission *control*, for that reason. The first astronauts on Mars will choose for themselves, for the most part, how they will live and work. In case of an emergency, they will need to decide what to do. And there's no guarantee the astronauts won't choose to take matters into their own hands.

"That's the complexity of humans. They are going to do things on their own, maybe outside of the mission rules. They are going to try to make things work on their own, and they're inventive and smart, and that's the reason you picked this crew," Fogarty said. "So thinking you can keep them in this tight little box of emotions is unrealistic."

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The musical form of the counterpoint... refers to a kind of melodic interaction that involves two or more distinct musical lines, themes or 'voices' that are independent in contour and rhythm, but interdependent in harmony. Counterpoint offers 'a way to listen to many voices, as themes and variations on themes, and to correct for not listening to particular themes'... In the contrapuntal, the individual elements are meaningful only in their relation to each other, and that relation is constantly shifting. A dominant voice or theme might subside or disappear altogether, although still shaping the whole by its absence. The interplay of different voices might work to create consonance or dissonance, as interpreted in the act of listening... The 'truth' of living the world must be a polyphonic truth, a truth that is capable of accommodating a plurality of potentially discordant voices.

If the public sphere is an auditorium where the freedom of speech is exercised, then it is the members of the listening audience who become the 'auditors' of public exchanges and performances. The listeners, in other words, hold the responsibility not to close their ears to expressions of opinions with which they might not agree, and, by extension, to ensure that the whole spectrum of opinion gets to be heard... for those who speak might all speak with the same voice, either through choice, coercion or the conditions of the marketplace. It is in the freedom of listening that limitations on plurality are registered, whether that be the dominance of certain voices or the absence, marginalization and censorship of others. Even silence may register in the politics of listening as a marker of agency, a political strategy not to engage in a particular incarnation of the public sphere.

Just as a speaker draws on a shared cultural tradition of language and thought in producing an utterance... so does the listener bring with them their own horizon of understanding, a horizon that is itself always shifting according to context and circumstance... listening is... the collision of the world of the speaker and the world of the listener.

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The Mercedes-Benz Superdome, often referred to simply as the Superdome, is a domed sports and exhibition stadium located in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States. It primarily serves as the home venue for the New Orleans Saints of the National Football League. Plans were drawn up in 1967 by the New Orleans modernist architectural firm of Curtis and Davis and the building opened as the Louisiana Superdome in 1975. Its steel frame covers a 13-acre expanse and the 273-foot dome is made of a lamellar multi-ringed frame and has a diameter of 680 feet, making it the largest fixed domed structure in the world. The dome has a height of 253 feet and a capacity of 73,208 people.

The Superdome was used as a "shelter of last resort" for those in New Orleans unable to evacuate from Hurricane Katrina when it struck on August 29, 2005. During the storm on August 29, 2005, a large section of the outer covering was peeled off by high winds. A few days later the dome was closed until September 25, 2006.

A Concert for Hurricane Relief was an hour-long, celebrity-driven benefit concert broadcast live on September 2, 2005. Its purpose was to raise money, relief, and awareness in response to the loss of life and human suffering that resulted from Hurricane Katrina in five southeastern States in the United States in 2005. Hosted by Matt Lauer, it was simulcast from the New York studios of NBC located in 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City, on NBC, MSNBC, CNBC, and i: Independent Television.

Viewers were encouraged to donate to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by calling the number 1-800-HELP-NOW or through the Red Cross's website. The benefit generated \$50 million and was watched on television by approximately 8.5 million viewers.

On September 2, 2005 during a live broadcast of A Concert for Hurricane Relief, American musician Kanye West, delivered an un-scripted speech which addressed the united states government's slow response in providing relief to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The structure of the levees had failed. The structure of the Superdome was failing.

And suddenly, a singular performance of dissent on live television before an audience of 8.5 million listeners, reframed the chorus of imploding structures (the levees, the Superdome, the federal emergency management agency) that citizens—especially black citizens—would like to imagine but hardly believe are meant to protect them.

The form of address changed without the audience having to change the channel. The symbolic gesture of the telethon shifted from an outstretched open hand to a pointed finger. From a plea to an indictment.

The incident would circulate as one of the 21st century's earliest and most infamous viral moments, and in the days immediately following West's performance, the sentiment of outrage resonated with and was repeated by others, including pop stars. It seemed as if pop for a moment was auditioning for a more overtly political role.

Do you feel increasingly intolerant of viewpoints that are discordant with your own?

Are you more receptive to ideas when you feel entertained?

Do you think pop music is stupid?

Do you have a fear of being worked over or of allowing yourself to be worked over?

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YOU ARE THE CROWD  
AND SO AM I  
AND I OFTEN DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO  
SO I GUESS THERE'S A PART OF YOU THAT DOESN'T KNOW EITHER  
HMMM  
THAT SOUNDS LIKE WORK  
NOT KNOWING  
WORKING  
FEELING NOT LIKE YOURSELF?  
FEELING LIKE OTHERS?  
FEELING LIKE YOURSELF?  
EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE  
YOU ARE THE CROWD  
FEELING INCREASINGLY ISOLATED FROM RADICAL IDEAS?  
FINDING THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY INCREASINGLY MORE ALIENATING?  
FLAKING MORE FREQUENTLY ON FRIENDS?  
BUYING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE INSTEAD OF USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION?  
I WOULD LIKE TO BE A CROWD  
SOMETHING LARGER THAN MYSELF  
I WOULD LIKE TO FEEL MY THOUGHTS MULTIPLY  
THROUGH THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OTHERS  
ONE NEED NOT LOOK AROUND HERE  
YOU ONLY HAVE TO LOOK AHEAD

IN FRONT OF YOU A CURVE IS UNFOLDING  
IN OTHERS  
IN FRONT OF YOU A CURVE IS UNFOLDING  
IN THE MINDS OF OTHERS  
TO DISPATCH AND TO BE RECEIVED  
WITH ENTHUSIASM  
THE DECISION TO RECEIVE IS A SOCIAL EVENT  
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ANYMORE  
BUT WE CAN NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO TOGETHER  
OR WE CAN NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO ALONE

ACTUALLY  
WE CAN NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO TOGETHER  
AND WE CAN NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO ALONE

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On a dark stage, a woman of African descent wears a lavishly decorated mustard yellow marching band uniform and a tall black hat with a white feather. She plays a deep marching snare drum. As her strokes accelerate, her scowl intensifies.

Next, she puts a whistle in her mouth.

She gives way to a column of flag-baring men. Next, female dancers wear skin-tight leotards depicting a golden Egyptian sarcophagus.

██████████ wears an ornate studded cape, and a Nefertiti-inspired black cylindrical crown.

Sauntering down a long catwalk in high heels, her shimmering silver bodysuit accentuates her curvaceous figure. She bares her full thighs proudly.

A grainy video captures a different angle. She follows the catwalk's right turn. She carries a cane. The dancers follow.

She continues walking down the catwalk-like stage. Lights glow across the massive crowd, ██████████ struts up the stairs and heads off stage.

The dance troupe takes the stage in formation. They wear black berets, sunglasses, and high-heeled boots. Their right legs are bare. They dance before an imposing steel frame.

As the others freeze, the central dancer solos in an aggressive style. Spreading her knees wide, she squats and throws her arms up and down. Then standing, she kicks a leg out and spins. Wiggling her buttocks, she turns to the side and juts out her hips. As white light beams, the troupe joins her in synchronized movements. The steel frame rises slowly behind them, revealing an elaborate set featuring a set of bleachers shaped like a pyramid.

Rows of women are seated at the front in matching yellow shirts.

In a different performance, their tops are hot pink. Behind them, the pyramid is packed with trumpeters, trombonists, sousaphone players, and drummers. Concert goes groove to the music.

The women sitting still in the front row wear berets, mustard bodysuits with bare legs, white gloves, and white knee-high boots.

As white lights flash, the dancers perform a synchronized routine across the stage. With hands on their hips, they march off stage.

At the pyramid's peak, ██████████ wears a mustard sequined sorority shirt, with the acronym for: Beta Delta Kappa. She wears frayed high-cut jean shorts, fishnet stockings, and white tinsel knee-boots. Her long curly golden hair is parted in the middle. She erupts in a tenacious dance combination.

Brilliant fireworks explode around the pyramid.



The stage is flanked by two giant screens that create the illusion of three pyramids. [REDACTED] runs her hand through her flowing locks.

Grainy clips show her adoring fans.

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**Robot 1:** I

**Robot 2:** I

**Robot 1:** Cannot

**Robot 2:** Cannot

**Robot 1:** Hear you

**Robot 2:** Hear you

**Robot 1:** Except

**Robot 2:** Except

**Robot 1:** Against

**Robot 2:** Against

**Robot 1:** The ground

**Robot 2:** The ground

**Robot 1:** Of who I am

**Robot 2:** Of who I am

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**Voice 1:** Like a rolling stone... Like the FBI...

**Voice 1:** You hear that?

**Voice 2:** What is that?

**Voice 1:** Like the CIA...

**Voice 2:** Sounds familiar

**Voice 1:** John Lennon, ...Like the BBC...

**Voice 2:** Oh, what song is it?

**Voice 1:** ...BB King, Uh, they call it "Can You Dig It?", ...And Doris Day

**Voice 2:** \*Laughs\*

**Voice 1:** Dig it, dig it... it's like a little short piece, like a transitional thing. Gets you screaming out... stuff

**Voice 1:** The arts are the pulse of the body politic, as I see it. The extent to which you can get a, get a read on how healthy it is—how generative it is able to be with what means and creativity it's reflecting on its own mind, in some sense. And there are means to transcend, organize, and orient people towards new realities.

I was thinking about, you know, ten thousand people standing around a mob. One person stands up with a guitar, and it's a concert! And then people are listening. And then, once you have people's attention deployed in a direction, the question is, *Where do you want to go?*

When we're talking about, *How do we stay in relationship with one another and curate difficult encounters?*, the arts are an extremely potent form of doing this.

**Voice 2:** You have to hand it to America. It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide, while masquerading as a force for universal good. It's a brilliant—even witty—highly successful act of hypnosis.

**Voice 1:** And so I think there are just endless instances of social messaging that pull us away from our wholeness. And that's kind of what we're trying to talk about here, which is like, *How are we all able to stay in relationship with one another and be able to be whole?*

I'll quote the law professor and trans activist Dean Spade here in saying that: self-care during this time, in this country, is a form of resistance. And increases the likelihood of an equitable distribution of life chances for lots of different kinds of bodies. Many of these kinds of bodies are being explicitly targeted.

In order to sustain the long marathon in the pursuit of justice, self-care is crucial.

**Voice 2:** Brutal, indifferent. Scornful, and ruthless, it may be. But it's also very clever. As a salesman, it is out on its own. And its most saleable commodity is self-love.

It's a winner.

Listen to all American presidents on television say the words, "the American people". As in the sentence: "I say to the American people, it is time to pray and to defend the rights of the American people. And I ask the American people to trust their President in the action he is about to take, on behalf of the American people."

**Voice 1:** Perhaps part of the mess is that the people that constitute America have very, very different understandings of what it is, where it comes from, and what they want it to be. So maybe one way of thinking about it, is that, part of the mess is that there's a battle over the narrative right now of who we are to one another. And divergent opinions on the reality—and I'm going to emphasize, reality of interdependence—that we fundamentally are implicated in one another's well-being or lack thereof, regardless of whether or not people want to be.

**Voice 2:** It's a scintillating stratagem, language is actually employed to keep thought at bay. The words, "American people", provide a truly voluptuous cushion of reassurance. You don't need to think, just lie back on the cushion. The cushion may be suffocating your intelligence and your critical faculties, but it's very comfortable.

This does not apply, of course, to the forty million people living below the poverty line. And the two million men and women imprisoned in the vast gulag of prisons which extends across the United States.

I put to you that the United States is without doubt, *The Greatest Show On the Road*.