

(I Am) Nobody's Lunch
Anthology Introduction

(I Am) Nobody's Lunch came about as a response to a time in America when it seemed that the country had lost its mind. The years surrounding the invasion of Iraq felt like watching a slow train crash from somewhere inside the train, with the conductors calmly announcing that everything is ok (or occasionally screaming "Watch out the train is crashing!") It did not feel much like democracy. Feeling utterly powerless, we tried to at least follow the story. And the story went something like this: "We are not _____. Actually we are _____. We are _____ for your safety. What you thought was _____ has been redefined and now we are no longer _____ and it is unpatriotic to keep asking questions about _____."

In response to all this, the company wanted to do something more expressly political. Figuring out how to do so however posed some challenges. At such a time, the strongest impulse was to shout "That's a lie!" "Here's the truth!" But the problem wasn't really that the truth was censored. It was readily available. The problem was that the truth had lost its power to affect reality. Furthermore, shouting the truth violated one of our working principles. We had decided that any project had to be driven by an open-ended question, some sort of inquiry for which we couldn't presuppose a result. What's the point, in other words, of making a show about what we already know? After much deliberation, we came up with a question. Essentially, we wanted to know how everyone else was sorting out the mess. If a democracy depends in part on there being some common understanding of what is actually taking place in the world, then we wanted to know if in fact if such a consensus existed, and if not, then just how are people parsing reality?

As with *Gone Missing*, the company conducted wide-ranging interviews and Michael Friedman wrote songs at the same time. We found words of wisdom from all sorts of unlikely corners (like the Pleiades). And in the end I think we discovered some helpful thoughts for difficult times.

— Steve Cosson