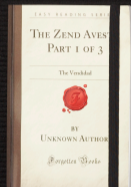


PUBLIC TRUST



ZEND AVESTA



QUR'AN



BHAGAVAD GITA



OLD TESTAMENT

ZZZZ Z
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RING BELL FOR:
PINKY PROMISE
WITNESS
HANDSHAKE



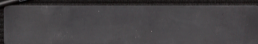
TIME

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SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 6:54PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO BELIEVE
THE PROMISES &
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS



SEAL



YOUR NAME

YOUR FINGER

YOUR BLOOD

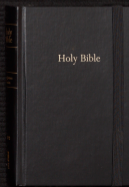
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U.S. CONSTITUTION



JUPITER STONE



BIBLE



GANGES RIVER WATER

DEPOSIT

FE PUBLICA

CROSS MY HEART AND
HOPE TO DIE
ON MY MOTHER'S LIFE
ON MY GRANDMOTHER'S
GRAVE

TAKE
I GIVE YOU MY WORD
WORD



PAPER



PUBLIC TRUST

PAUL RAMIREZ JONAS

KATE GILBERT

ALEXANDER PROVAN



IN COLLABORATION WITH

NOW
⇄THERE

Public Trust

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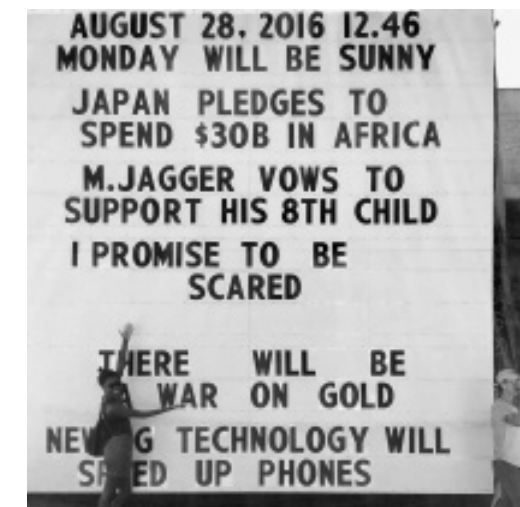


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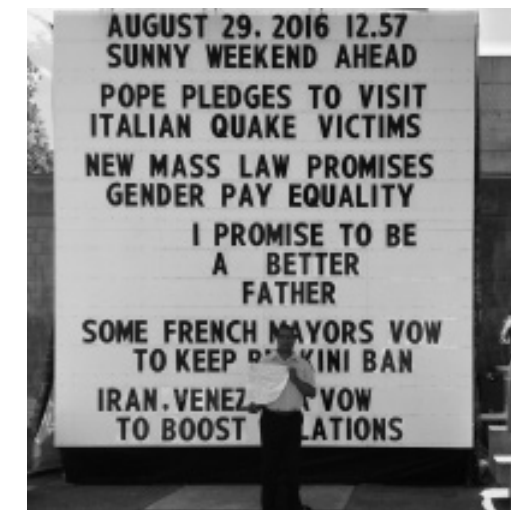
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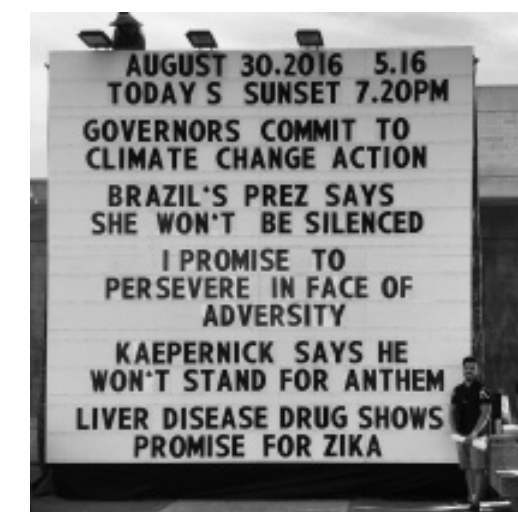
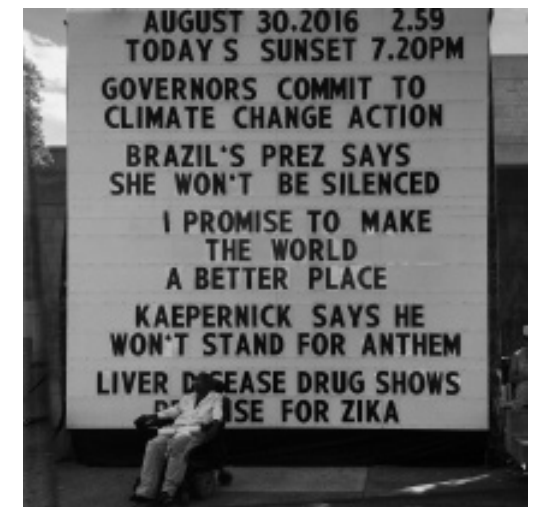
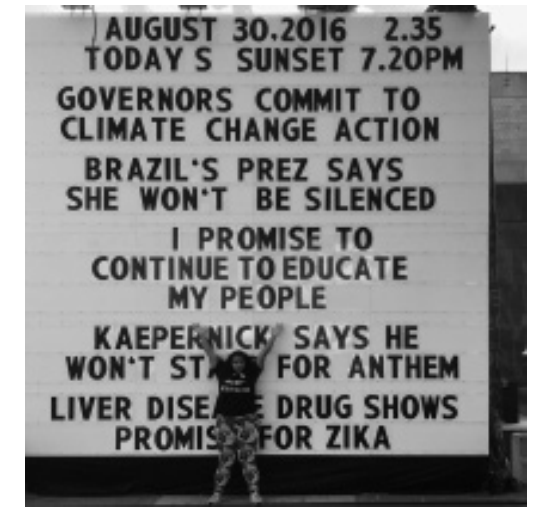
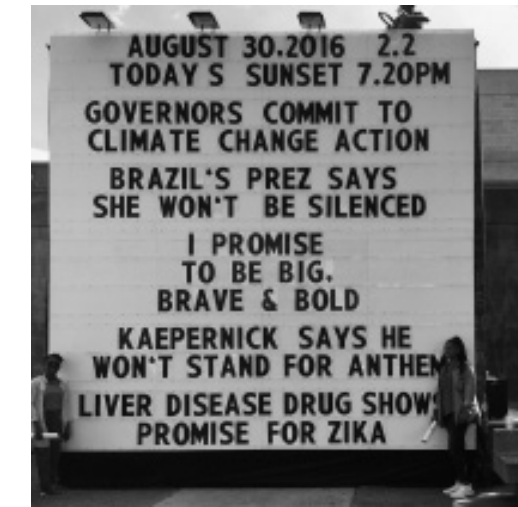
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.05 • TRUMP SAID — I WILL FIX IT • WIKILEAKS PROMISES MORE CLINTON LEAKS • I WILL BE A BETTER CITIZEN • US COMPANIES PLEDGE EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN • RICK ROSS TO DRAKE I WILL GO OFF LEASH • NASA WILL SNAP FIRST CLOSE-UP OF JUPITER • I PROMISE TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH BEFORE I SPEAK MY MIND • I PROMISE TO SUPPORT MY COMMUNITY • I PROMISE TO PURSUE MY DREAMS • I PROMISE TO WALK 10,000 STEPS EACH DAY • I WILL HONOR AND DEFEND MY CREATIVE POWER • I WILL FIND AND JOIN A SOFTBALL TEAM • I WILL RUN TRACK THROUGHOUT HIGH SCHOOL • I WILL HELP PEOPLE IN TROUBLE • I WILL HELP MY MOM OUT MORE • I WILL WORK LESS AND SPEND MORE TIME WITH MY FAMILY • I PROMISE TO SMILE AS MUCH AS I CAN • I WILL COME BACK TO BOSTON • I WILL TRUST MYSELF AND MY DECISIONS • I PROMISE TO GROW, GLOW, GRADUATE, AND GIVE • I PROMISE TO BE A BEYONCÉ IN EVERYTHING I DO • I PROMISE TO LISTEN WITH AN OPEN HEART • I PROMISE TO CRY AND LAUGH WITH NO REGRETS • I WILL ACTIVELY WORK TO MAKE MY LIFE BETTER • I PROMISE TO LOVE GOD AND THE PEOPLE AND TO HELP • I PROMISE TO BE A PRODUCTIVE AND POSITIVE CITIZEN • I PROMISE TO REVERENCE MY ANCESTORS ASÉ • I PROMISE TO MAKE NO PROMISES • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF MY WIFE FOREVER • I PROMISE TO BE HERE • I PROMISE TO FINISH SCHOOL • I PROMISE TO BE MORE CAREFUL AND LESS CAUTIOUS • I PROMISE TO SHARE WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT EVERYDAY • I PROMISE TO STAY ON EARTH FOREVER • I PROMISE TO BE



TRUE TO THYSELF • I PROMISE TO GIVE LOVE TO ALL • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER PERSON • I PROMISE TO CHANGE MY ATTITUDE • I PROMISE TO OBTAIN WORLD DOMINATION • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS ACT AGAINST INJUSTICE • I PROMISE TO REMEMBER THE LITTLE THINGS • I PROMISE TO FINISH SCHOOL THIS YEAR • I PROMISE TO BE BETTER • I PROMISE TO REMEMBER TO LIVE LIFE FULLY • I PROMISE TO HAVE A BETTER FUTURE • I PROMISE TO WORK WITH MY EMOTIONS • I PROMISE TO REMARRY MY WIFE CYNDI • I PROMISE TO DO BETTER • I PROMISE TO FIGHT FOR WHAT'S RIGHT • I PROMISE AUTHENTICITY • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF • I PROMISE TO PUT HOES B4 BROS • MONDAY WILL BE SUNNY • JAPAN PLEDGES TO SPEND \$30B IN AFRICA • M. JAGGER VOWS TO SUPPORT HIS 8TH CHILD • I PROMISE TO TAKE MYSELF ON AN ADVENTURE • THERE WILL BE A WAR ON GOLD • NEW 5G TECHNOLOGY WILL SPEED UP PHONES • I PROMISE TO BE SCARED • I PROMISE TO BE NICE TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO NOT BE A SILENT BYSTANDER • I PROMISE TO BE THE VERY BEST LIKE NO ONE EVER WAS • I PROMISE TO NEVER FORGET THIS PROMISE • I PROMISE TO BE A ZEALOUS ADVOCATE • I WILL MAKE ART FOREVER • I VOW TO PRAISE JEHOVAH GOD • I PROMISE TO BE ON TIME • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS PROGRESS • I PROMISE TO BE BETTER TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER PERSON IN THE FUTURE • I PROMISE TO LIVE MY LIFE LIKE IT'S GOLDEN • I PROMISE TO PUT MYSELF FIRST • I PROMISE TO LEARN TO SAY NO • I PROMISE TO HAVE PATIENCE WITH MY HUSBAND • I PROMISE TO BE



MORE LOVING • SUNNY WEEKEND AHEAD • POPE PLEDGES TO VISIT ITALIAN QUAKE VICTIMS • NEW MASS LAW PROMISES GENDER PAY EQUALITY • I PROMISE TO NOT BE HARD ON MYSELF • SOME FRENCH MAYORS VOW TO KEEP BURKINI BAN • IRAN, VENEZUELA VOW TO BOOST RELATIONS • I PROMISE TO BE ME • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER FATHER • I PROMISE TO BE PATIENT WITH MYSELF • I WILL PROPAGATE ISLAM • I PROMISE TO BE WITH MY WIFE FOREVER • I PROMISE TO MAKE MY DAUGHTER PROUD THAT I'M HER DADDY • I PROMISE TO CALL MY ANCESTORS EVERY MORNING THAT'S THE AFRICAN WAY • PROMETTO A DIRE UNA PREGHIERA OGNI GIORNO • I PROMISE TO SHARE THE VOICES OF THE UNHEARD • I PROMISE MY DAUGHTER TO BE A MORE LOVING FATHER • I PROMISE TO LISTEN MORE AND TO EAT HEALTHIER • I PROMISE TO MAKE SURE BLACK LIVES MATTER • I PROMISE TO BE MORE PATIENT • I PROMISE TO BE MORE THANKFUL • I PROMISE TO CONTINUE BEING REAL • I PROMISE TO CHANGE THE WORLD • I PROMISE TO BE TRUE TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO MAKE YOUR SKIN FEEL POWERFUL • I PROMISE TO BE A COMPUTER ENGINEER AND AN ENTREPRENEUR • I WILL TAKE THE JUMP • I PROMISE NOT TO LET ANYONE STEAL MY SPARKLE & SHINE • I VOW TO NOT ALLOW MY CIRCUMSTANCES TO DETERMINE MY DESTINY • I PROMISE TO VISIT MY STUDENT'S FAMILY IN HAITI • I PROMISE TO HELP THE CHILDREN IN MY COUNTRY • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER FATHER TO MY CHILDREN • I PROMISE TO GO TO SLEEP LIKE THE SUN • TODAY'S SUNSET 7:20 •



GOVERNORS COMMIT TO CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION • BRAZIL'S PREZ SAYS SHE WON'T BE SILENCED • I PROMISE TO MAKE TIME TO APPRECIATE MY LIFE • KAEPERNICK SAYS HE WON'T STAND FOR ANTHEM • LIVER DISEASE DRUG SHOWS PROMISE FOR ZIKA • I PROMISE TO TREAT ALL BEINGS WITH COMPASSION • I PROMISE TO TRY TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CANNOT ACCEPT • I PROMISE TO BE KIND, SUPPORTIVE & PATIENT IN LIFE • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS SUPPORT ARTISTS • TO COMPROMISE WHEN IT DOES MORE PUBLIC GOOD THAN INACTION • I PROMISE TO BE AN ADVOCATE FOR KEEPING THE BLACK ART COMMUNITY • I PROMISE TO KEEP MY PROMISES • LOVING MOMMY • LOVING MY FAMILY WITH ALL MY HEART • I PROMISE TO BE THE VOICE OF ROXBURY • TO SEE FAIRNESS & EQUALITY IN HOUSING FOR BOSTON • PROMETO MANTENERME LIMPIA PARA DARLE A MI HIJA UN BUEN FUTURO • I PROMISE TO BE BIG, BRAVE, & BOLD • I PROMISE TO CONTINUE TO EDUCATE MY PEOPLE • I PROMISE TO LOVE MY MOTHER • I PROMISE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF MY KIDS • I PROMISE TO STAY INDEPENDENT • I PROMISE TO PROTECT MY FAMILY • I PROMISE TO PASS ON MY WISDOM TO THE YOUTH • I PROMISE TO FIGHT ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION • I PROMISE TO RISING SUN CHAPTER NO2 • I PROMISE TO REMAIN HUMBLE • I PROMISE TO STAY OUT OF TRBL 2DAY • I PROMISE TO BE PATIENT • I PROMISE TO PERSEVERE IN FACE OF ADVERSITY • I PROMISE TO CONTINUE TO ASSIST YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK • I WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME DOING NOTHING • I PROMISE TO NOT CHANGE



SCRIPT

INTRO

This script is not a word-by-word script. It covers what needs to be said and often provides several versions. You will find your own rhythm. Use your own words to say the same things. Be yourself. You are not acting, like in a play. You are acting as you might act during a job in retail, or working in a restaurant, or running a workshop. It is you, but in service. You can and should react to the participant. Each person will be different. Be sensitive; don't overdo it, engage them only up to the point they are comfortable. It already took a lot for them to sit down and participate! Do not be afraid to be personal, but make sure you do not offend, make fun of, or question the participant's promise. You can say things like: That would be hard for me to do, or, I should make that promise, or comment on promises that came from the news – but tread lightly on loaded headlines. It is not unusual to forget to say something important for the piece; you can just insert it somewhere else. The action of rubbing twice gives plenty of opportunity to introduce information. Also, it is perfectly fine to be repetitive; in fact, it is part of the rhythm of the piece. The repetition is a kind of incantation, as if repeating the words is making the promises true. Use your voice to keep the person engaged. If there is not a lot of banter, if the person is quiet, if you can't establish a rapport, or even if they are conversing with you, read the promises as you are rubbing them, or as you see them on the board, or the table, or the paper. Describe what you are doing as you are doing it, and explain what you will be doing next. These words will fill the space.



WHO I AM • I PROMISE TO KEEP MAKING ART • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER MOM • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER FATHER & A GREAT GRANDFATHER • I PROMISE TO BE HONEST WITH MYSELF & EVERYONE ELSE • 40% RAIN THURSDAY • EQUATION PROMISES TO UNIFY PHYSICS THEORIES • DALLAS PROMISES TO CLOSE HOMELESS TENT CITY • I PROMISE TO FORGIVE • IRAQ PLEDGES SUPPORT TO OPEC FREEZE • MEL C I'LL JOIN SPICE GIRLS REUNION • I PROMISE TO NOT GIVE MY MOM A HARD TIME WHEN I GET UP • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS EAT DINNER • I PROMISE TO HUG MY MOTHER ALWAYS • I PROMISE TO NEVER GIVE UP • I PROMISE TO BE BRAVE, KIND, AND GENEROUS • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS EAT TACOS ON TUESDAYS • I PROMISE TO CONSERVE AND CREATE • I PROMISE TO BE OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES • I PROMISE TO BALANCE AESTHETICS AND POLITICS • I PROMISE TO MAKE KINSHIP • I PROMISE TO GET MY REAL ESTATE LICENSE BY SEP 30TH 2016 • I PROMISE TO GET BETTER GRADES THIS YEAR • I PROMISE TO TRY HARDER AT SCHOOL • I PROMISE TO HELP MORE AT HOME • I PROMISE TO HELP MY MOTHER DO MORE DISHES AT HOME • I PROMISE TO DO BETTER NEXT YEAR • I PROMISE TO FIGHT AGAINST PROMESA • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF & DISREGARD THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS • I PROMISE TO BE MORE OUTGOING! • I PROMISE TO NOT QUIT BOY SCOUTS • I PROMISE TO BE MORE PRESENT • I PROMISE TO BE MY BROTHER'S KEEPER • I PROMISE TO BE EVEN-KEEL WITH ANY DECISION MAKING • I PROMISE TO MAKE MY MOM & DAD LAUGH • I



KEYS

[Italics and brackets at the beginning of a section describe an action you are doing throughout the section]

If an action is closely related to some specific words, *[I describe the action in brackets in the text itself, like this]*.

This is plain text and it transcribes how I say it but you can say it in your own words.

This gray text means that these are words that change for each participant, or whoever else is performing with you.

or

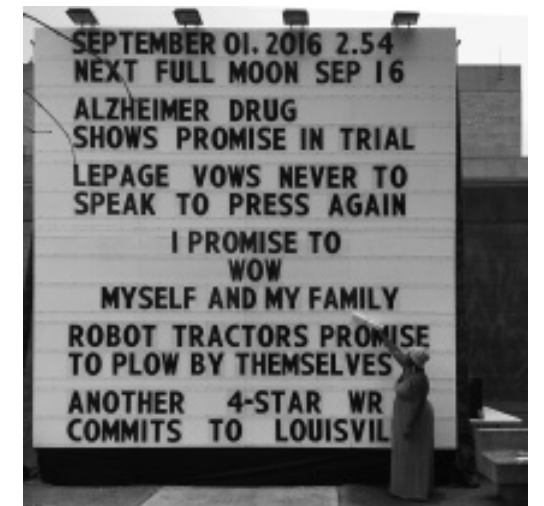
or means that you can use the text above as a guide or this text.

optional

(optional means that you can say this, or not. It is up to you. It appears between parentheses.)

and

and clarifies that the text is not optional. It is not between parentheses. You should use your own words to deliver the information contained here.



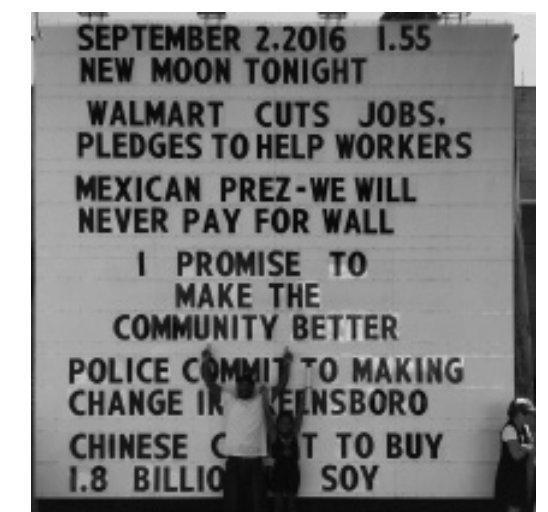
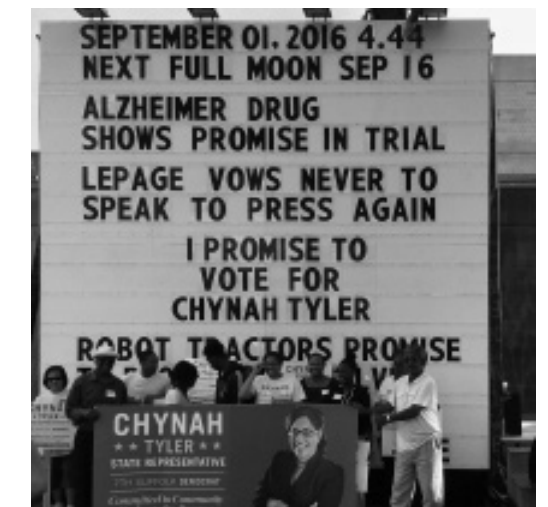
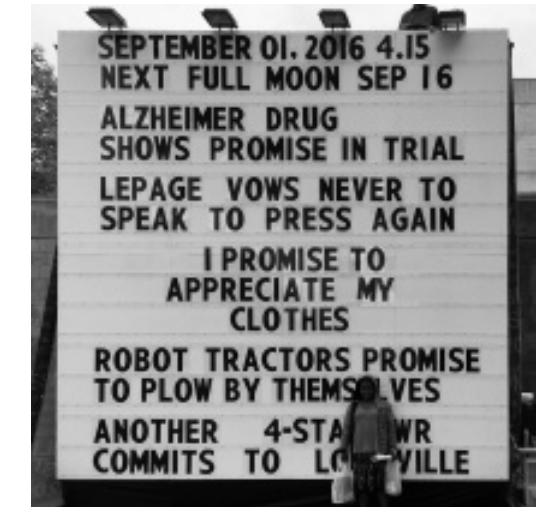
PROMISE TO BE A BETTER MOM • I PROMISE TO CONTINUE TO TEACH OUR HISTORY TO OUR PEOPLE • I PROMISE TO REMIND MYSELF TO THINK MORE ABOUT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS • I PROMISE TO HAVE MORE PATIENCE • I PROMISE TO GET MORE SLEEP • I PROMISE TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE • I PROMISE TO KEEP THE 10 COMMANDMENTS • I PROMISE TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF MY HEALTH • NEXT FULL MOON SEP 16 • ALZHEIMER DRUG SHOWS PROMISE IN TRIAL • LEPAGE VOWS NEVER TO SPEAK TO PRESS AGAIN • I PROMISE TO RETIRE EARLY WITH MY DAD IN THE CARIBBEAN • ROBOT TRACTORS PROMISE TO PLOW BY THEMSELVES • ANOTHER 4-STAR WR COMMITS TO LOUISVILLE • I PROMISE TO SPEND 9/11 WITH MY WIFE, JACKIE • I PROMISE TO GET HONOR ROLL THIS YEAR • I PROMISE TO NOT LET MY SITUATION IN LIFE KEEP ME FROM SEEING THE GOOD IN PEOPLE • I PROMISE NOT TO COMPLAIN AND TO LOVE MY FELLOW MAN AS THEY ARE • I PROMISE TO FINISH MY NOVEL • I PROMISE TO CHERISH MY HUSBAND FOREVER • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS BE MY BROTHER'S KEEPER • I PROMISE TO WOW MYSELF AND MY FAMILY • I PROMISE TO BE KINDER TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO TRUST IN THE LORD • I PROMISE TO LOVE MY MOMMY • I PROMISE TO WRITE MY BOOK • I PROMISE TO APPRECIATE MY CLOTHES • I PROMISE TO CLEAN UP • I PROMISE TO START LOVING MYSELF • I PROMISE TO VOTE FOR CHYNAH TYLER • I PROMISE TO RECOGNIZE MY CONNECTION WITH ETERNAL GODDESSES • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER FATHER • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER COMMUNITY LEADER —



OVERVIEW

The performance resembles a retail transaction because in many ways it is. It happens in distinct parts that are designed to make sure there are no long pauses where you are doing something and the participant is not. Thus, the moments where they need to make decisions are paired with moments when you physically need to perform some tasks.

1. **THEY APPROACH:** The participant approaches the table.
2. **ASK:** You invite them to participate.
3. **EXPLAIN BY POINTING AT WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.**
4. **THEY SIT DOWN. ERASE WHILE THEY THINK.** They think of their promise while you erase the previous one.
5. **THEY SAY THEIR PROMISE.** You explain about truth, lies, and promises while you typeset their message.
6. **FIRST RUBBING.** You make a copy of the promise to hand to the performers writing on the board, while you explain why we set their promise on paper and ask them to consider how they will give you their word.
7. **SIGNATURE.** You ask them to choose how to sign the contract and they sign it.
8. **WE HAVE A PROMISE.** You call attention to the fact that a promise is about to be made, and hand the paper to the performers, who begin writing it on the wall. This way they will be done at the same time as you are done with the participant.
9. **SECOND RUBBING.** You set up the moment when they will give their word. You read their promise and the societal promises as you get ready for them giving their word.
10. **SWEARING IN.** They make their promise, are given their copy of the contract, and most likely head to the board to have their picture taken.



CLMAD • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER EXAMPLE TO OUR YOUTH • I PROMISE TO DO A GOOD DEED EVERY DAY • I PROMISE TO DO MY BEST • I PROMISE TO LIVE AND LET LIVE KM • NEW MOON TONIGHT • WALMART CUTS JOBS, PLEDGES TO HELP WORKERS • MEXICAN PREZ — WE WILL NEVER PAY FOR WALL • I PROMISE TO ADVOCATE FOR SMOKE-FREE BUS STOPS • POLICE COMMIT TO MAKING CHANGE IN GREENSBORO • CHINESE COMMIT TO BUY 1.8 BILLION US SOY • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS STAND UP AGAINST INJUSTICE • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS LOVE VELH2 • I PROMISE TO FORA TEMER • I PROMISE TO NOT VOTE FOR DONALD TRUMP • I PROMISE TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY BETTER • I PROMISE TO TRUST JESUS'S • I PROMISE TO ATTEND THE ART HUB SUPPER CLUB ON OCT 20TH • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER PERSON THIS YEAR • I PROMISE TO PLANT A DATE PALM • I PROMISE TO ACCEPT AND EMBRACE JESUS'S LOVE FOREVER • I WILL RESEARCH K.V. COCKREL & USE MY POWER TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE • I PROMISE NOT TO RUN AWAY FROM MY PAIN & THE PAIN OF OTHERS • I PROMISE TO VOLUNTEER MORE • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF THE ELDERLY • I PROMISE TO PROFESS GOD • I PROMISE TO MAINTAIN MYSELF AND MY FAMILY MKW • I PROMISE TO STAY ANGRY • EU PROMETO LUTAR PELA PAZ NO MUNDO • I PROMISE TO LOVE AND FORGIVE NO MATTER WHAT • I PROMISE TO BE A RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER • I PROMISE NOT TO WORRY • I PROMISE TO BE A STRONG, POSITIVE IMPACT • I PROMISE TO STAY OPEN & KEEP EXPLORING • SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:12 • CLINTON PLEDGES



THEY APPROACH

Hi. How are you?

ASK

Do you know what we're doing here?

or

Are you aware of what's happening here? The situation?

EXPLAIN BY POINTING AT WHAT HAS HAPPENED

[pointing at the participant that just left]

They just promised to live each day with love and integrity, and now Nate is going to write it on the wall, and then they are going to have their picture taken with it, and they also left with a drawing of it. Their promise will stay up only until you make a promise and it replaces theirs.

If you want, we can do the same for you.

[pointing at the wall with all the drawings]

Those are promises that people have made throughout the piece.

The piece is called *Public Trust*, because that's what we're doing, trusting in public.

There are lies and there are facts and in between them everything else is a promissory statement, a sort of promise. Since a promise is already a contract, we make a kind of contract or drawing, on paper. And this . . .

[pointing at the place on the table where you write and the big board]

. . . is a context for your promise. These are other promises made in the last 24 hours. The scientists? Are they more trustworthy? The politicians? Can they keep their promises? And in between them we have an individual like you. That is unverifiable, perhaps; it's an internal state.

Greet people.

Lure them in by offering to explain what is happening.

You repeat what the previous person promised.

You describe what is happening to their promise.

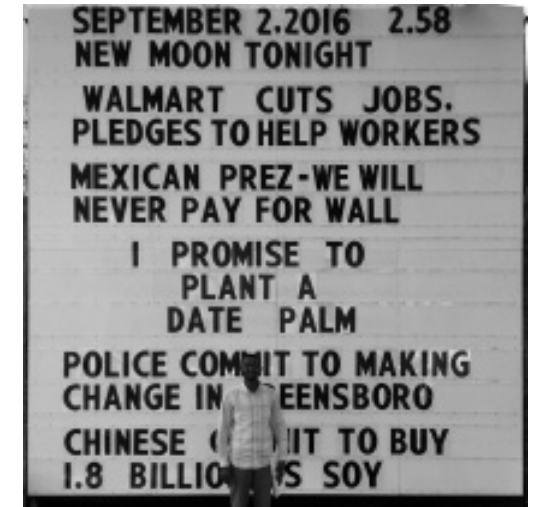
State the title of the piece.

State that a promise is a contract.

Explain that this is why it will be put on paper.

Show what the table is for.

Explain that their promise will be placed among other promises from the last 24 hours.



TO STOP DRUG PRICE HIKES • MARS LANDER WILL LAUNCH IN 2018 • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS BE THERE FOR MY FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD • TACO TRUCKS PROMISED ON EVERY CORNER • BOULDER COMMITS TO 100% CLEAN ENERGY • I WILL STRIVE TO REACT WITH REASON AND NOT WITH EMOTION • I PROMISE TO LET MY HEART GROW • I PROMISE NOT TO CRY TODAY • QUEBRANDO LA PROMESA DE LOS ESTADOS JODIDOS • I PROMISE TO PURSUE ALETHEIA RELENTLESSLY • I PROMISE TO EXPOSE THIS UNIVERSE WRAPPED IN SKIN • I PROMISE FAMILY • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MY DREAM • I PROMISE TO TRUST MYSELF • I DON'T WANT TO BE A HATER OR RACIST. • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS STAND UP FOR MYSELF & FOR WHAT I BELIEVE IN • I PROMISE TO DO ONE GOOD DEED EVERYDAY • I PROMISE TO MAKE A GREAT HOME FOR HELEN • WE PROMISE TO BRING BODY CAMS W/ COMMUNITY INFLUENCED POLICY • WE PROMISE TO OPEN A FRIED CHICKEN & DONUT SHOP • I PROMISE TO DO THE RIGHT THING • MY OBESHCHAEM VERNUTSYA NA S M T B • I ERIC D. PROMISE TO RIDE THE MBTA & AVOID USING FOSSIL FUELS • I PROMISE TO WRITE THE UNTOLD STORIES • W.X. Y.C. PROMISE TO BE BETTER PEOPLE FOR EACH OTHER • EMILIANO, I PROMISE YOU TO BE THE BEST MOM THAT I CAN BE • YVE YANG GALLERY PROMISES TO MAKE GREAT SHOWS ALWAYS • I PROMISE TO BE PATIENT WITH MY THREE YEAR OLD • I PROMISE TO HELP SUPPORT NEW ENGLAND ARTISTS • I PROMISE TO GIVE IT A TRY BUT LET MYSELF MOVE ON • I PROMISE TO BE A POSITIVE & LOVING PERSON • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS KEEP



THEY SIT DOWN. ERASE WHILE THEY THINK.

[Delete the last promise; sort the letters into the area of the table where they are stored. This is the moment when you invite them to think about their promise.]

I'm going to delete the last promise which was I will live each day creatively from my true self, *[read it from the table, and make sure they see that this is what you are doing]*. It is also on the big board *[point at it]*. I have to take the letters away; and while I'm doing that, you have time to think about your promise. How are you going to word it?

or

The last person promised that they would live each day with love and integrity *[notice use of repetition and reading the words on the board and table]* and now it's up on the wall *[point at it]*. While you think about what you want to promise, I will erase their promise from the table and make space for yours.

optional

(We have a lot of letters, but we have to make your promise fit on three lines. I'll help you shorten it if it's too long. For the most part, people's promises fit.)

and

Your promise can be huge, there was a couple that came and promised to love each other forever; but someone else only promised to do the dishes **THAT** night. It can be as huge or as small as you want it to be. There is no pressure. It can be something that's happening in your life or something for your community.

optional

(This is what makes society work, that we can believe what we say to each other.)

and

All right, now I am ready for you. There is space for you on the table now. What would you like to promise?

Erase the previous promise.

Read the last promise as you do.

Sort the letters away.

Ask them to think about what they are going to promise as you work.

Tell them it can be any magnitude of promise, use previous promises as examples.

Ask for their promise.



TRYING • I PROMISE TO TRUST IN THE UNKNOWN • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF • I PROMISE TO CHANGE THE WORLD FOR YOUTH • I PROMISE TO NOT TURN MY HEAD WHEN I SEE INJUSTICE • WE PROMISE TO GET MARRIED • I PROMISE TO HELP LEAVE THE WORLD BETTER THAN I FOUND IT • I PROMISE TO TRUST MYSELF EVERY F-CKDAY • THE STORM IS COMING • FRENCH LEADER PROMISES BREXIT FOR HER COUNTRY • PACKERS PROMISE THIS TO BE AN INTERESTING DAY • I PROMISE TO LET GO AND NOT MAKE ANYTHING HAPPEN • ANNAPOLIS PLEDGES TO PROTECT HONEYBEES • VIETNAM COMMITS TO GREEN GROWTH • I PROMISE TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE! • I PROMISE TO READ AT LEAST ONE HOUR EVERY DAY • I PROMISE TO DO WHAT I BELIEVE IN AND FOSTER MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS • I PROMISE TO HAVE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY FAMILY • WE PROMISE TO GO AT OUR OWN PACE • I PROMISE TO MAKE TIME • I PROMISE NOT TO KILL MY SISTER • I PROMISE NOT TO FRET • I PROMISE TO ASK BEFORE PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVELY TEXTING MY MOTHER-IN-LAW • I PROMISE TO STOP PROCRASTINATING • I PROMISE TO EMBRACE CHANGE • I PROMISE TO ACTIVATE MY FULL POTENTIAL • I PROMISE TO KEEP MY PROMISES, INCLUDING TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO HAVE AN ADVENTURE AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR • I PROMISE TO EAT ALL THE STRAWBERRIES • I PROMISE TO BE PRESENT FOR HIS PRESENCE • I PROMISE NOT TO MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES AGAIN • I PROMISE TO BE MOTIVATED BY LOVE RATHER THAN FEAR • I PROMISE TO LIVE AS MUCH AS I IMAGINE • I WILL BE PATIENT NOT



THEY SAY THEIR PROMISE

[As soon as they make their promise, start to compose it on the table. Make sure it takes up three lines and is centered. Break short promises into an appealing arrangement of three lines. For example, "I will try harder" becomes "I / will try / harder." I often gather all the letters for one word at a time to do one word in one swoop. This part can be quiet and passive for the participant and it is hard to talk and do it at the same time. Sometimes I say the words I am typesetting as I do it, so the situation remains dynamic and fills the space with their words: I . . . will . . . try . . . harder . . . OK, done!]

So this is your promise, I promise not to be late on Monday, right? *[Note: always find a way to repeat their promise out loud.]*

optional

(Can I promise that too? OR Is that going to be easy to keep? OR I could never keep that promise . . .)

and

If you think about everything we say in our daily lives, a few things are truths and a few are lies; but the bulk of everything we say is a promise of some kind. *[Go through some examples:*

*See you later
I'll pay you back
See you tomorrow
I got your back
I'll be here when you're done]*

[Once you are done writing their promise, update the time on the typeset area.]

Let me write down the time, it is 7:08.

FIRST RUBBING

[Once the promise is typeset, grab a piece of paper from the stack to your left and place it over the typeset words. Grab the graphite bar and start rubbing, left to right, top to bottom. You can further engage them by asking them to help you keep the paper in place by holding the corners of the paper.]

optional

I like your promise; do you think you can keep it?

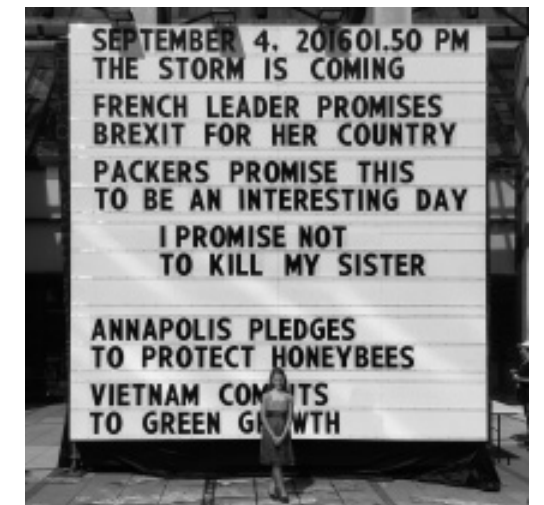
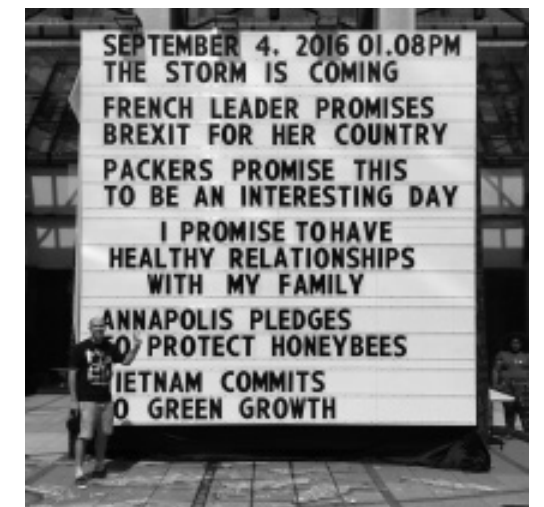
Write their promise on the table.

Repeat it to them word by word as you write it.

You can state that everything that isn't a lie or a fact is a kind of a promise.

Give examples of promises in daily speech.

Update the time.



PASSIVE FOR CHANGE • I PROMISE TO BE PRESENT • I PROMISE TO STAND UP FOR MYSELF AND OTHERS • I WILL READ TO THE END • I PROMISE TO LISTEN • WINTER IS COMING • OIL PRICES WILL REMAIN STEADY THIS YEAR • NADAL VOWS TO KEEP WORKING AFTER LOSS • I PROMISE TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF • ACTIVISTS PROMISE TO STAND UP TO BEIJING • TOMORROW'S HIGH TIDE WILL BE 9.5 FEET • I PROMISE TO STAY FRIENDS WITH MY FRESHMAN-YEAR ROOMMATE • I PROMISE TO STAY FRIENDS WITH MY FRESHMAN-YEAR ROOMMATE • WE PROMISE TO BE BRAVE • I PROMISE TO OBEY JESUS & FOLLOW THE 10 COMMANDMENTS • I PROMISE NOT TO VOTE FOR TRUMP • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS MAKE ART • I PROMISE TO CALL MY GRANDMA • I PROMISE TO LOVE & CHERISH LAURI, STILL AFTER 32 YEARS • I PROMISE TO BUY A BIG CAR • I PROMISE TO MEASURE TWICE CUT ONCE • I PROMISE TO LOOK FOR HUMOR • I PROMISE TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT KATE GILBERT'S ART • I PROMISE TO KEEP IT CLEAN! • I PROMISE TO STAY IN THE MOMENT • I PROMISE TO HAVE COURAGE • I PROMISE TO TREAT PEOPLE BETTER • I PROMISE TO BE MORE OPEN-MINDED • I PROMISE TO KEEP MY PASSION FOR ART • I PROMISE TO VISIT OFTEN • I PROMISE TO MAKE THOSE AROUND ME THE BEST THEY CAN BE • I PROMISE TO BE MORE THOUGHTFUL & LESS REACTIVE • DAN WILL DO HIS PART TO STAY HEALTHY THIS YEAR • ELEANOR PROMISES TO PRACTICE CONTENTMENT • I PROMISE TO TRY TO DO THE HARD THING • I PROMISE TO TRY TO GROW AS MUCH LOVE AS I HARVEST • I PROMISE TO SEE



or

All right, I like this promise, because it is feasible.

and

[read their promise out loud] I will live each day creatively. As I'm doing this, think about what makes your word good. Some people swear on the US Constitution, some promise over the Bible, if you're Hindu we have holy water from the River Ganges, we've got the Old Testament, the Koran, if you want to make a pinky promise or shake hands over your promise you can ring this bell and someone will come to assist you (or you can shake hands with your companion), some people leave a money deposit as collateral. Think about what makes your word true, because I'll ask you to give me your word in some way later. Promises are a form of contract, that is why we are putting it down on paper. There will be one copy for you and one for me. This will help you keep your promise.

or you can say it like this

[read their promise out loud] I promise to love always. A promise has several parts. Choosing a promise was the first part. Telling your promise to somebody, like me, is the second part. You are making it public. This is going to be a deal between you and me. It is going to be a form of contract. We are putting it on paper. It is a drawing and a contract. Another part of the promise is what makes your word good, what is your collateral, so to speak. You want to make sure when you promise someone something that they believe you. That they trust you. On the table you'll see different things that people use to back up their word. You can swear on the Old Testament or the New Testament, or on the Constitution, there is holy water from the River Ganges, you can leave a small money deposit, you can make a pinky promise or shake hands with someone. Some people just say things like this to themselves [point to the area on the table with common sayings]. Think about what you want to do while I write your promise.

and

There are lies and there are facts; almost everything else is a kind of promise. You haven't promised this yet, we are just making a copy so I can give it to Nate, who is going to write it on the board.

on the board will be ready for them when they are done.

Make the first drawing by rubbing.

Repeat their promise out loud.

State the components of a promise.

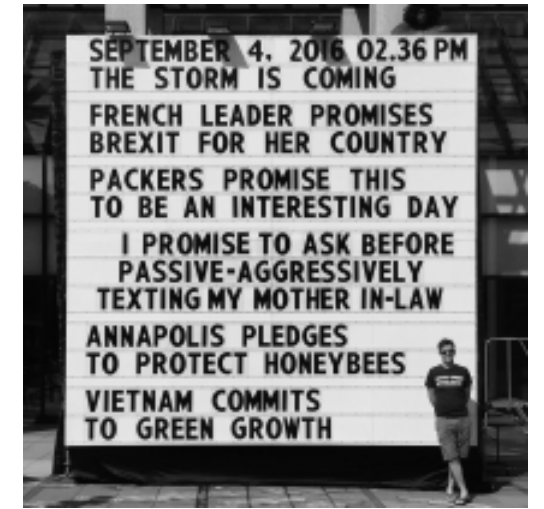
Describe ways to give one's word.

Set the expectation that they will be asked to do this later.

State that promises are a form of contract.

State that everything that isn't a lie or a fact is kind of a promise.

Describe what you are doing as you are doing it.



HAMILTON WITH MY DAUGHTER • WE PROMISE TO BE NICE TO ME & YOU & MOM • WE PROMISE TO BE FINANCIALLY STABLE • TODAY PROMISES RAIN • CLINTON PROMISES JOBS OF THE FUTURE • G20 ENDS WITH PLEDGE ON TRADE • I PROMISE TO ENCOURAGE THE NEXT GENERATION TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES • TRUMP AGREES TO TAKE PART IN ALL DEBATES • CARS WILL GET AUTOMATIC SOFTWARE UPDATES • I PROMISE TO CHERISH EVERY MOMENT • I PROMISE TO CONTRIBUTE TO CURES FOR CANCER • I PROMISE TO SHARE MY JOY AND KNOWLEDGE • I PROMISE TO SMILE AND MAKE OTHERS HAPPY • I PROMISE TO HELP MY SISTER HELP TOGO • I PROMISE TO SEEK HELP EVEN WHEN SHY • I PLEDGE TO BETTER THE WORLD THROUGH MUSIC AND MEDICINE • I PROMISE TO LISTEN AND ACCEPT HELP • I PROMISE TO DO MY PART • I PROMISE TO VALUE MY FOUNDATIONS • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU • I PLEDGE TO NOT BACKDOWN! • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF • I PROMISE TO LET THE GUARD DOWN • I PROMISE TO BREAK MY PROMISES • I PROMISE TO BE HUMBLE AGAINST ALL ODDS • I PROMISE TO NOT TAKE MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO GIVE PEACE A CHANCE • I PROMISE TO LAUGH MORE • I PROMISE TO GIVE BIG BROTHER SOMETHING TO WATCH • I PROMISE TO MAINTAIN FAITH IN MY POTENTIAL • I PROMISE TO HONOR MY BOUNDARIES & BE BRAVE • I PROMISE TO FULLY ACCEPT THE MESSINESS • WE PROMISE TO FINISH TOMORROW'S WORK • NEXT WEEK WILL BE WARM • OBAMA VOWS TIGHTER SANCTIONS ON N. KOREA • PAUL RYAN PROMISES TO KEEP GOVERNMENT OPEN • I



[Once you are done rubbing, number it and seal the drawing. Describe what you are doing as you are doing it. This is a motif of the interaction. Do not be afraid to repeat yourself, as you write and as you make the drawings.]

[as you number the paper] One of two.

[as you seal the paper] I have a seal.

SIGNATURE

[as you place the paper in front of them, in the flat area made for signing]

Now your promise is in this context [point at the societal promises]. Because this is a form of contract, you can either sign it with your thumbprint, or a drop of blood, or your name. Whatever you prefer. You put your mark here [point at the lower left-hand corner of the page]. This one is just a copy, the second one will be yours, and that's the one where you will give me your word.

or

This copy is not the promise yet, this is just our copy to keep and use to write it on the big board. Since you are the one making the promise, I need a way to record your identity. It can either be your name, or your fingerprint, or a drop of your blood.

[As they sign, or put their thumbprint down, or a drop of blood, help them place it in the bottom right-hand corner. **IMPORTANT: if they choose blood, make them put the blood on the drawing and a blank piece of paper, so they don't have to prick themselves a second time.**]

So this is the copy, one of two.

optional

(Your promise is I promise to love always, we have the date March 3, 2016, we have the time 8:45, we have a promise made by science [read it]. Statements are either facts or lies and almost everything else is a promise. We have a sports team promise [read it] and one from a politician.)

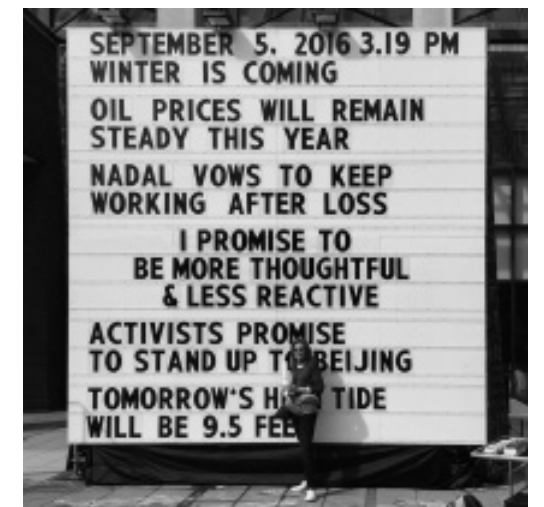
Flip the paper and present it to them.

State that you need them to mark the paper with their identity.

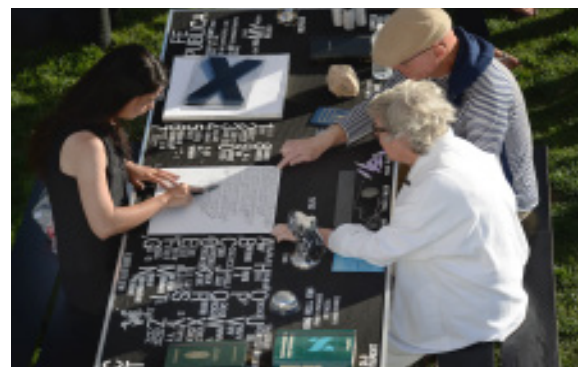
Give them the three choices.

Emphasize that this is just the copy, that the next drawing will be the original that contains their promise.

You may read everything in the contract if you feel like it.



PROMISE TO VOTE • SPACEX CUSTOMER VOWS TO REBUILD SATELLITE • INDIA'S RICHEST MAN PLEDGES FREE 4G TO 1B • I PROMISE I WILL TAKE MORE VACATION • I PROMISE TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE • I PROMISE TO BE AS GOOD A FRIEND AS MINE ARE TO ME • I PROMISE MY LITTLE BROTHER HE WILL BE OKAY • I PROMISE TO KEEP CLEANLINESS EVERYWHERE • I PROMISE TO BE THE BEST MOTHER I CAN BE ALWAYS • I PROMISE TO CALL MY GRANDMOTHER • I PROMISE TO SUPPORT MY NEPHEW IN HIS RECOVERY • WE PROMISE TO JOURNEY TOGETHER • I PROMISE TO VOTE • I PROMISE TO BREATHE INTO MY HEART • I PROMISE TO CRUSH GOOGLE • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS TRY HARDER • I PROMISE TO GET MY PH.D. • I PROMISE TO CLEAN MY ROOM • I PROMISE TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD • I PROMISE TO INSPIRE MY CHILDREN TO DO GOOD WORK IN THE WORLD • I PROMISE TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF POSSIBLE • I PROMISE TO MAKE SOMEONE'S DAY HAPPIER • I PROMISE TO WRITE EVERY DAY FOR THE REST OF THE MONTH • I PROMISE TO MAKE PHILANTHROPY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL VIA GC IN CHINA • I PROMISE TO EAT Q'S NUTS • I PROMISE TO FIGHT AGAINST WORLD POLLUTION • I PROMISE TO VLOG EVERY DAY • I PROMISE TO BE A GOOD SPORT • I PROMISE TO GROW THE CIVIC SERIES AND TAKE MY VITAMINS • I PROMISE TO VOTE TOMORROW IN OUR LOCAL ELECTION • I PROMISE TO REACT MORE THOUGHTFULLY • I PROMISE TO IDENTIFY MORE MOMENTS TO LEARN FROM OTHERS • I PROMISE TO LET MY PASSIONS CONTINUE TO DRIVE ME • I PROMISE TO CREATE SPACE TO



WE HAVE A PROMISE

[as soon as they have signed the paper, say loudly so everyone can hear you, you can even ring the bell]

Nate, we have a promise.

or

We have a promise.

[hand the paper to the person who will write it on the board]

He will write that up on the big board and I will make your copy now, the one that you will actually make the promise over. When we are done, Nate can take a picture of you in front of your promise with your phone.

SECOND RUBBING

[Grab another piece of paper from the stack to your left and place it over the typeset words. Grab the graphite bar and start rubbing, left to right, top to bottom. You can further engage them by asking them to help you keep the paper in place by holding the corners of the paper.]

[if you did not say this during the first rubbing, say]

optional

Nate just took the copy. The one we are going to make now is the original. While I make it, think about what backs up your word. What is your collateral? Because you're going to have to give me your word over this contract. You can do it over a sacred text, from different religions, or the US Constitution. You can leave a deposit as collateral. There's holy water from the River Ganges. There are common expressions that people use. You can also use one of your friends, or me, for a pinky promise, or as a witness, or to shake hands with. Think about your values and what makes your word good; and that is how we are going to make the promise over this document.

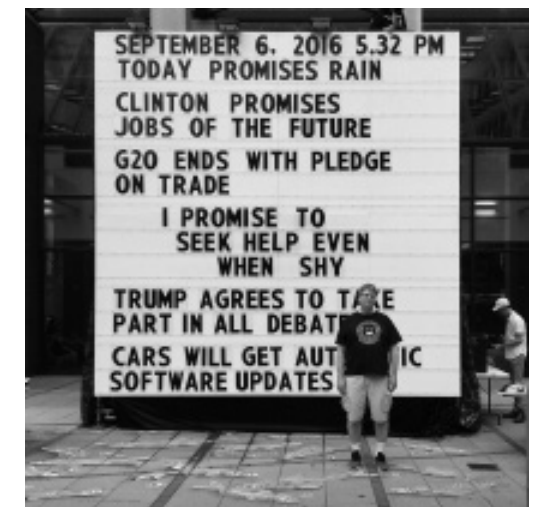
[as you rub, say]

I'm going to make your copy of the contract now. This is the one you are going to promise over. So your promise is not made yet. We need to wait for you to pinky promise over it *[or whatever*

Declare that there is a promise.

Hand the drawing to the performer in charge of writing on the board.

Explain that when they will be able to have their picture against the marquee when their promise is written on it.



Make a second drawing.

If you have not done it yet, describe ways to give one's word; and set the expectation that they will be asked to do this as soon as the rubbing is done.

State that this is their copy and the original.

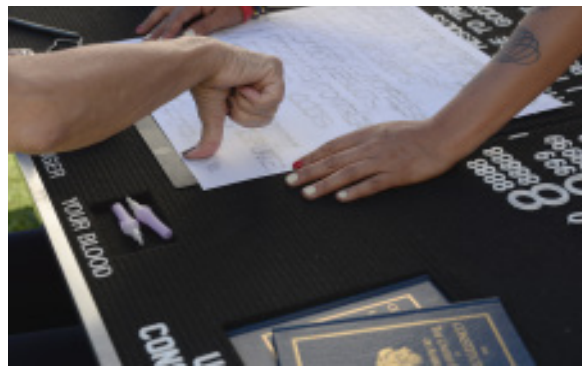
Remind them that they have not made their promise yet.

Read the promises on the drawing as you rub them.

Describe what you are doing as you are doing it.

You may point out that they are making a drawing.

DISCOVER MY GIFTS • I PROMISE TO PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT OVER THE URGENT • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS CHALLENGE MY COMFORT ZONE • I PROMISE TO NEVER HATE ANYONE & SPREAD LOVE AS MUCH • WAXING MOON TONIGHT • CHINA PROMISES PATIENCE WITH UK NUCLEAR DEAL • VOTER TURNOUT PROMISES TO BE ABYSMAL • I PROMISE TO BE FAITHFUL TO MY AIM • WOMAN'S CLUB COMMITS TO YOUTH • PEET'S PLEDGES TO ADVANCE COFFEE RESEARCH • I PROMISE TO ADVOCATE FOR VOTING RIGHTS • I PLEDGE TO ACCELERATE GENDER BALANCE IN TECH • I PROMISE TO COMPLY WITH MY NEPHROLOGIST • I PROMISE HONESTY & INTEGRITY • I MUST REMEMBER TO FORGET • I PROMISE TO VOTE • I PROMISE TO LEAD WITH LOVE • I PROMISE TO MAKE TOMORROW A BETTER DAY • I PROMISE TO LOVE LI BEI BEI • I PROMISE YOU ARE ENOUGH • YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL • I PROMISE NOT TO DRINK • I PROMISE TO GET ENOUGH SLEEP • I PROMISE TO BE MORE OPEN • I PROMISE TO STAY OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES • I PROMISE TO BE ALTRUISTIC • I PROMISE TO GO GREEN • I PROMISE TO ELIMINATE THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH FOOD ROTS IN MY FRIDGE • I PROMISE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO VOTE BY MAIL • I PROMISE TO JUST DO ONE THING EVERYDAY • I PROMISE TO TRUST HER • I WILL DO A TRIATHLON BY END OF 2017 • I PROMISE TO KEEP LOWERING LOGD • I PROMISE TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL, GET AN APT & GET A GIRLFRIEND • I PROMISE MYSELF NOT TO CARE WHAT ANYONE THINKS ABOUT ME • I PROMISE TO KEEP GOING • WE PROMISE TO FINISH COLLEGE, BE



they have chosen to promise by]. In-n-out burger vows antibiotic beef, yeah that is from today. I will live each day creatively from my true self, that's the promise you made. We have a corporation promising something, we have you, this one is the government, saying bank loan defaulters won't be spared . . . [*you read the promises as they appear in the rubbing and indicate who said them*].

or if you have repeated too many times

We have a corporate promise, we have your promise, we have a federal government promise, we have a politician's promise, and finally we have the law promising. All right, I will need your fingerprint again.

and

[as you number the paper] This is two of two.

[as you seal the paper] We get the seal.

[as you put the paper in the signing area] We need your mark on your copy, here.

optional

(Notice that you are also making a work of art, with all the proper conventions, pencil on paper, the date, something you want to express, your signature, and even an edition number.)

SWEARING IN

[as soon as they make their mark, say (even if they already told you how)]

How are you going to promise this?

or

How are you going to give me your word?

and

I am going to have to follow my cheat sheet. [*look up the right words for their promise*]

Repeat after me:

Ask them to reveal what form of oath they have chosen.

Refer to your cheat sheet and enact the ritual of the promise.

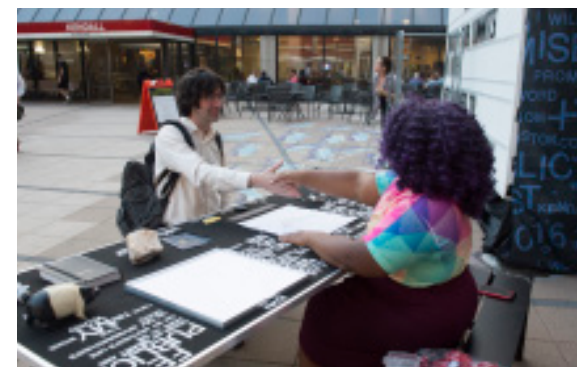
Declare that this is now a promise.

Give them their drawing.

Encourage them to have their picture taken.



SUCCESSFUL PARTNERS & HELP OTHERS • I PROMISE TO STAND UP FOR MYSELF & OTHERS • I PROMISE TO BE A WARM INTERPRETER • I PROMISE TO MAKE MY FRIENDS A PRIORITY • I PROMISE NOT TO GIVE UP SO QUICKLY • I PROMISE TO MAKE A BIG DATA APP FOR A SOCIAL CAUSE • I PROMISE TO TAKE UP SPACE • I PROMISE TO PRACTICE • I PROMISE TO BE OPEN ABOUT BEING POLY • I PROMISE TO BETTER MYSELF • WEEKEND PROMISES RAIN • 49ERS OWNER PLEDGES \$1 MILLION TO CHARITY • PENCE PROMISES NEW REAGAN REVOLUTION • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS LISTEN FIRST • CLINTON PROMISES NO MORE TROOPS IN IRAQ • AIRBNB COMMITS TO NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY • I PROMISE TO EMPOWER MORE YOUTH-DRIVEN CHANGE WITH CHINA YOUTHOLGY • YO PROMETO HACER ARTE CON OTROS • I WILL FIND JOY IN ART • WE PROMISE NEVER TO BE BORING! • I PROMISE TO COMMIT MYSELF TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO TAKE THEM OUT TO DINNER • I PROMISE TO LEARN TO METABOLIZE MY ANXIETY • I WILL REALLY WORK ON BEING MORE PATIENT • WE WILL USE OUR SCIENCE TO SAVE THE WORLD • I WILL MAKE DECISIONS WITH LOVE • I WILL SHOW UP TO LIFE • I WANT TO CREATE AN OPEN FORUM FOR YOU • I PLEDGE TO BRING A DANCE PARTY TO THE OFFICE • I PROMISE TO TELL MY HUSBAND I RESPECT & LOVE HIM • I PROMISE TO ONLY WORK JOBS I ENJOY • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF LOVE • SKYE I PROMISE TO TAKE YOU TO THE ISLE OF SKYE • I PROMISE TO CONNECT WITH SOMEONE DIFFERENT FROM ME EVERYDAY • I WILL STRIVE TO HONOR



Constitution

I do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm . . .

Bible

As God is my witness . . .

Old Testament

May harm befall me if I do not . . .

Jupiter Stone

Pacta sunt servanda . . .

Koran

I promise to . . .

Bhagavad Gita

I promise to . . .

Zoroaster

I promise to . . .

Witness

(ring bell)

I give my word that . . .

Pinky Promise

(ring bell)

Pinkie swear?

Shake Hands

(ring bell)

I give you my word . . .

Or they can read one of the following texts on the side:

I swear over my mother's grave that

[point at their promise on the paper]

Now read your promise.

[after they complete this procedure, say loudly]

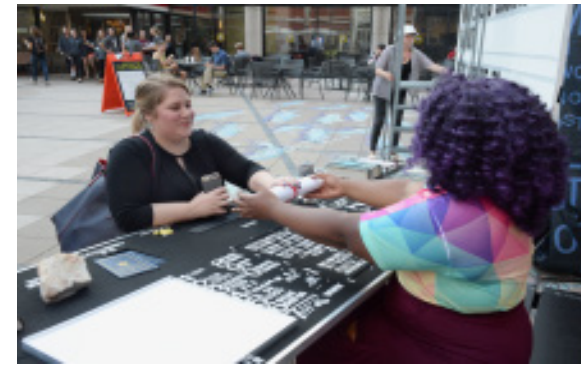
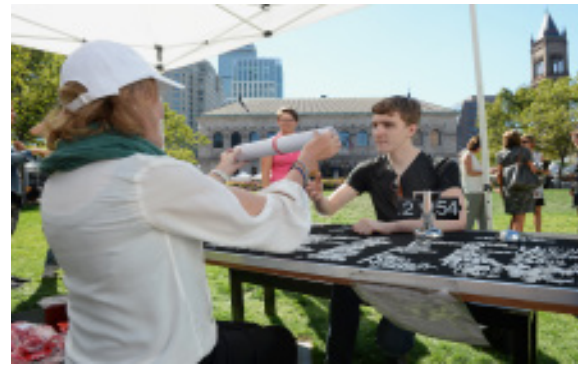
Now it is promised.

[hand them the paper, offer them a rubber band to keep their promise rolled]

Thank you. When Nate is done writing your promise, he can take a picture of you.



ALL PEOPLE AS WORTHY •
 CAMBRIDGEFOODLAB.COM WILL BE
 OPEN BY THE END OF FEBRUARY 2017
 • I PROMISE TO MAKE A MAJOR
 CHANGE IN MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO
 CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR EDUCATION
 EQUITY • I PROMISE TO CRY WHEN I
 WANT TO • I WILL REMIND MYSELF
 THAT I WILL BE OKAY • I WILL MAKE
 THE TIME • I WILL MAKE THE TIME • I
 WILL FOLLOW THROUGH EVEN IF I MAY
 FAIL • I PROMISE TO QUIT MIT BY
 AUGUST 1ST 2017 • I PROMISE TO
 BECOME A PROCESS ENGINEER IN 3
 YEARS • I PROMISE TO CREATE
 JUKETAPE • I PROMISE TO THROW
 MORE SPARKLE PARTIES • SUN SETS
 AT 7:01 • CHELSEA C. VOWS TO STAY
 FRIENDS W IVANKA T. • UZBEKISTAN
 PLEDGES BETTER TIES WITH RUSSIA •
 I PROMISE TO SEIZE THE MOMENT &
 BE MORE EMPATHIC • INDIA PLEDGES
 TO JOIN CLIMATE DEAL • TURLINGTON,
 I WILL NEVER HAVE PLASTIC SURGERY
 • I PROMISE TO PRACTICE LOVING-
 KINDNESS IN TOUGH SITUATIONS • I
 PROMISE TO BE MORE CONFIDENT IN
 MYSELF AND MY IDEAS • I PROMISE TO
 ENJOY MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO LOVE
 MYSELF • I WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD
 MY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS • I
 WILL ALWAYS ACT KINDER THAN I FEEL
 • I PROMISE TO MAKE YOU PROUD
 EVERYDAY • I PROMISE TO FORGIVE
 MY FLAWS • I PROMISE TO WORRY
 LESS • I PROMISE TO HAVE MY PAPER
 ON ARCHIVE BY THE END OF 2016 • I
 PROMISE TO SLEEP BEFORE 12AM
 EVERY NIGHT • I PROMISE TO GET UP
 BEFORE 8AM EVERY WEEKDAY • I
 PROMISE TO BE A BETTER FRIEND • I
 WILL SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH YOU IN
 CUBA • I PROMISE TO HELP THE
 FAMILIES/CHILDREN ACCOMPLISH
 THEIR GOALS • I PROMISE I WON'T

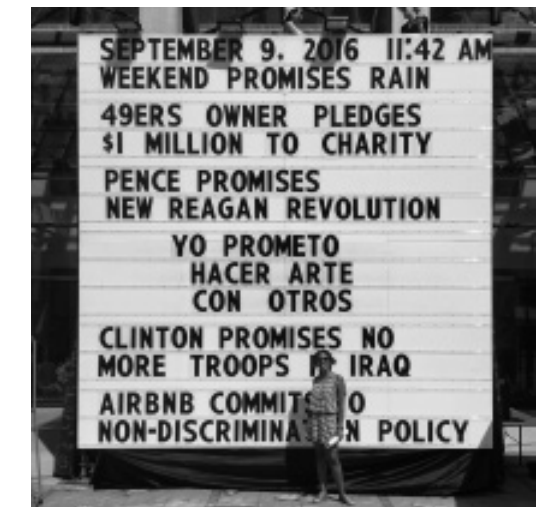
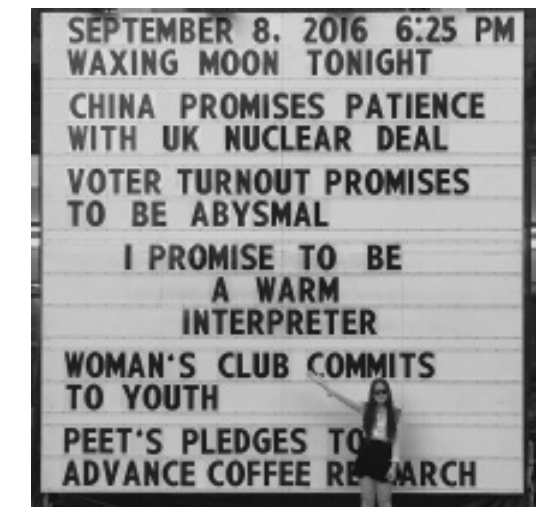


IF THEY ASK: HOW DID YOU THINK OF MAKING THIS PIECE?

Promises are one of the few things we can do with words. I can say, "I'll see you tomorrow," and I can make it happen. Some people believe that believing in the promises inherent in our language, in the things we say, is the only thing that keeps a society together. We can function because we believe in what we say to each other. If you don't believe what you say, or what I say to you, then everything falls apart. We are making a piece of art about this together, we are making a drawing together, we are making promises.

[engage in conversation . . . ask them what they think]

— PAUL RAMIREZ JONAS



GIVE UP ON US • I PROMISE I WON'T BECOME DISILLUSIONED • WE PROMISE TO FOCUS ON THE HAPPY THINGS • I PROMISE TO SPREAD MORE LOVE • I PROMISE TO THINK LESS AND LIVE MORE • I PROMISE TO KEEP GOING EVEN WHEN I FEEL THE DARKNESS • I PROMISE TO EAT MORE VEGETABLES & FRUITS • I PROMISE TO WORK HARD AND NEVER STOP LEARNING • I PROMISE TO LOVE PEOPLE MORE & BE A BETTER FRIEND • I PROMISE TO LOVE MAMA • I PROMISE TO MAKE SURE MY KIDS ALWAYS KNOW I WILL LOVE THEM FOREVER • WE PROMISE GUN CONTROL & TO LIFT UP & BUILD THE FUTURE MIDDLE CLASS • ROY Z PROMISES TO STAY FRIENDS WITH NOAH T AND DYLAN M • WE PROMISE TO LOVE SAWYER FREDERICKS TODAY TOMORROW & FOREVER • LEO WILL ALWAYS LOVE JACKIE • I WILL HELP EDUCATE MEN IN THE VALUE OF WOMEN & CHILDREN IN INDIA • LESS EMAIL MORE REAL LIFE & CONVERSATION • TO REMEMBER WHAT REALLY MATTERS • I WILL REACH OUT FOR HELP WHEN I NEED IT • WE WILL NEVER FORGET • MBTA PLEDGES TO KEEP STATIONS CLEAN • SAUDI ARABIA PLEDGES TO PROTECT PILGRIMS • I PROMISE TO BE FLUENT IN SPANISH • UN VOWS TO PUNISH N. KOREA FOR NUCLEAR TEST • VAN SUSTEREN: I WILL BE BACK ON THE AIR • I PROMISE TO LET GO EASIER • CURIOSITY SHOULD NOT BE WARNED NOR BLAMED • I PROMISE TO PRAY FOR LOVE & PEACE FOR OUR NATIONS • I PROMISE TO RESPECT & DEFEND RIGHTS • GO EASY • I PROMISE TO PRAY FOR POLITICAL UNITY • WE PROMISE TO SOW SEEDS OF GOOD & HAVE FAITH IN THE HARVEST • I



FOREWORD

KATE GILBERT

Greater Boston, like many urban centers in the United States, exhibits the same growing tensions and cynicism as our nation at large. We are badly divided, and that division breeds mistrust.

Differences in economic advantage, class, race, and geography prevent us from recognizing each other as humans with similar needs and dreams. When demands for the greater good are made, promises of change are all too easy to make. But as many of Boston's lower-income neighborhoods know all too well, promises aren't always kept.

What hope is there, then, for honest public discourse? What can we do as individuals to repair eroding trust, society's glue? And what, if any, is the role of art in this process?

Enter *Public Trust*, Paul Ramirez Jonas's participatory exploration of the value of our words—indeed, of the idea that the verity of, and commitment to, our statements defines us, both as individuals and as a society.

Over twenty-one days, Bostonians were invited to give a promise they would keep, and to make it public with a grand gesture—by proclaiming it on a fifteen-by-fifteen-foot marquee surrounded by the questionable promises made that day by politicians and other public figures.

Ramirez Jonas was a natural choice for Now + There's first annual public art-based inquiry into a social issue. His work relies on participation and exchange. In doing so, he creates equal contributors: through *Public Trust*, we become artists; through our words, we become agents for social change.

A critical matter was whose words and points of view would be represented—and also representative. We selected three locations to offer a wide sampling.

Dudley Square was our first site, a hub of African-American culture in the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury. As gentrification threatens, Roxbury's residents, some third generation, regard outsiders with a healthy skepticism.

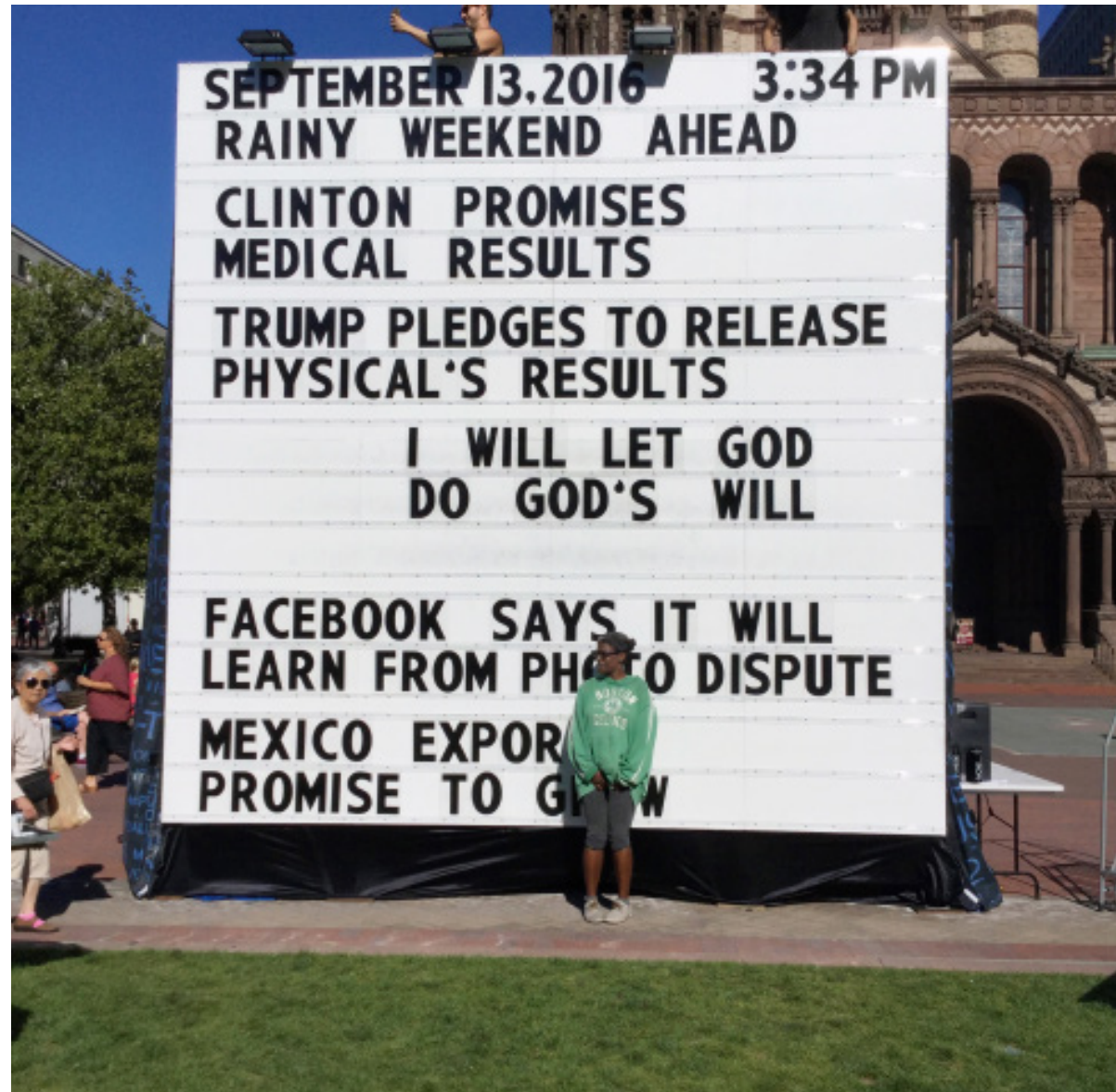
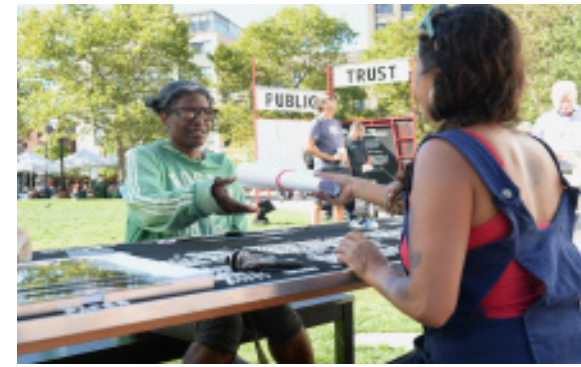
Two and a half miles northeast, across the Charles River, was our second location, Kendall Square in Cambridge, a nexus of innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship.

Our final location was Copley Square in Boston's Back Bay, home to the nation's first free municipal library, historic Trinity Church, the iconic I.M. Pei tower housing some of Boston's largest wealth-management companies, and an area populated by strolling shoppers.

Approaching *Public Trust* at any of these locations between August 27 and September 17, 2016, one would immediately spot a fifteen-foot-square white marquee proclaiming the date, weather, and a variety of promises in black letters. Leaning over the top of the board or perched on a ladder, performers would be adding letters and numbers, one at a time. In front of the board, one would see a table set with letters, graphite, paper, sacred texts, and other objects for making a binding "contract." One of fifteen local performers was waiting to share the last



PROMISE TO NOT LET SOCIAL ANXIETY WIN • I PROMISE TO USE MY LIGHT TO SAVE OTHERS FROM THE DARK • I PROMISE TO DO WHAT I CAN WITH WHAT I HAVE WHERE I AM • I PROMISE TO LOVE MORE & FORGIVE FREQUENTLY • I WILL BE A HISTORY PROFESSOR WITH A PHD • I PROMISE TO BE A BRIDGE THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE TO THEIR DESTINY • I PROMISE TO REDUCE THE TOXICITY OF LIFE • I PROMISE TO BE KINDER • I PROMISE TO STAND UP AGAINST SOCIAL INEQUALITY • I PROMISE TO WALK THE DOGS MORE • I PROMISE TO BE THE DAD I ALWAYS WISHED I HAD • I PROMISE TO DO THE WORK, KEEP THE FAITH BE TRUE BLUE • I GIVE MY WORD TO ALWAYS BE THERE FOR MY FAMILY • I PROMISE TO ANSWER • I PROMISE TO VISIT MY GRANDPARENTS MORE • I PROMISE TO BE THE BEST MOTHER I CAN BE • 12H 35M OF SUN TODAY • GREEK PM PROMISES BAILOUT IN 2 YEARS • TEST FOR ENGINE THAT PROMISES TRIP TO MARS • I PROMISE TO EMBRACE MY FEMININITY & PASSION AS A PERCUSSIONIST • GISELE: I WILL KEEP TOM BRADY READY TO PLAY • TURKEY PLEDGES TO FIGHT IN SYRIA • I PROMISE TO BRING MORE ART & ARTISTS INTO PARKS • I PROMISE TO FIGHT FOR LGBTQ RIGHTS / DON'T HATE DON'T DISCRIMINATE • I PROMISE TO MAKE MY LIFE A HAPPY ONE • I PROMISE TO FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC PAIN • I PROMISE TO GROW NUTZDESIGN • I PROMISE NOT TO JUDGE PEOPLE • I PROMISE NOT TO SCREAM. • I PROMISE TO HELP AIDS ORPHANS EDUCATION • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH • I WILL ACT POSITIVELY IN THE FACE OF FEAR • I



promise he witnessed and to help participants make their own, which would be recorded in a document he or she would take with them.

This scene and its objects represented Ramirez Jonas's carefully crafted framework to reflect the uniqueness of each location and every participant's expression.

Thus, in Dudley on August 28 at 1:05 p.m., La Tanya promised "to not be a silent bystander," and today she stands by that promise in her actions as an author and motivational speaker.

In Kendall on September 7 at 7:40 p.m., Mark promised "to prioritize the important over the urgent," and, despite his initial skepticism, he admits, "proclaiming that promise publicly has actually changed my day-to-day experience."

And in Copley Square on September 16 at 4:30 p.m., Alli promised to check her racism while the local ABC television affiliate took footage. Her promise was later broadcast locally as well as nationally, and reminds us all to challenge our biases.

Public Trust fulfilled two goals: to give participants a space in which to expose their dreams and commitments, and to allow Ramirez Jonas the opportunity to pose such vital questions as: Where does trust break down? How do we hold ourselves accountable?

The most common promises—regardless of location or participants' race or economic status—were promises to ourselves ("I will make decisions with love") and to those closest to us ("I promise to be a better mom"). These elicited tears, high-fives, and great pride.

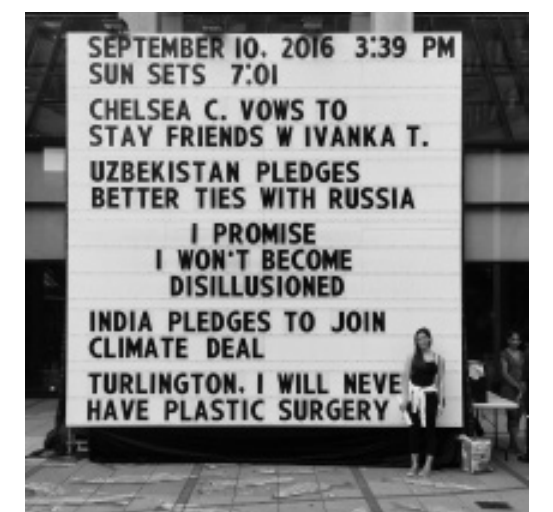
Less common were social-activist promises, such as "I promise to make black lives matter" and "We promise to bring body cams with community influenced policy."

In striking contrast were official bromides from headlines, such as "Governors commit to climate change action," or vague predictions from experts made to unidentified publics, such as "Mars lander will launch in 2018."

I want to thank each of the 956 people who made a promise with *Public Trust*. It took bravery and self-understanding. I also owe a debt of gratitude to our dedicated team of performers and staff, our hosts and partners at the three sites, and the Lewis Family Foundation, which supported this project in the belief that artistic expression makes for strong communities: for twenty-one days they helped Greater Boston unite around a desire to reclaim the power of our words.

This book, a record of the project, was made possible by another set of incredible contributors, including the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, Nara Roesler Gallery, and Alexander Provan. Their generosity adds another level of accountability to *Public Trust*.

Finally, I must recognize the vision of Paul Ramirez Jonas. His invitation to Bostonians to voice their deepest commitments affirms the power of individuals to repair trust and become the citizen-leaders our world needs.



SEEK TO UNDERSTAND AND THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD • I WILL BE BETTER THAN I WAS YESTERDAY • I PROMISE TO NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF INTERESTING THINGS • I PROMISE TO SPREAD TRUTH AND GOOD ENERGY • I PROMISE TO KEEP TO MY FAITH IN GOD • SOME DAY I WILL OBTAIN FREEDOM IN MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO KEEP HELPING CHILDREN & FAMILIES • I PROMISE TO GO BACK TO SAN FRANCISCO • I PROMISE TO BETTER MANAGE MY TIME TO MAKE AN IMPACT • I PROMISE TO TRUST MYSELF & KEEP PROGRESSING • I PROMISE TO ELEVATE THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE PEOPLE AROUND ME • I PROMISE TO CHOOSE THE PATH OF CURIOSITY OVER THE PATH OF FEAR • I PROMISE TO CARPE DIEM BECAUSE EACH DAY IS A GIFT • I PROMISE TO BE HERE RIGHT NOW. • I PROMISE TO SELF-CARE & TRAVEL THE WORLD • I PROMISE TO LET GO • I PROMISE TO PROTECT, RESCUE & SERVE ALL ANIMALS • I PROMISE TO BREAK THE WHEEL OF MY RIDICULOUS LIFE • I PROMISE TO FIGHT FOR MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO STAY HUNGRY & STAY WEIRD • I PROMISE TO BE A TOUGH GUY • I PROMISE TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION TO EQUITY IN MY COMMUNITY • I PROMISE TO BE MORE SUPPORTIVE & LESS JUDGMENTAL • I PROMISE TO BE LOVING TOWARD MYSELF • I COMMIT TO KEEP UPHOLDING PROMISES TO MYSELF • WE PROMISE TO LOVE THE MOMENT FOR WHAT IT IS • WE PROMISE TO LOVE THE MOMENT FOR WHAT IT IS • I PROMISE TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THIS VISION • I PROMISE TO PASS ALL MY CLASSES • WE PROMISE TO ALWAYS LOVE EACH OTHER • I PROMISE TO BE AWARE OF



JUST WORDS

ALEXANDER PROVAN

1.

The billboard reads: MONDAY WILL BE SUNNY. JAPAN PLEDGES TO SPEND \$30B IN AFRICA. M. JAGGER VOWS TO SUPPORT HIS 8TH CHILD. I PROMISE NOT BE A SILENT BYSTANDER. THERE WILL BE A WAR ON GOLD. NEW 5G TECHNOLOGY WILL SPEED UP PHONES. The statements are formed by black plastic letters slotted into thirteen tracks, like the weekly special at a suburban hamburger shop. Behind the sixteen-foot-tall billboard stands the public library’s Dudley branch, an imposing pile of concrete blocks topped by a solitary ribbon of opaque windows. To the right is a folding table scattered with white letters, a silver call bell, an assortment of books, a piggy bank, an eggshell-colored rock, and an antique flip clock.

The day is—as tomorrow promises to be—sunny. A couple of women in black shades and matching gray T-shirts hang out by a three-paneled display structure, which is divided into quadrilaterals by red metal tubes. Banners emblazoned with PUBLIC and TRUST crown adjacent panels, and the third is dominated by a blackboard with an invitation to passersby: JOIN THE CONVERSATION. Looking up at the billboard, I wonder what it will be like—if *this* is what it is like—for language to nearly be emptied of meaning, and reality to subsequently be wrecked. Public pledges fail to reveal anything about the intentions of the speaker or provoke any expectations on the part of the audience. “We will build a great wall along the southern border, and Mexico will pay for the wall.”

A middle-aged Puerto Rican man with a scraggly goatee and skewed eyeglasses rides his bicycle past the women, who cheerfully ask, “Would you like to make a promise?” He flashes a noncommittal grin and keeps pedaling back and forth beneath a cluster of scruffy trees. Eventually he stops, but instead of responding to the invitation he brags about his basketball skills and evaluates the shelters and squats where he’s recently slept. He seems not to care why the young white women are in Roxbury: 57 percent African American, 27 percent Latino; 36 percent poverty rate; 42 percent child poverty rate; one-third of adults lacking a high school diploma.

They tell him anyway: Artist Paul Ramirez Jonas’s work, *Public Trust*, encourages locals to sit down with a stranger, make a promise, and consider how—or if—our words guarantee our actions and bind us together. *Public Trust* is organized by a local nonprofit called Now + There, and after a week in Dudley Square it’ll move to Kendall Center in Cambridge, then Copley Square. “So, would you like to make a promise?”

The man shrugs and points to the nearby Ferdinand Furniture building, where, he theorizes, the National Security Agency has set up shop. The local landmark, erected in the



MY MENTAL HEALTH • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS THINK THE BEST OF ALL HUMANS • I WILL FOLLOW THROUGH ON . . . • I WILL QUESTION MY BELIEFS • I PROMISE TO PURSUE HAPPINESS • I PROMISE TO BE PRESENT, CENTERED HERE WITH YOU • I PROMISE TO KEEP MY FOCUS ON MY POWER TO MAKE CHANGE • I PROMISE TO CHALLENGE MY OWN RACISM • I PROMISE TO BECOME A VEGETARIAN • I PROMISE TO LET GO OF SELF-HATRED & MAKE MY CHOICES COUNT • WE PROMISE TO FIND OUR WAY TOGETHER • I PROMISE TO BE THE IMAGE OF MY OWN IMAGINATION • I PROMISE TO DO WHAT I LOVE • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER SON TO MOM, PAPA & SIS • I PROMISE TO TRY TO KEEP YOU SAFE IN ANY STORM • I BIXIE, PROMISE TO PLAY WITH MY BROTHER EVERY DAY • RAINY WEEKEND AHEAD • CLINTON PROMISES MEDICAL RESULTS • TRUMP PLEDGES TO RELEASE PHYSICAL'S RESULTS • I PROMISE TO DO MY BEST IN SCHOOL • FACEBOOK SAYS IT WILL LEARN FROM PHOTO DISPUTE • MEXICO EXPORTS PROMISE TO GROW • I PROMISE TO DO AN ACT OF KINDNESS EVERY WEEK • I PROMISE TO LET MY CHILDREN BECOME THE PEOPLE THEY WANT TO BE • I PROMISE TO DO THE BEST IN MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO LOVE HIM ALWAYS • I PROMISE TO GO EASY ON MYSELF • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS BE FREE / LOVE KENDALL & FAMILY • I PROMISE TO GIVE BACK TO MY PARENTS • I PROMISE TO BE HONEST WITH MYSELF & WRITE MY BOOK • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF / BE BETTER THAN I WAS YESTERDAY • I PROMISE TO BE BRAVE WHEN EXPRESSING MYSELF • I PROMISE TO CONTINUE TO VOTE IN EVERY



1880s but dilapidated since the neighborhood of Roxbury was emptied of white residents in the 1970s, has just been renovated, renamed, made to house a tax-payer-funded business incubator, and promoted as the beachhead for Boston's next "innovation district." The custom here is to discuss *improvements*, he snarls, for years and years and years, then trade them for new blueprints meant to spur the careers of junior politicians. He suspects that the NSA is developing drones, camouflaged as birds and stars, for urban reconnaissance and crime control. He wants to know: Haven't we got enough eyes on us?

2.

Silvi, a twenty-nine-year-old artist with electric brown eyes, tracks a black man in his mid-thirties as he exits the bus station across the street and strides toward the plaza. He scans the installation, his eyes shifting from the billboard to the informational display to the women clutching clipboards and cell phones. Silvi calls out to him, Hi! Are you interested in making a promise today? Her voice is chirpy but declamatory. The man halts, then pivots toward her.

Silvi's elbows are planted on the table, her hands clasped above the rows of letters, and the sun shines on the tattoos that score her forearms. The man, who introduces himself as Anthony, wears a black polo shirt with the Greyhound logo on the breast and blocky glasses.

What are you all doing? he asks.

We're collecting promises from citizens like yourself, she says. I'm what we're calling an *ambassador*—not a title I'm in love with.

Huh. Why's this happening?

Well . . . at this point, we don't know who to trust, right? She motions toward the billboard, the pledges of the day. We're asking if, by making promises—to ourselves, to friends, family, neighbors—we can help restore trust, and our belief in words.

Anthony impassively nods his head, which seems to indicate that he accepts but is not entirely taken with this proposition. But Silvi has already begun to rearrange the letters on the table. She dismantles the previous promise and explains how his words will be preserved in a rubbing: one copy will be posted on the red-rimmed display structure, the other will be his to keep—an artwork, in an edition of two. Anthony follows her fingers as they flit across the board. As she speaks, she occasionally lifts her head, brushes back her hair to reveal dime-sized plugs pinned through her lobes.

Silvi asks, without stilling her hands, if Anthony works at Greyhound, and he replies that he's been in customer service and baggage for six years.

Do you *like* it?

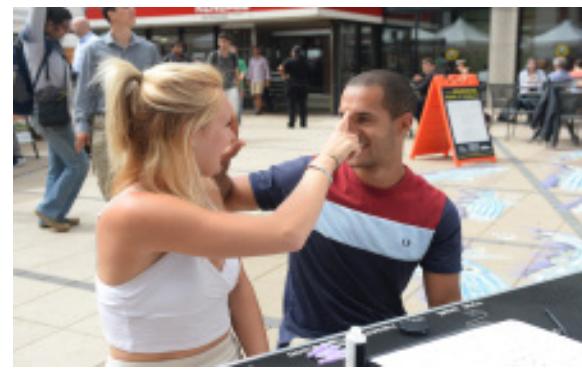
Anthony chuckles with amusement at the notion of feeling passionate about Greyhound. Yeah, it gets a little repetitive, but they treat me well.

OK, are you ready?

Anthony rolls his eyes back and meditates for a few seconds. Then he calmly states: I promise always to progress.



GENERAL ELECTION • I PROMISE TO FULLY COMMIT. • I PROMISE TO BE MORE CONSCIOUS ABOUT MY STEWARDSHIP • I PROMISE TO VOICE MY QUESTIONS • I PROMISE TO ENJOY EVERYDAY & EVERY MOMENT • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF MORE • I PROMISE TO PRACTICE LOVING-KINDNESS IN TOUGH SITUATIONS • I PROMISE TO TRAIN EVERY DAY • PRACTICE MAKES PROGRESS • I PROMISE TO NOT LIVE MY LIFE ON AUTOPILOT • I PROMISE TO REMEMBER YOU ARE FORGIVEN • I PROMISE TO LOVE YOU • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE MISTAKES CAN BE FIXED • I PROMISE TO NOT GIVE UP HOPE • I PROMISE TO BE GRATEFUL • I PROMISE TO VOTE FOR TRUMP • I'LL TRY NOT TO BE A VICTIM, A PERPETRATOR, OR A BYSTANDER • I PROMISE TO BE MORE GRATEFUL AND LESS CYNICAL • I PROMISE TO TAKE DELIBERATE CARE OF MYSELF • I NEED TO ACCEPT HELP WHEN IT'S GIVEN TO ME • I PROMISE TO LET MYSELF BE HAPPY • I WILL LET GOD DO GOD'S WILL • I PROMISE TO TREAT MY BODY AS GOD'S TEMPLE • I PROMISE TO LISTEN TO SLAYER • I PROMISE TO RIDE FOR MY WOUNDED BROTHERS AND SISTERS • I PROMISE NOT TO MISS CLASS ANYMORE • I PROMISE TO REMAIN TRUTHFUL AND HONEST NO MATTER THE COST • I PROMISE TO CALL MY GRANDPARENTS MORE OFTEN • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS PUT MY FEET IN THE WATER • VIRTUE WILL BE A VITAL FORCE IN MY LIFE • I PROMISE TO MAKE THE MOST OF EVERYTHING • I PROMISE TO STAY GROUNDED • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS SING OUT LOUD • I PROMISE TO KEEP MY EYE ON THE SPARROW • I PROMISE TO GET OLD BUT NEVER



What a promise! Silvi exclaims. She praises his attitude. I always tell myself: Whatever went wrong yesterday, that's yesterday—that's not today. She shows Anthony one of her tattoos, which says PMA: Positive Mental Attitude. You watch the news and it's like the world's going to hell in a handbasket, you know?

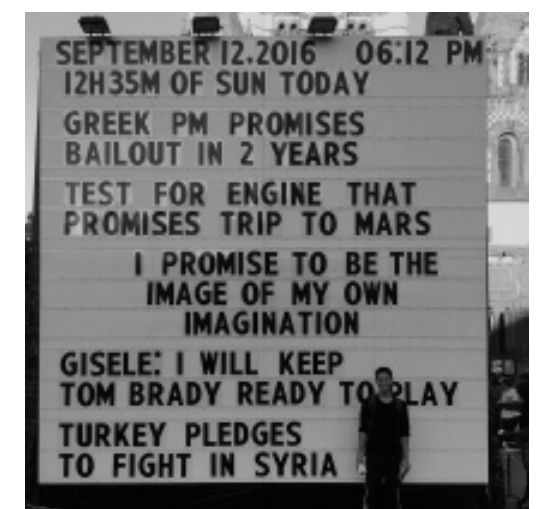
I've just got to instill positivity in my friends and in my children, Anthony says. Silvi rhythmically nods her head as she assembles the promise. Every few seconds she looks into his porcelain pupils, fixes him to his seat. When you've got children, you become the center of the universe. They follow you wherever you go, whatever you do. Even when they're not around you feel their eyes on you. I try to think about this every time I make a decision, every time I open my mouth. I push them forward by pushing myself forward.

Anthony examines the promise, nods approvingly, and tells Silvi that he'd like to consecrate his words with a handshake. I give you my word. Silvi drops a piece of drawing paper over the table and Anthony presses his index fingers against the top two corners. He monitors her hand as she makes the rubbing, as impressions of the letters appear.

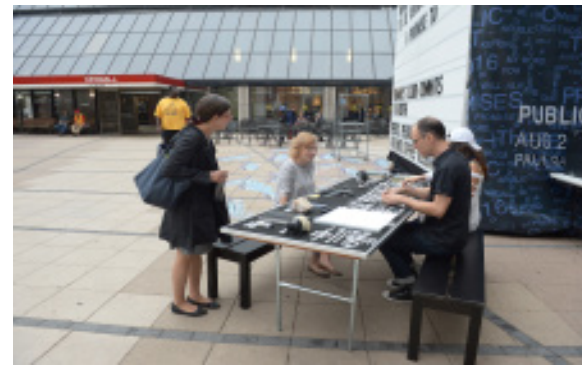
3.

What, I ask myself, after Anthony has gone to pick up his son and daughter from school, was exceptional about his promise? At a certain point, by some obscure mechanism, Anthony seemed to have overcome his doubts, submitted to *Public Trust's* protocols, and become highly attuned to the manner and meaning of his speech. Or perhaps I was more affected than him? I couldn't pinpoint what, if anything, had actually happened. I could only recall facial expressions and tonal shifts, the subtle change from stranger to intimate, the uptick in deliberateness that signals awareness of each word—all of which I had observed to some degree during nearly every promise.

The same five words, I realize, are bound to mean something dramatically different to each person who pronounces them. Whatever distinguishes a promise—especially a promise having to do with how to live one's life—is unlikely to be apparent to onlookers. This makes the content of the promise somewhat peripheral: *Public Trust* isn't out to record and enforce contracts, but rather to stir in participants a sense of the gravity of speech and the ways in which we entrust ourselves to each other. Some of these are mundane and go unnoticed, some are remarkable and attended by much ceremony, hand-shaking, and back-patting. Residents of Roxbury might be reminded of instances of the latter, in which government officials pledged to make up for decades of neglect, alleviate poverty, eliminate blight, and so on. They might be reminded of Martin Luther King Jr. saying, in 1965, "The vision of the New Boston must extend into the heart of Roxbury. Boston must become a testing ground for the ideal of freedom." They might be reminded of the city's campaign, begun in 1974, to desegregate schools by sending children from Roxbury to South Boston, which was predominantly Irish, and they might remember how protestors met buses with racial epithets and rocks, how the students huddled beneath seats and guarded their heads against shards of glass as the drivers



GROW UP • I PROMISE TO FORGIVE MYSELF AND OTHERS • I PROMISE TO WORK HARD FOR DEMOCRACY • I PROMISE TO MARRY ANGELA LEE • I PROMISE TO WORK FOR THE ELECTION • I PROMISE TO STOP APOLOGIZING FOR WHAT I LOVE • I PROMISE NOT TO WASTE MY TIME HERE • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS ENGAGE MYSELF IN & WITH PUBLIC ART • I PROMISE TO STAY POSITIVE • I PROMISE TO GIVE & RECEIVE MORE LOVE • WE PROMISE TO BE BEST FRIENDS 4EVER, SEPARATED BY RELIGION NEVER! • I PROMISE TO BE A KIND & LOVING PARTNER • I PROMISE TO LISTEN & EMBRACE THE QUIET LOVINGNESS • I PROMISE TO MAKE ART OUT OF KINDNESS • I PROMISE NOT TO LET HER LOSS DEFINE ME, BUT GUIDE ME • I PROMISE TO BE STRONGER THAN THE FEARS OF MY SUCCESS • I PROMISE NOT TO TURN AWAY • I PROMISE TO VALUE THOSE WHO MEAN EVERYTHING • I PROMISE NOT TO GET STUCK IN MY HEAD • I PROMISE TO SPEAK UP, LEAN IN, AND STAY FOCUSED • I PROMISE TO EXPERIENCE AND BE OPEN TO FEELING • I PROMISE TO BE PRESENT • FULL MOON THIS FRIDAY • CHELSEA MANNING GETS PROMISE OF SURGERY • CEO VOWS OIL PIPELINE DESPITE PROTESTS • I PROMISE TO BE MYSELF • SIOUX TRIBE VOWS TO CONTINUE PIPELINE FIGHT • M. CYRUS VOWS TO NEVER DO A RED CARPET AGAIN • I PROMISE TO BE THOUGHTFUL & HONEST • I PROMISE TO MAKE & TAKE TIME FOR WHAT REALLY MATTERS • I PROMISE TO GET BACK TO MY FAITH • I PROMISE TO BRING LIGHT & LAUGHTER TO OTHERS • WE PROMISE TO LOVE OURSELVES • I PROMISE TO CREATE MY OWN UNIQUE



sped away in retreat, how white families fled for the suburbs. They might be reminded of Mayor Marty Walsh’s recent exhortation to “give people in Dudley the chance to understand what the tech and innovation economy can be for them.”

I’m told by the organizers of *Public Trust* that steps have been taken in the preceding months to involve residents in the formulation of the project (as opposed to simply requesting that they show up), and to draw a line between this “conversation about the value of words” and “art,” which might be identified as the vanguard of gentrification. Conversations have transpired with local activists, educators, politicians, and ministers, and posters have been dropped at neighborhood coffee shops and restaurants, whose entryways are cluttered with pamphlets (“Remove all elected officials who justify racist police terror”), broadsheets (“Teachers try to make do with fewer staff, supplies”), business cards (“Haroon Rashid, author of *My Cultural Birthrights and Other Black Gold*”), and flyers (“Grown Folks Saturday’s with DJ Christophlex”).

Throughout the day, as promises are extracted from curious pedestrians, inscribed on the tabletop board, transmitted to the billboard, and published on Twitter and Instagram, I wonder what promise I’ll make, whether I’ll remain a notebook-toting observer, whether declining to participate will be interpreted as a judgment of the project rather than an admission of my inability to commit to any single statement. I’ve been ruminating for weeks, auditing my behavior and ambitions, replaying arguments and scanning newspaper headlines, compiling kernels of pledges, then trying out phrases at my desk and on the subway. I’ve not made much progress. I’ve thought about what I can control in my own life, and to whom I’m accountable—myself, my wife, my newborn son, my relatives (alive and dead), my friends, my colleagues—and how much I’d like for the domain in which my actions matter to encompass many more people, for accountability to convincingly extend to a community, a city, a society. At the same time, this notion seems ridiculous and likely to lead to a vague promise to make a difference—or, worse, to supply me with an excuse not to consider how to act in the world that I actually inhabit.

Now I’m not only beset by indecision but acutely aware of how my promise might be interpreted by passersby: how the speech of a thirty-three-year-old white man, a writer transported from New York to Dudley Square for the afternoon to observe the effects of public art on locals, might address Roxbury residents, who are known to him only through newspaper articles and demographic data reviewed during his train ride. As I walk around the neighborhood, I mull over a promise I’d sketched about remedying the inequalities of parenting. Couldn’t this be interpreted as chastising inattentive fathers? Easy for me to talk about addressing inequality within my domestic sphere, given the amount of time I could spend cleaning, cooking, and running errands instead of drinking with friends, going to museums, and seeking Trump’s roots in diaries about the language of Nazism.

What kind of promise would satisfy the mandate for sincerity and self-expression without flagging the presence of a patronizing interloper? I’ve been so intent on crafting a perfectly balanced representation of myself that I’ve failed to consider the word limit, which all my drafts exceed. (I promise to write shorter sentences.) Returning to the library, I watch a few



STORY • I PROMISE TO CREATE MY OWN UNIQUE STORY • I PROMISE TO CREATE MY OWN UNIQUE STORY • WE PROMISE TO PRESERVE NATURE'S BEAUTY • WE PROMISE TO PRESERVE NATURE'S BEAUTY • WE PROMISE TO PRESERVE NATURE'S BEAUTY • WE PROMISE TO PRESERVE NATURE'S BEAUTY • WE PROMISE TO MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY SITUATION • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS SEE THE GOOD IN OTHERS • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS SEE THE GOOD IN OTHERS • WE PROMISE TO LISTEN WITH AN OPEN MIND • I PROMISE TO NEVER GIVE UP NO MATTER HOW DARK TIMES GET • I PROMISE TO NEVER LET YOU FORGET TO LOVE YOURSELF • I PROMISE TO TAKE PRIDE IN EVERYTHING I DO • I PROMISE TO NOT LET FEAR HOLD ME BACK • WE PROMISE TO BE MORE SOCIAL • I PROMISE TO STAY FAITHFUL • I PROMISE TO STAND BY JACK GERARD • I PROMISE TO DEDICATE MORE TIME TO PLAYING MUSIC • I PROMISE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH MY HEART • RANDY PROMISES FIONA TO BE THE COOLEST UNCLE EVER • I PROMISE TO LOOK FOR THE POSITIVITY • I PROMISE TO DO MY BEST TO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL • I PROMISE TO TELL MY BEST FRIENDS I LOVE THEM • I PROMISE TO LISTEN BETTER • I PROMISE TO PURSUE MY DREAM OF SINGING • WE PROMISE TO CREATE MORE ART • I PROMISE TO MAKE MY COMMUNITY BETTER • I PROMISE TO CLEAN MY ROOM • I PROMISE TO LOVE MY WIFE • I PROMISE TO KEEP MY COOL • I PROMISE TO DO MY BEST • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS LISTEN • I PROMISE TO FEEL IT ALL • I PROMISE TO INCLUDE MORE WOMEN ARTISTS IN MY LECTURES • I PROMISE TO STILL



rounds of promises, and I consider appropriating the words of previous participants, which might be as genuine for me as for them. But as I rehearse the most anodyne formulations, I recognize, with regret, the degree to which they're animated by quotidian struggles that are foreign to me: I promise to be big, brave, and bold. I will work less and spend more time with my family. I promise to take care of my kids. I promise to be patient.

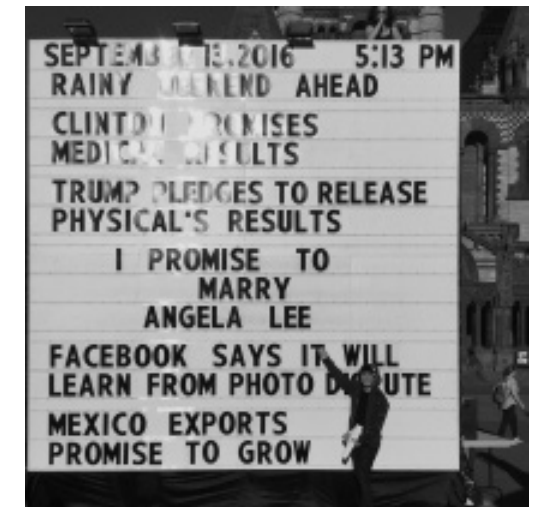
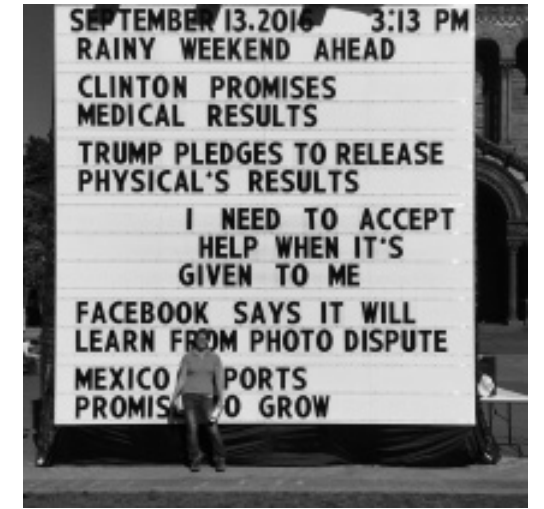
4.

To make this kind of promise in public seems to mandate an alignment of what one says and who one is. Yet the language I employ might serve to showcase a persona as much as to betray my fundamental characteristics as an individual. How often does a promise have more to do with simulation than authentication? But that doesn't mean the promise is false: Perhaps, in making a promise, I'm saying that I'll *become* someone different and pretending to *be* someone different, or perhaps I'm forging a self—however that may be a performance or a necessary fiction—through this ancient act.

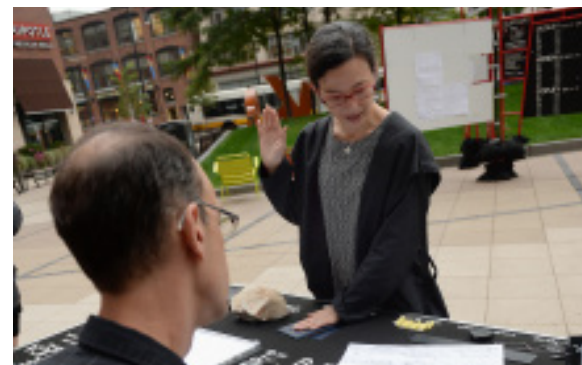
Philosopher J. L. Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), observes that we all contain innumerable contradictions, and may have complex (and obscure) motivations for representing ourselves in a particular way. But we nevertheless are bound by speech, and even come into being through speech. Austin attended to the nuances of everyday speech at a time when American philosophy departments were in thrall to logical positivism, and statements were typically judged as demonstrably true or false, and otherwise meaningless—a calculus that was applied to manifold areas of life, to the detriment of ambiguity, much less poetry. Austin's influential book describes the uses and social nature of ordinary language, and distinguishes between statements that describe the world or deliver information about the psychology of the speaker and those that produce an actual effect. Chief among the latter, which he dubs "performative utterances," are promises.

Austin's analysis of the promise begins with the famous line from Euripides's *Hippolytus*: "My tongue swore to, but my mind is not on oath / my mind is unsworn." Hippolytus, the protagonist, is announcing that he'll renege on a vow to keep a secret, and that he never actually meant what he said. But Austin, after mulling the contradictions and conflicts that often attend the making of a promise, concludes that tongue can't be divorced from mind. "Accuracy and morality alike are on the side of the plain saying that *our word is our bond*." A promise can be made in bad faith or voided, but the speaker has nevertheless performed the act. And when bonds are broken, we fault the speaker but do not conclude that she did not promise after all, or that the entire category of utterance is a sham.

Many have objected to Austin's claims, especially to his confidence that a performative utterance will succeed—that words will translate into action—under the right conditions: the proper context, compliance with agreed-upon protocols, and the transparency of the speaker's intentions. Given the promiscuity of language, the fact that we're always in the process of performing or fabricating ourselves, etc., how can Austin believe that a promise will mean



BELIEVE IN LOVE • I PROMISE TO NOT LIVE POINTLESSLY • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF MOST • I PROMISE TO LOOK FROM MANY ANGLES • I PROMISE TO BE MORE CONFIDENT • I PROMISE TO BE MYSELF & FORGIVE • I PROMISE TO GRADUATE • I PROMISE TO SHARE • I PROMISE TO STOP AND ENJOY LITTLE THINGS • I PROMISE TO SEEK PEACE • I VOW TO NEVER SELF-HARM AGAIN • I PROMISE TO FIND CONFIDENCE • HESCHEL PROMISES TO TRANSFORM ISRAEL INTO A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY • I PROMISE TO KEEP IT REAL • I VOW TO REMEMBER HARAMBE • I PROMISE TO WITNESS AND PORTRAY • I PROMISE TO EXPERIMENT • I PROMISE TO MEDITATE EVERY DAY • RANDY KAUFMAN PROMISES TO ALWAYS BE CREATIVE & FUN • I PROMISE ACTIVITY LEADING TO SPECIFICITY • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER ALLY • I PROMISE TO REMEMBER TO LOVE MYSELF • I PROMISE TO STAY ALIVE • I PROMISE TO BE A GOOD DRIVER • I PROMISE TO ENGAGE MORE • I PROMISE TO READ MORE • I PROMISE TO BE IN THE MOMENT • I PROMISE TO EMBRACE THE CREATIVE PROCESS • I PROMISE TO BE THE PEACE & LOVE ALL • FRIDAY WILL BE SUNNY • OBAMA VOWS SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR • BANK OF ENGLAND WILL SIT ON ITS HANDS • PROMETO ESTAR EN CONTACTO CON MIS HERMANAS • NFL COMMITS \$100 MILLION TO PLAYER SAFETY • EUROPE PLEDGES TO HELP MIGRANT CHILDREN • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF MY CONTRIBUTION • I PROMISE TO SUCCEED IN THE ARTS • I PROMISE TO BE MYSELF & ALWAYS PURSUE MY DREAMS • I PROMISE TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF MYSELF • I WILL PUSH ON • I



the same thing to the speaker and whomever is listening, much less have the intended effect? If I stand in front of the Dudley library and state, with my hand on a Bible or Jupiter Stone, promise to be a better person this year, will the context of my statement and the underlying intention be apparent to passersby—and in approximately the same way to every passerby? Isn't the promise likely to mean something different to nearly everyone who says or hears it?

Obviously, we can't precisely discern who is speaking and what is being said. Yet if we look at how words function in our daily lives, we find that they typically do their work, to forge bonds, even if our intentions remain somewhat muddled.

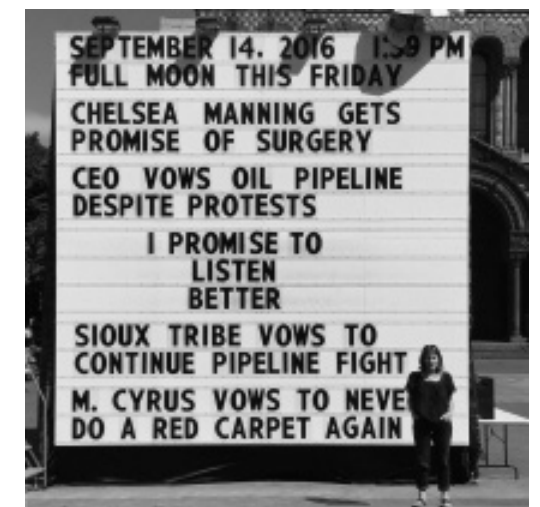
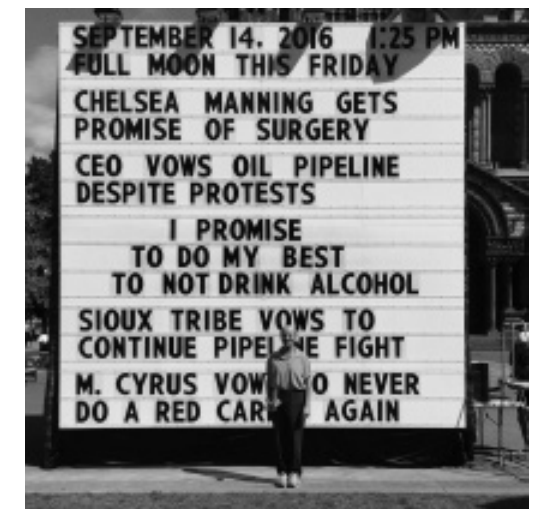
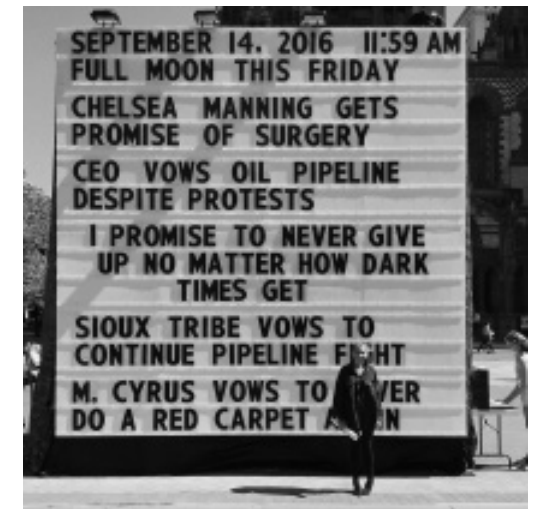
Or, at least, they used to. Rather than harangue people about the degradation of language—as if they aren't aware that our age is supremely apocalyptic, unimaginable to our political progenitors, repugnant to our grandparents—*Public Trust* establishes a realm, however minimal and ephemeral, in which the status of words is assured. Yet the artwork also acts as a reminder of the tragic aspect of the promise, which has to do with the likelihood of what Austin calls “misfire,” in which the bond formed by words is breached. This occurs because a promise is hollow or because of elements beyond our control, despite our best intentions. Knowing that misfire is unavoidable might make us additionally skeptical of individual promises, even if we maintain faith in the promise as an utterance; or it might make us accept the impossibility of truly and clearly meaning what we say and vanquishing ambiguity—which to Austin is the basis for the credibility of the promise.

To philosopher Stanley Cavell, who was mentored by Austin, this realization is at once liberating and humbling, as it presents “the human being as a field of vulnerability whose actions and words imply wider consequences and effects and results—if narrower meaning—than we should be answerable for.” If we're to be less philosophically inclined, and more attentive to the problems of the day, we might simply ask: Is it worse to always and forever be tethered to your words and deeds (and the body from which they emanate), or to live in a world in which sincerity has no currency?

5.

“I am your voice”—somehow this works as an offer of representation and not an act of appropriation. Really, there is nothing but the voice, which is sturdy enough to inspire credence, malleable enough to incorporate millions. Like “We the people.” We, like the colonists, are unsure of who we are (or who we purport to be) when we speak, when we emit texts and images from online accounts, when we grasp for intentions, sincerity, context, protocols. So we seek the authentic voice, the one that truly addresses us, amid the PR-flacked politicians who flail for a message (much less a self) that coheres and resonates across disparate platforms and despite self-sorting mechanisms. That voice may be a promise to be a voice. That voice may refuse to be photographed from behind, below, or either side.

And who is the “I,” if there is an “I”? I ask because Trump's coup seems to be to turn himself into a plausible vessel for the aspirations and resentments of working-class



PROMISE TO HELP OTHERS TO FEEL IMPORTANT • I PROMISE TO LET GO & BE FEARLESS • I PROMISE TO LOOK AFTER MYSELF • I PROMISE TO BE MORE HUMBLE • I PROMISE TO FINISH • I WILL NEVER FORGET THE HAND YOU HAD IN MY GROWTH • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS BE FAITHFUL TO MANKIND • I PROMISE TO REMIND YOU OF THE FUTURE • I PROMISE TO VALUE MY SELF WORTH • I PROMISE TO CONQUER MY VIOLENCE • I PROMISE TO FIND HAPPINESS • I PROMISE TO HAVE FAITH IN HUMANITY • I PROMISE TO MERGE ART & CONSERVATION • I PROMISE TO EMBRACE MY WEIRD, A L W A Y S • I PROMISE TO BE WITH ART • I PROMISE TO SMILE MORE & LET NOTHING BOTHER ME • I PROMISE TO VALUE MYSELF MORE • I PROMISE TO NEVER GIVE UP • I PROMISE TO LIVE, LAUGH & LOVE EVERY DAY • I PROMISE TO NEVER STOP THINKING OF YOU • I PROMISE TO BE COURAGEOUS • I PROMISE TO BE MORE PATIENT WITH MY CHILDREN • I PROMISE TO BE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON LIFE • I PROMISE TO BE MORE CONFIDENT IN MYSELF • I PROMISE TO PUSH MYSELF TO TRY NEW THINGS • I PROMISE TO BE KINDER TO MYSELF TOMORROW • I PROMISE TO VISIT MY LOCAL LIBRARY • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MYSELF • I PROMISE TO TRUST MY INTUITION • I PROMISE TO BE KINDER TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO BE BRAVE • I PROMISE TO BE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTOR TO MY SOCIETY • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS CHOOSE LOVE OVER VIOLENCE • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS PROTECT MY FAMILY • I PROMISE TO ONLY THINK POSITIVELY • I PROMISE TO REMEMBER MY BROTHERS • I PROMISE TO BE MORE CONFIDENT • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS LOVE MYSELF • I



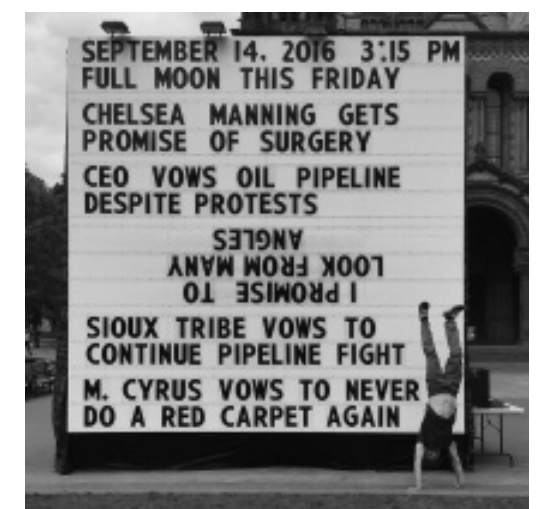
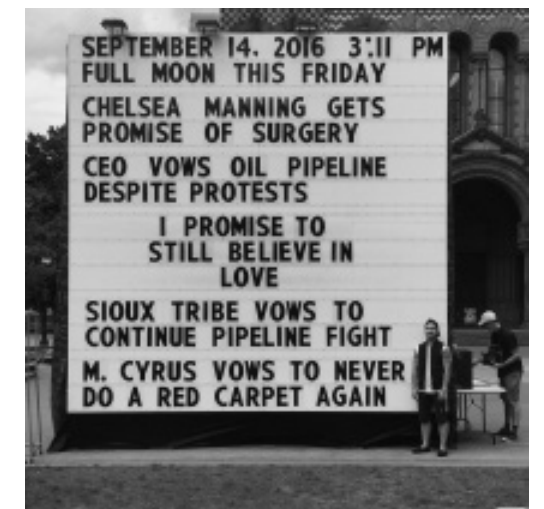
Americans without anyone (including ex-wives, including himself) being able to confidently say what constitutes “him.” I can’t get my head around this; I guess that it betrays an epochal appreciation for the self as a constant and consistent performance. Trump seems to have vacuum-packed and frozen much of his psychology in order to cultivate his solitary role: the metropolitan avatar of success, as constructed by a child from *Playboy* ads and Howard Hughes biopics. He has an act, and he typically nails it (whereas Clinton toggles between characters, and often delivers underwhelming performances). “I think I’m pretty constant,” he said in a 2014 interview. “I actually think I’m pretty constant. . . . I guess I’m a performer, but I don’t think of myself as a performer. . . . I’ve always gotten much more publicity than anyone else, and I don’t have PR agents.”

Trump performs without seeming or knowing to perform. Which is to say that, as a product of our media environment, he’s the real thing. He’s always uttering the essential promise of our era: I am who I say I am. I click to confirm that I’m the subject of my expressions and transactions, to reinforce the inseparability of my accounts, the records associated with them, and myself. From the incessant affirmation of identity, which is built less from immutable facts than the labor of constructing a self to be consumed by others, and read by machines, countless promises flow (especially via dating apps). What kind of bonds do they form, compared to the promises made by Roxbury residents in the plaza by the library? Who are the people swearing on the Jupiter Stone in relation to the data-constellations that occupy their accounts? How do their voices seek to be in concert, if not by draining into @realDonaldTrump?

I recall how Austin and his fellow ordinary-language philosophers, who were conditioned by the true–false binarism of logical positivism, encountered the most quotidian exchanges as if they were Shakespeare sonnets, if not alien verses, rich with ambiguity and possibility. If *Public Trust* suddenly makes us regard our own language as strange, powerful, and rudimentary to our understanding of ourselves as humans who’ve chosen to create a world with other humans, the ambassadors provide no primer on the history of speech and politics. Perhaps none is needed, given the stirring in participants of a sense of connection to the ancient world via the Jupiter Stone, not to mention Boston’s neoclassical glut and the fetish made by pundits of comparisons to the Greeks. We hold this truth to be self-evident: that Western politics is rooted in the oath, which “links the speaker to his speech and, at the same time, words to reality,” as philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes in *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath* (2010).

But Agamben claims that the oath—a species of promise that involves a divine witness—actually precedes politics, and speaks to the entwinement of religion and law, which both hinge on the “truth and efficacy of language.” He views the gods—especially the Christian deity—as machines for the production and maintenance of oaths, given that their words have an intrinsic connection to reality: Gods never misfire, always mean what they say, and can never be doubted.

In the ancient world, the oath was tied to the imitation of divine speech. This effort was, of course, faulty, and many ancient authors warned of the dire consequences of violating promises, renegeing on oral contracts. The point of the oath, in creating a ritual out of speech—



PROMISE TO ALWAYS REMEMBER
 DAWN JAFFIER • MIKE SOF WE
 PROMISE TO NEVER FORGET YOU • I
 PROMISE TO LIVE CREATIVELY • I
 PROMISE TO DO MY BEST AND BE THE
 BEST • I PROMISE TO LIVE W LOVE,
 WORK 4 RECOVERY, RACIAL JUSTICE &
 REFUGEE RIGHTS • I PROMISE TO
 MOTHER FROM MY HEART • I PROMISE
 TO TREAT EVERYONE WITH LOVE,
 KINDNESS & PATIENCE • I PROMISE TO
 NEVER AGAIN APOLOGIZE FOR WHO I
 AM • I PROMISE TO LOVE EVERYTHING
 I DO • WE PROMISE TO BE KIND,
 SMART, AND IMPORTANT • I PROMISE
 TO HONOR KATAHDIN • WE PROMISE
 TO MAKE COOL STUFF • PROJECT
 LOVE 2016 PROMISES TO LOVE THEIR
 COMMUNITY WITH PEACE • I PROMISE
 TO STRENGTHEN & FOCUS ON MY
 CREATIVITY • I PROMISE TO KEEP ALL
 MY PROMISES . . . MOST OF THE TIME
 • I PROMISE TO TRUST MY
 PROJECTION OF LOVE • I PROMISE
 EVERY NIGHT TO LOOK UP AT THE
 STARS • I PROMISE TO MANIFEST THE
 LOVE & KINDNESS I WISH FOR
 EVERYONE • I PROMISE TO KEEP A
 POSITIVE ATTITUDE • TO BUILD PEACE
 & UNITE THE WORLD ONE
 RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME • I PROMISE
 TO LOVE MYSELF SO I CAN LOVE
 OTHERS MORE • I PROMISE TO ENACT
 THE KINDNESS MY DAD TAUGHT ME TO
 GIVE • I COMMIT TO LETTING GO • I
 PROMISE TO BE HERE NOW • I
 PROMISE TO REMEMBER MY B612 &
 ALEX • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF
 MYSELF • I PROMISE TO WRITE THE
 TRUTH • I PROMISE TO HAVE FUN • I
 PROMISE TO QUIT WORKING WHEN I'M
 70 • I PROMISE TO BE MYSELF • I
 PROMISE TO MAKE MYSELF HAPPY • I
 PROMISE TO LOVE NOT HATE • I
 PROMISE TO STRIVE FOR GREATER • I



complete with protocols and accoutrements that shuttle the speaker into a sacred realm—was not so much to banish lies as to protect against the inevitability of falsehood, which might owe to the treachery of the speaker or poor weather. The speaker had to make a public declaration, invoke a divine witness (to affirm the bond between words and reality), and also level a curse against perjury (to acknowledge that violating the oath is tantamount to desecrating the names of the gods). This was the case regardless of how banal the oath, which is to say that “the very signifying force of language” was always at stake.

Agamben offers a philologist’s account of the post-truth era: Humans are defined—distinguished from beasts—by their possession of language, and civilization is founded on the ties between what we say and what we do. With those ties severed, we’ve entered into a postlapsarian state, characterized by blasphemy, in which individuals no longer have the means to forge political associations. We’re unmoored from one another and alienated from ourselves. We can no longer distinguish between human and animal, between political life and biological existence. Speech becomes vanity and law becomes an instrument for the raw assertion of power.

Without faith in the meaning of words, why would people entrust themselves, their families, their property, their freedoms, and their security to one another, merely on the basis of handshakes and promises and signed pieces of paper? The emblematic scene in Agamben’s book is of ancient Greek town criers, in advance of each assembly, cursing anyone who betrays the will of the people. (Like the oath, the curse acts as a “sacrament of power,” a sign of submission to divinity and law.) I couldn’t read this passage without yearning to see the same performance precede every session of Congress, without imagining hundreds of heads hung low in shame—and while recognizing how easily the gesture could be solemnly performed and instantly deposited into the antique dustbin reserved for venerable and nugatory traditions, e.g., the oath of office. Which suggests that we may still subscribe to the notion that the cornerstone of government is belief in the correspondence between language and action, but we may also call this hopeless idealism.

6.

I visit *Public Trust* again on September 16 at Copley Square, which symbolizes the transformation—and promotion—of Boston as a progressive mecca after the Civil War (“O happy town beside the sea,” Emerson rhapsodized, “Whose roads lead everywhere to all.”). The sky is perfectly clear and every thirty seconds, as if on a timer, a bracing breeze attenuates the sun’s warmth. I take Boston’s clogged commercial artery, Boylston Street, where tourists decked out in Red Sox and/or Patriots and/or Harvard apparel cycle between upscale chains and oyster-bar terraces. Outside the Apple store, which is about to unload the first shipment of iPhone 7s, dozens of people stand in a serpentine line and punch at their soon-to-be-artifactual devices.

Approaching the square, I see the puddingstone facade of Old South Church and the granite cylinders of Trinity Church. The Fairmont hotel, a Beaux-Arts cruise ship, is parked



PROMISE TO EMBRACE
 UNCONSIDERED POSSIBILITIES • I
 PROMISE TO APPRECIATE THE DAY •
 WINTER WILL BE COLDER • SECURITY
 PROTOCOL PROMISES TRUST • “I WILL
 BE VOTING” EDWARD SNOWDEN • I
 PROMISE NOT TO LET THE STATUS
 QUO GET ME DOWN • DEVELOPERS
 PROMISE TO KEEP ORANGE DINOSAUR
 • GM COMMITS TO 100% RENEWABLES
 BY 2050 • I PROMISE TO BE A WIFE, A
 MOM, AND AN ARTIST • I PROMISE TO
 BE ATTUNED TO THE NEEDS AND
 FEELINGS OF OTHERS • I PROMISE TO
 CALL MY MOM MORE • I PROMISE TO
 TAKE BETTER CARE OF MYSELF AND
 MY ART • I PROMISE TO BE A GOOD
 LISTENER AND NOT BE JUDGMENTAL •
 I WILL DO 52 TOTALLY
 UNCHARACTERISTIC THINGS THIS
 YEAR • I PROMISE TO LET MY VOICE
 BE HEARD AND BE ON BROADWAY • I
 COMMIT TO MEDITATE EVERYDAY • I
 PROMISE TO CELEBRATE JOY • I
 PROMISE TO LOVE MY NEIGHBORS •
 TALK LESS SMILE MORE • WE PROMISE
 TO ALWAYS APPRECIATE THE
 ARTISTRY OF LIFE • TO ALWAYS BE
 TRUTHFUL • I PROMISE TO REMEMBER
 WHERE I CAME FROM • TO NEVER
 STOP MAKING • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS
 BE TRUE TO MYSELF • NOTHING WILL
 DIMINISH MY ABILITY TO ACHIEVE
 HAPPINESS • I PROMISE TO STOP
 BEING SO HARD ON MYSELF • I
 PROMISE TO FOLLOW MY GUT • I
 PROMISE TO LIVE MY LIFE AS
 HONESTLY AS MY MOTHER DID • I
 PROMISE TO BE GRATEFUL • I
 PROMISE TO KEEP TRYING SIDE
 DISHES • WE PROMISE TO BE MORE
 CONNECTED WITH THE WORLD • I
 PROMISE TO ALWAYS CHOOSE
 KINDNESS • I PROMISE TO SIMPLIFY • I
 PROMISE TO LIVE LIFE, LOVE LOTS,



between them, and I. M. Pei’s glass-sheathed Hancock Tower hogs the air rights above. A farmers’ market bounds the pristine plot of grass on three sides, and as I walk toward Trinity Church I pass booths stocked with straw baskets and pine boxes bearing distinctive varieties of tomato, potato, pepper, and eggplant, each with a charming name. The vendors smile, chat, and snack on each other’s vegan baked goods, smoked fish, cured meats, herbed goat cheeses, and other picturesque and costly foods. People of all ages, races, and, I assume, religious and political persuasions lounge in the grass; they occasionally hoist iPhones and pan from one feature to the next, unsure of which to capture. Finally I see the *Public Trust* billboard on the eastern edge of the yard, bearing the day’s promises: WINTER WILL BE COLDER. SECURITY PROTOCOL PROMISES TRUST. “I WILL BE VOTING” EDWARD SNOWDEN. I COMMIT TO MEDITATE EVERY DAY. DEVELOPERS PROMISE TO KEEP ORANGE DINOSAUR. GM COMMITS TO 100% RENEWABLES BY 2050.

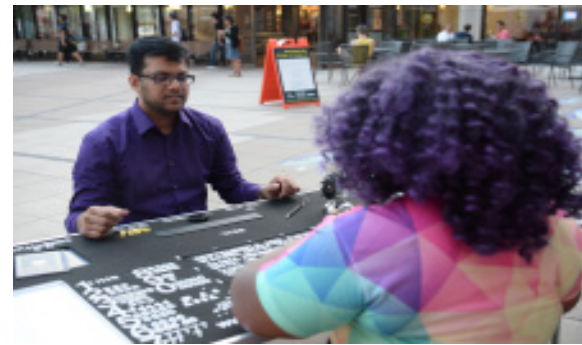
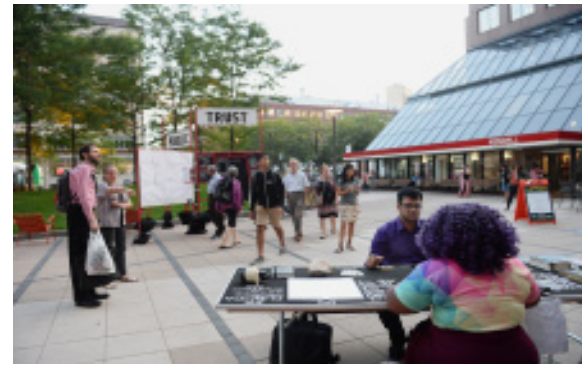
The final promise is to be logged on the next day, and there’s a twenty-minute wait for a spot at one of the two tables on either side of the billboard. The ambassadors tasked with cajoling passersby are idle, as hardly anyone needs enticement beyond the presence of two long lines. At Dudley Square, conversations often began with a pedestrian posing a concern, which an ambassador attempted to assuage (and turn into a reason for the pedestrian to participate). How many promises had to be harvested from the neighborhood in order for the project to succeed? What do I get out of these conversations? What do you get, what does the artist get? Who and where is the artist? Here there seems to be no skepticism. Everyone has assumed that the project is innocuous, or at least unlikely to be personally exploitative, and for most nothing more is at stake. The ambassadors are at once buoyant and methodical, more like overburdened notaries than cautious interlopers.

I sit at one of the tables as Julia, an unassuming painter in her late twenties, quizzes Yasmine, an ebullient and slightly skittish young woman from Saudi Arabia, about her promise. Yasmine, who has the glinting brown eyes and glossy cheeks of a newborn, blinks and scratches at the top of her hijab, begins and abandons sentences. She speaks deliberately, and frequently corrects her pronunciation and questions her word choice, grasps for a more fitting expression, as if practicing for an oral exam. She is, she says, devoted to learning and wants never to stop, which is why she’s studying English in Boston. She wants to make a difference in her country, which is why she plans to return to Jeddah to pursue a career in international law. She knows from experience, and from what her parents have told her, that to accomplish her goals will be challenging, so she has to be persistent.

As Yasmine wonders how to incorporate all her concerns and ambitions into a perfectly characteristic promise, Julia gently reminds her of the limited amount of space on the board. Flustered, she strings together words—*keep learning, make a difference, accomplish goals*—until Julia makes a suggestion: I promise to keep learning . . . and never to give up. Yasmine contorts her lips, bows her head, murmurs the line several times, then grins and glances up at the ambassador. I promise to keep learning and don’t give up, she says. After the rephrased promise has been assembled on the board, she consecrates it by swearing on the Koran as well as dousing her head with water from the Ganges. She winces and beams as the water flows



LAUGH OFTEN • I PROMISE TO WORRY LESS • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MYSELF • I PROMISE TO KEEP LEARNING & DON'T GIVE UP • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MY ABILITY TO ACHIEVE MY MBA DREAM • I PROMISE TO LISTEN TO MY HEART • WE PROMISE TO KEEP LOVING • I PROMISE TO BE MORE PATIENT & KINDER TO MYSELF & OTHERS • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS BE THERE FOR NATALIE • I PROMISE TO BE MORE PARTICIPATIVE • I SAMUEL, PROMISE TO ALWAYS MAKE MY MOM AND DAD PROUD • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF FIRST • I PROMISE TO CHOOSE LOVE OVER FEAR EVERY TIME • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS BE AUTHENTIC • I PROMISE TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT & LOVE TO THE FULLEST • I PROMISE TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS • I PROMISE TO WORRY LESS & LOVE GENUINELY • I PROMISE TO REACH OUT MORE • I PROMISE TO LIVE INSIDE & OUTSIDE MYSELF • I PROMISE TO NEVER COMPROMISE ON MY BELIEFS OR MY ART • MY PERSONAL BEST PROMISE TO RETURN MY STOLEN IDENTITY • I PROMISE TO NEVER STOP CREATING • I PROMISE TO NEVER GIVE UP HOPE • I PROMISE TO RETIRE FROM TRAVEL BY 70 • I PROMISE TO LET MYSELF BE LOVED BY OTHERS • I PROMISE TO NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR BEING MYSELF • I PROMISE TO MAKE MY DAD PROUD • I PROMISE TO DIE • I PROMISE TO SET THE RIGHT EXAMPLE • I PROMISE TO DRINK MORE WINE • I PROMISE TO KEEP LIVING • I PROMISE TO BE PROUD OF MYSELF • I PROMISE TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF MYSELF • I PROMISE TO KEEP DEBATING • I PROMISE THAT I WILL SAY "I LOVE YOU" MORE • I PROMISE TO STAY TRUE TO MY ROOTS • I PROMISE TO



down her hijab and onto her brow.

Before standing up, Yasmine snaps a picture of the ambassador, then feebly asks, as if embarrassed to have forgotten, What company do you work for? Julia replies, Huh? Yasmine asks again, What company? Julia, confused, recites the script, but in the past tense: You've just participated in *Public Trust*, an artwork that asks us to consider the relationship between words and actions, the contracts we make with ourselves and others, organized by Paul Ramirez Jonas. Ah, Yasmine says. She nods, smiles, and thanks the ambassador repeatedly, but she seems nonplussed, as if there is nothing she can do with this information.

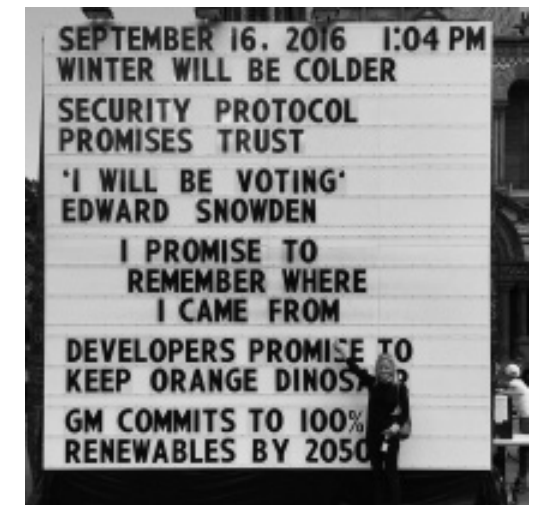
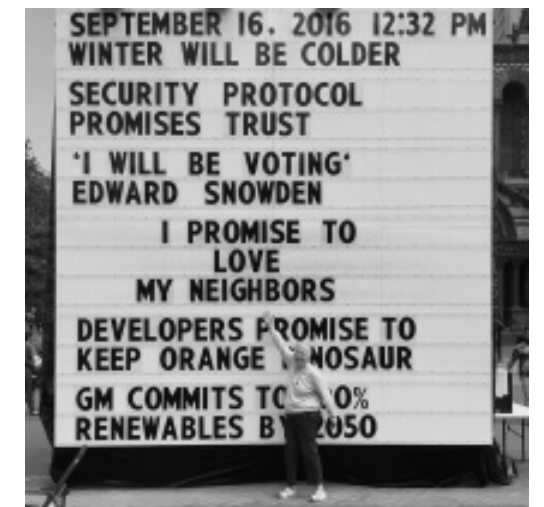
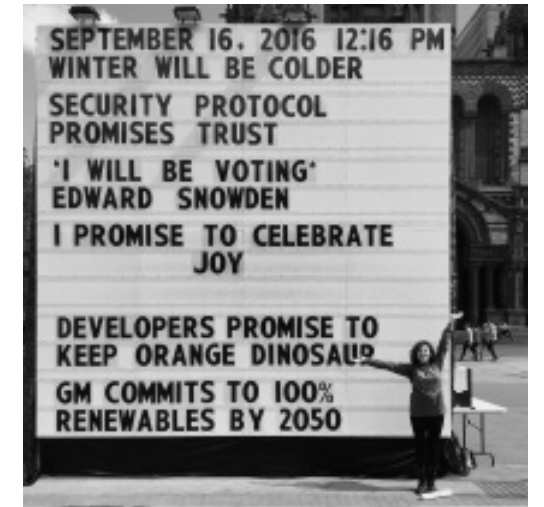
7.

As the sun drops behind the horizon, Trinity Church's granite is tinted auburn. I gaze across the square at the library's chain of window arches and bust of Minerva, goddess of wisdom. The facade seems like a warped reflection of the billboard: one is incised with the names of good and great men who ennobled the masses, the other looks like the marquee of a chintzy drive-in, with the names of B-movies supplanted by sincere and perfunctory and risible pledges. The promises of our epoch ricochet against those of Boston circa 1895, which reprise those of 1865 and 1776 and 400 BC. The present lampoons the past, and vice versa. In my mind, the library's Parthenon-style lobby, which teems with marble extracted from Siena, Tunisia, Knoxville, Levanto, and other exotic locales, morphs into an interiors emporium with a specialty in luxury wet rooms, then a prized Trump Tower penthouse.

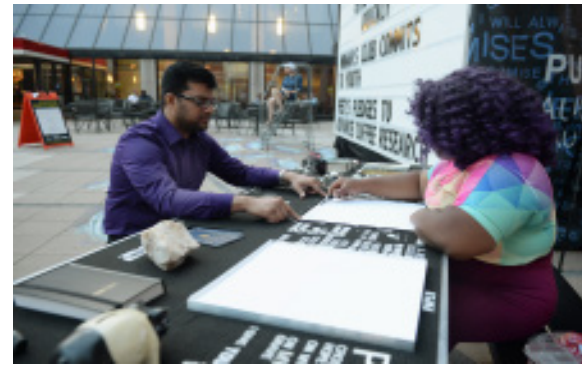
I look back at Yasmine, who's been lingering by the table, chatting with a group of Egyptian twentysomethings who followed her in line, lounging on the lawn, photographing the procession of promise-makers from table to billboard. Elsewhere, students from the Midwest sip cold-pressed juices on benches, tourists from Pakistan consult guidebooks and point to landmarks, suburbanites balance bulging shopping bags, pinstriped financiers stride across the plaza with briefcases wagging. The idyllic scene could have been staged by a PR firm hired to burnish Boston's cosmopolitan image, which may be why it seems so fragile, artificial, as if each carefree smile is telegraphing dramatic irony.

I realize that Yasmine, like most people, might find *Public Trust*, as a brand of artwork, to be incomprehensible on the level of inputs and outputs. We're used to trading personal information and innermost thoughts for the feeling of belonging, entertainment, convenience, discounted merchandise, and, eventually, the abolition of disease and colonization of Mars. We're used to leasing our eyeballs, monetizing our dissent, and submitting to nonstop surveillance. We're less and less used to interactions that are designed only to be impressed on our memory, to be conjured with the expression of a phrase—*I promise*—rather than retrieved with the click of a button or the triggering of an algorithm (but also published to Instagram and Twitter, circulation being the means by which bonds are formed between speaker and addressee, and a metric of the success of any public art project).

How strange that the transformative power of language might elude us even in an



ASK OUT PETER WEISS • I PROMISE TO STAND FOR PALESTINE • I PROMISE TO BE THE SOLUTION NOT THE PROBLEM • I PROMISE TO LIVE FOR THE ARTS • I PROMISE TO NOT BE AFRAID TO LIVE MY TRUTH • I PROMISE TO TRY TO INSPIRE JOY • I PROMISE TO GIVE HOPE TO PEOPLE • I PROMISE TO STAY MOTIVATED TO PURSUE MY CAREER • I PROMISE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE • I PROMISE TO GIVE OF MYSELF COMPLETELY • BE DUMBLEDORE • I PROMISE NOT TO GIVE INTO MY FEARS • I PROMISE TO NEVER BE DEFEATED • I PROMISE TO LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY FOR THE GOOD SIGNS • I PROMISE TO MAKE MISTAKES • I PROMISE TO BE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT MY WORDS • I PROMISE TO FEED MY BEAST • I PROMISE TO HELP YOU TAKE BACK THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION • I PROMISE TO NEVER MAKE A PROMISE I CANNOT KEEP • I PROMISE TO BE AWARE OF THE INEQUALITY OF PARENTING • I PROMISE TO REMAIN BALANCED • I PROMISE TO LISTEN MORE • I PROMISE TO DO MY PART TO DISMANTLE PATRIARCHY • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MY MANY STRENGTHS • STORMS TOMORROW • VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES AN ELECTRIC CAR • CLINTON PROMISES IMMIGRATION REFORM • I PROMISE TO BE PATIENT WITH MYSELF • TRUMP PROMISES TO STAND WITH CUBANS • TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS END TO SOGGY BAGS • I PROMISE TO DANCE PAINT AND SWIM MORE • I PROMISE TO BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR SEEKING FULFILLMENT • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS TRY • I PROMISE TO OPEN MY STUDIO • I PROMISE TO GIVE PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF • I PROMISE TO



open-air museum placarded by the pledges of the founders, who conjured the nation via the Constitution, which circulated from town to town, assimilating readers into the first-person plural of “We the people,” remaking colonists as citizens, forging a republic from those who previously had defined themselves by homeland, residence, trade, religion, holdings of land and slaves. On the other hand, the perennial problem of sincerity and transparency, voiced by John Adams: “A Notion prevails among all Parties that it is politest and genteelst to be on the Side of Administration, that the better Sort, the Wiser Few, are on one Side; and that the Multitude, the Vulgar, the Herd, the Rabble, the Mob only are on the other.”

A trio of women storms the table being helmed by Silvi. Two are college-age and one is in her forties, but seems to be playing the role of a fellow millennial. One of the younger women, a brunette wearing the top two-thirds of a sprayed-on baseball jersey, complains, with faux exasperation, that they’ve been waiting *approximately forever*, which elicits squeals—as does nearly every subsequent statement.

Who’s voting for Edward Snowden? What’s with the orange dinosaur? Which one of us is going first?

At the urging of her friends, the older woman sits down. Her freshly cropped and dyed hair contrasts with her functional wardrobe of denim overalls and a black hoodie. The third woman, who is tall with an avian mien, reveals that they’re all in the same drawing class at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and their professor sent them to *Public Trust* as an assignment. I’m going back to school, the older woman explains, to cheers and applause; I’m starting over again, doing what I always wanted.

When Silvi asks if she’s thought of her promise, the older woman begs her friends for help.

How about the one we were talking about earlier, Steph?

Oh, *yeah*, that was a good one, trills the woman in the jersey.

I don’t know . . .

The millennials look down expectantly. Steph clears her throat and, with mock solemnity, announces, I promise to keep masturbating. An eruption of high-pitched giggling ensues.

Steph turns and looks at Silvi, who is impassive. That’s too silly, I know, I know.

Silvi suggests to the millennials that they sit down and operate as a team. She locks eyes with Steph and asks what she feels she owes to herself, what she owes to others, what kind of promise might guarantee that she makes good on these debts. She lists pledges made in the past half hour and runs through the verification process: spell out the promise on the table, swear on one of these objects, make a charcoal rubbing, transfer to the billboard, pose for a photo.

After joking, stammering, and deflecting for a minute, Steph’s face tightens. She seems to seal herself off from the world beyond the table. The millennials, processing the message, become quiet and observant. Honesty, she says, is very important to me. I’ve been clean for twenty years, but for six years, when I was drinking—everything fell apart, as tends to happen. I wasn’t living how I wanted to live, and the worst thing was that my mother was there and saw—or at least knew—everything. I thought—I was always thinking—about how



MAINTAIN SAINTHOOD • I PROMISE TO BE ANGRY W/ UNSOLVED ISSUES & MAKE YOU A LITTLE ANGRY TOO • I PROMISE TO MAIL A LETTER • WE PROMISE TO SPREAD THE FUNK • I PROMISE TO MAKE PAUL HAPPY! • I PROMISE TO PRACTICE THE BANJO • WE PROMISE TO OPEN DAYJOB • I PROMISE TO OPEN MY HEART • I PROMISE TO NOT SECOND-GUESS MYSELF • I PROMISE TO HONOR MY TRUTH • I PROMISE TO LET GO OF GRUDGES • I PROMISE TO TAKE OPPORTUNITIES • I PROMISE NOT TO HOLD MYSELF TO SOCIETY'S STANDARDS • I PROMISE TO BE A BADASS EVERY DAY • I PROMISE TO BE PRESENT IN EVERYDAY SITUATIONS • I PROMISE TO KEEP LEARNING • I PROMISE TO HAVE A GRATITUDE MOMENT EVERYDAY • I PROMISE TO HOLD ON TO JESUS • WE PROMISE TO WOW EACH OTHER EVERY DAY • I PROMISE TO GO TOWARD HEARTBREAK • I PROMISE TO LOVE MYSELF MORE • I WILL GIVE A PERCENT OF MY ART PROFIT TOWARD ART MAKING • I PROMISE TO DO THE RIGHT THING • I PROMISE TO REALLY LISTEN TO MY KIDS • I WILL CHALLENGE THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM ¡VIVA LA REVOLUCION! • I PROMISE TO LISTEN TO THE TRUTH MORE • I PROMISE TO READ MORE • I PROMISE TO TRUST THE UNIVERSE • I PROMISE TO FEED THE GOOD WOLF • I PROMISE TO REVEAL MY TRUE SELF THROUGH MY FAULTS • I PROMISE TO PHOTOSYNTHESIZE • I PROMISE TO LEAN INTO THE PRESENT • I PROMISE TO FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS FOR EVERYONE • I PROMISE TO TRUST THE UNFOLDING • I PROMISE TO BE BETTER AWARE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S STRUGGLES • I PROMISE TO OPEN



honest my mother was, and I wondered if I could be like that someday. At the time I couldn't, no matter what, but someday, I thought.

So . . . do you want to make a promise about being honest, about being as honest as your mother?

Yes. I promise . . . to live my life . . . as honestly . . . as my mother did.

The millennials coo with encouragement. As Steph pins the paper to the table and Silvi makes the rubbings, they begin to deliberate, their levity having mostly been subsumed by muted purposefulness. The woman in the jersey resolves to always choose kindness, no matter the situation and personalities with which she's confronted. The birdlike woman commits to keep trying side dishes, a reference to an earlier conversation about placing conventional limits on one's experience of the world (and also, apparently, a crass joke about sexual intrepidity).

Soon the three women stand up, timidly eye each other, and try to revive their banter. So, what now? I dunno. Are you working on your drawings? Yeah, I probably have a few more hours to put in. They look in different directions as they walk toward the billboard. They quietly wait as the promises are mounted, faces nearly frozen. Then each poses, beaming reflexively, dwarfed by the stack of statements, as the others point and click.

8.

To participate in *Public Trust* seems to require a belief that the meaningfulness of words either has not entirely been eroded or can somehow be restored—not to mention that society is founded on honest communication, not posturing and manipulation. At Copley Square, most of the promises, however genuine, are about improving the speaker, who is hardly made accountable to anyone: I promise to take better care of myself and my art. I promise to listen more and eat healthier. I promise to believe in my ability to achieve my MBA dream. I promise to always be authentic. The promises were not so different in Roxbury, I realize, although I often understood them to be motivated by a need for care, strength, and protection. (There were exceptions: I promise to continue to educate my people. I promise to see fairness and equality in housing in Boston. I promise to persevere in the face of adversity.)

Does this reflect a lack of faith in the bonds made by words to extend beyond friends and family? Or a sense that our words and actions, however self-oriented, are apt to radiate outward? Or a conviction that our capacity to touch the lives of others is minimal, so we might as well pursue our own interests and hope that they all align someday?

Toward the end of the afternoon, I walk from one side of the table to the other and sit down across from Silvi. I worry about the usefulness of individually modeling the pact that should be at the crux of public life. This isn't Transcendental Meditation, we're not going to achieve world peace by getting the square root of 1 percent of the population to make a promise at once. We might preserve the feeling, carry it with us. Yet I can imagine a country in which nearly all people are mindful of the crucial relationship between language and reality, and are nevertheless governed by an elite for whom blasphemy is a fair price for power. I can



MORE WINDOWS AND MORE DOORS • I PROMISE TO BE KIND • I PROMISE TO BE MORE THANKFUL FOR WHAT I HAVE • I PROMISE TO KEEP FIGHTING • I PROMISE TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD • I PROMISE TO LEARN FROM THE PAST • I PROMISE TO LOVE MORE AND TO GET INTO CALARTS • WE PROMISE TO PUT EACH OTHER FIRST • I PROMISE TO TRY MY BEST TO DECLUTTER • I PROMISE TO TRUST MYSELF AND MY TIME • I PROMISE TO BE MORE TRUE TO MYSELF • I PROMISE TO LOOK UPWARD AND OUTWARD • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS TRY AGAIN • I PROMISE TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION • I PROMISE TO COMFORT THE DISTURBED & DISTURB THE COMFORTABLE • I PROMISE TO LIVE AND LOVE PASSIONATELY • I PROMISE TO NOT RUN AWAY FROM WHAT IS GOOD FOR ME • I PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF AND CHOOSE LOVE • I PROMISE YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO ME • I PROMISE TO GIVE TO THE LESS FORTUNATE • I PROMISE TO TRY EVERYTHING • I PROMISE TO SPEAK THE TRUTH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY • I PROMISE TO SHOW MYSELF LOVING-KINDNESS EVERYDAY • I WILL TRUST MYSELF AS AN ARTIST • DREAM BIG, LIVE SMALL • I PROMISE TO WORRY LESS • I PROMISE TO WORK ON TIME MANAGEMENT • I PROMISE TO FIND JOY IN THE DARKNESS • I PROMISE TO BE PATIENT AND SUPPORTIVE • I WILL HONOR ISHMAEL • I PROMISE TO BE COURAGEOUS & TRUST MY GUTS • I PROMISE TO SEE YOU 10 YEARS FROM TODAY • I PROMISE TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON MY CHOICES • I PROMISE TO BE A HARVARD STUDENT • I PROMISE TO KEEP IT COOL • I WILL MAKE MISTAKES • WE PROMISE TO BE



imagine a country in which people maintain the credibility of oaths, and “e pluribus unum” is nevertheless supplanted by a choice Trumpism: “It’s just words, folks. It’s just words.”

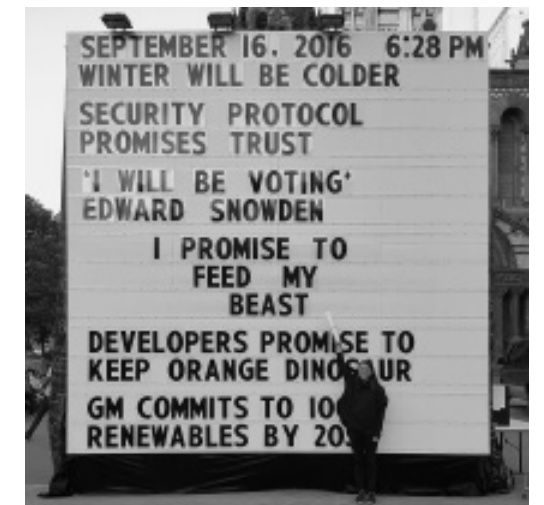
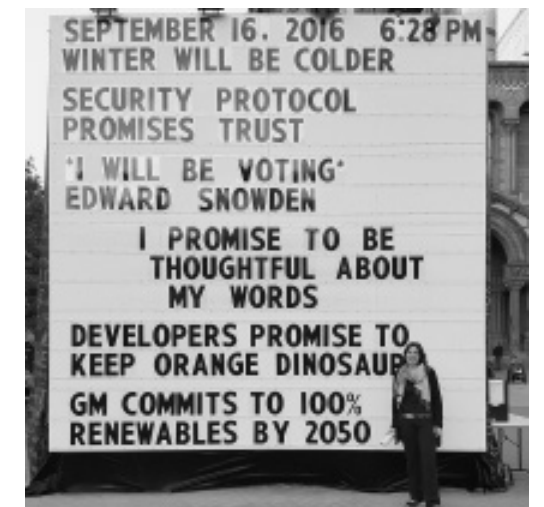
I weigh the sanctity of language against the need, voiced by Cavell, to accept ambiguity. This balance seems especially vital given the migration of so many speakers and so much speech to digital realms. If we’re to fully assume our digital identities, we might as well offload oaths to an algorithm that can automatically enforce them, and in the process nullify concerns about broken promises, as well as subtract deities from the equation. (This is now possible, thanks to the blockchain, the decentralized public ledger that enables people to transfer money, place bets, run governments, or manage corporations without having to rely on an intermediary.) But if all exchanges were turned into binding contracts, why would anyone take seriously a promise that is based merely on an utterance, a discernible intention, a recitation before a holy book?

Most people would rather not inhabit a world in which promises are immunized against misfire (even though they may, unwittingly or not, usher it into existence). Perhaps this is because the relationship between language and reality can’t be guaranteed without abolishing insincerity and infelicity, without rejecting what it means to be human. Promises are risky and tenuous, and this seems as essential to the bond that they create as the obligations that they establish.

So, what’ll it be? Silvi asks.

My instinct, now, is to insist on the right to fabricate, falsify, and otherwise use words to deform the world, and even skewer the ideals of Pericles-fetishizing philologists. I sympathize with the drive to restore the “signifying force of language,” in Agamben’s words, yet I wonder if the campaign isn’t a little . . . Make America Ancient Greece Again. But is this really why I feel reticent about presenting myself in such a sincere fashion, rather than putting forward a carefully crafted and purposefully partial avatar? Perhaps I also feel this way because here, at the nucleus of colonial tourism, at the most patriotic of farmers’ markets, I, an American of certain means and circumstances, feel convinced that my intentions will be transparent, my self will be aligned with my speech. Which relates to the feeling that channeling myself into digital vessels is a zero-sum game: Every addition to these insatiable personas involves a subtraction from a finite reserve of essential material; the more fully I inhabit the world of digital platforms, the less I inhabit myself. I’m reminded of Immanuel Kant’s belief that the public sphere is made by individuals reading and writing in solitude, that collectivity hinges on the maintenance of our private and inner lives.

I decide to return to my original promise, which stems from having had a child and, in the following months, sensing that I was not sufficiently mindful of the inequity that seems to be inherent in parenting, or not consistently making decisions based on this knowledge. Instead, I’d been assuaged by the notion that my wife, Rachel, was more or less content with her role, or that the lopsidedness of our dynamic would progressively be mitigated as our son became less reliant on her as a food source. Rachel had noticed the promise scrawled in a notebook that I had left open on the dining table: I promise to be mindful of the inequality inherent in parenting. She called it sweet, and asked if mindfulness is enough. Do you want to



KIND HELPFUL & LOVING • I WILL BRING HAIBAO TO BOSTON • I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER MAN FOR YOU • WE PROMISE TO SPREAD LOVE EVERYDAY • I PROMISE TO SUPPORT THE ARTS & ARTISTS • I PROMISE TO CELEBRATE YOUR LIGHT & FIGHT FOR YOUR FREEDOM • WE PROMISE TO KEEP WISHING ON STARS • I PROMISE TO LIVE, LOVE, LEARN & EMPOWER UNAPOLOGETICALLY • I PROMISE TO STAY COMMITTED TO GOOD HEALTH • WE PROMISE TO DISFRUTAR EL MOMENTO • I PROMISE TO BE PASSIONATE IN MY PURSUIT • ENDURE ALL THINGS BELIEVE ALL THINGS HOPE ALL THINGS • I PROMISE TO LOVE AS HARD AS I WORK • I PROMISE TO ALWAYS DO WORK THAT HAS MEANING • I WILL STAND FOR LOVE & THE FUTURE EVEN WHEN I TREMBLE • I PROMISE TO PRACTICE GIVING VOICE TO MY VULNERABILITIES • TOGETHER, LET US BE PART OF THE SOLUTION • HUMANITY PROMISES TO FREE PALESTINE • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MYSELF • I PROMISE TO BE MORE SELFLESS • I PROMISE TO GO WITH THE FLOW • I PROMISE TO CRY FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT • I PROMISE TO EMPOWER PEOPLE WITH LOVE • I PROMISE TO DEDICATE MYSELF TO YOUR SUCCESS • I PROMISE TO ENCOURAGE LOVE & THOSE WHOM I LOVE THE MOST • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN MY INTUITION • I PROMISE TO BELIEVE THE PROMISES & TRUST THE PROCESS • I PROMISE NOT TO WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE • I PROMISE TO SHOW UP



act differently or simply keep in mind that you should act differently?

Silvi nods and fixes her eyes on me as I explain, which makes me feel pinned to the bench. My pulse accelerates. How about . . . aware? Your space is limited.

Well, what I really want to say has to do with the link between consciousness and behavior. To me, awareness doesn't necessarily have to do with action. For instance, I'm *aware* of the refugee crisis in Syria, and I'm not doing very much about it.

OK. How about this "inherent in"? Why not simply "of parenting"?

I think . . . well, don't you think it makes sense to be clear that this is a kind of fundamental issue, and not a situation that I created or that anyone creates through their actions or inaction, at least not at first, although, of course, nearly everyone aggravates the situation in their own way?

We go back and forth like this for several minutes, Silvi coaxing and editing me. I could posture, dissemble, or speak as someone other than myself, but I'd be conscious of the effort. I feel slightly exposed, and I tap my fingers on the bench as Silvi assembles the letters: I promise to be aware of the inequality of parenting. I pin the paper to the table and focus on the sound of charcoal sliding against the paper, scraping against the plastic letters.



SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 10:43AM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
LOVE
MYSELF
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 10:50AM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
MAINTAIN
SAINTHOOD
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 11:00AM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO BE ANGRY W/
UNSOLVED ISSUES & MAKE
YOU A LITTLE ANGRY TOO
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 1:59 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO FIGHT
AGAINST HOMELESSNESS
FOR EVERYONE
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 2:05 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO TRUST
THE UNFOLDING
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 2:47 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
WE PROMISE TO PUT
EACH OTHER FIRST
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 11:15 AM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
WE PROMISE TO
SPREAD THE
FUNK
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 11:40AM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
NOT SECOND-GUESS
MYSELF
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 12:09PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
BE A BADASS
EVERY DAY
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 3:33 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
NOT RUN AWAY FROM
WHAT IS GOOD FOR ME
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 3:45 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE
YOU MEAN THE WORLD
TO ME
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 4:35PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
BE COURAGEOUS &
TRUST MY GUT
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 12:40PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
HOLD ON TO
JESUS
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 1:40PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
FEED
THE GOOD WOLF
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 1:49PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
PHOTOSYNTHESIZE
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 4:56PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I WILL
MAKE
MISTAKES
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 6:00 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
LOVE AS HARD AS
I WORK
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 6:36 PM
STORMS TOMORROW
VOLKSWAGEN PROMISES
AN ELECTRIC CAR
CLINTON PROMISES
IMMIGRATION REFORM
I PROMISE TO
CRY FOR THOSE
WHO CAN NOT
TRUMP PROMISES TO
STAND WITH CUBANS
TEA FROM A SPRAY VOWS
END TO SOGGY BAGS

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