

## Women in Black Greek Chorus Script

Mask 1: You are silent, yet we hear your question. Who are these people?

Mask 2: We ARE the people. Citizens of democracy. We have been called forth as an ancient Greek Chorus.

Mask 3: We, the Chorus, were citizens speaking to their leaders in the dramas of Sophocles, Euripides.

Mask 1: Saying to the leaders what they needed to hear, but did not want to hear.

Mask 2: We foretold what should happen.

Mask 3: There were no spectators in Greek drama. Everyone—actors, chorus, and citizens in the amphitheater-- all had to play a role.

Mask 1: We come now to speak our truth.

Mask 2: Like our ancient sisters, we sing laments because we grieve.

Mask 3: For our country.

Mask 1: For the world.

Mask 2: We have sung our wishes for leaders

Mask 3: and Hope is born out of grief.

Mask 1: As is the responsibility to ask questions.

Mask 2: We have many questions.

### **Spoken out from individual members of the Chorus:**

1. Do you participate in our democracy?
2. Do you feel like a spectator?
3. Is YOUR voice silent?
4. Has your voice BEEN silenced?
5. How can art give you a voice?
6. What should we as citizens say to our leaders?
7. What price do WE pay today for the hubris of the world's leaders?
8. How can the people give birth to good from this grief?

### **Some possible alternate questions:**

- Do you think the voices of everyday citizens are heard?
- What IS civic duty?
- Is creative expression part of civic duty?
- What is our responsibility to change what is happening?

# A Chorus of Women<sup>1</sup>

We are A Chorus of Women singing laments, in the ancient tradition of the Chorus in Greek drama. It is our way of expressing our grief for the violence that is occurring in our nation and the world. We hope to encourage you to be bold: to follow the human capacity for empathy and imagination into positive action.

We take our inspiration from Glenda Cloughley of Women in Black Australia who says:  
“Sorrow doesn’t oppose anything. It is a form of love. Often it is more potent and original than rage. In many myths about the eternal cycles of the seasons and (the passing of) generations, the song of grief brings life out of death.”

“We stand in an ancient lineage. In the Greek theatre the Chorus speaks for the citizens, comments on events and foretells the future. A robust, articulate Chorus is integral to the idea of democracy that’s embedded in English from the Greek words *demos* *kratos*, meaning ‘the strength, influence, power, authority’ (of) ‘the people’.”

The Greeks considered serving in the Chorus to be part of civic duty. The Chorus spoke for the general population: it was the play's public opinion. The words of the Chorus were “the poets' answer to important questions, such as-- How should one behave? How can one accept the injustices of life? What is the price of *hubris*\*? Read a soliloquy from a Greek tragedy, or from Hamlet or Macbeth, and you will hear these questions being asked.”<sup>2</sup>

There were no spectators, as we think of it, in Greek drama. The actors, Chorus, and citizens who sat in the tiered stone seats of the amphitheater all had a role in moving the action to where it needed to go. It was the large group of citizens in the amphitheater, however, who had a view of the “big picture”, the whole landscape of what was unfolding.

**\*What is Hubris?** Hubris is overbearing pride or presumption; it is arrogance and wanton violence that often results in retribution. Hubris is an important concept that the Greeks explored over and over in the great tragedies, in mythology and in the histories of Herodotus. The Greeks saw acts of hubris as the root of evil, and the hubris of leaders as the source of much of the suffering and destruction that befell the people.

**Our wishes for you:** *The Chorus hopes that imaginative responses will emerge from our collective grieving that encourage us all to become more creative and humane. We ask you to consider important questions also, and your role in democracy. We invite you to find your voice, and your own response.*

**Do you participate in our democracy? ....Do you feel like a spectator?**

**Is your voice silent?.....Has your voice been silenced?**

**Do you think the voices of everyday citizens are heard?....How can art give you a voice?**

**What should we as citizens say to our leaders?**

**What is civic duty? .... Is creative expression part of civic duty?**

**What price do we pay today for the hubris of the world’s leaders?**

**What is our responsibility to change what is happening?**

**How can the people give birth to good from this grief?**

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<sup>1</sup> The Chorus of Women is sponsored by Frederick Women in Black and is independent of the Frederick Festival of the Arts

<sup>2</sup> Botinelly, Robert. The ELAC Guide to Ancient Greek Theatre.