

## P.J. PALMER

*Okie Cabin in Bakersfield, 2013*  
single frame 1:85:1, digital capture



courtesy: National Steinbeck Center and (twenty)2 films

showing up; but the thing is, is that those people have no idea what's going on here. All these new buildings that come up, I mean, it's a means to an end now. I mean, it's not a campo no more. It's a prison. I see it as a prison because I've seen what they've done, you know, and there's absolutely no connection to anything.

They're all cookie-cutter. They all look the same. In 2008, we came and we painted a door Navajo Turquoise and a certain yellow, a very beautiful yellow: marigold yellow. And the housing authority, within five days, painted over what we had painted.

See, this whole thing that you guys are doing is wonderful, celebrating the seventy-five-year anniversary for John Steinbeck. But the whole thing is that, what's in the book is still happening right now, and there's new migrants, but since nobody's saying anything, everything gets destroyed, you know. And, like, the palm trees are probably, like, the only things that are original. I mean, you see all the vacant fields. I mean, there's a saying that all these empty fields used to be houses. Well, these empty fields *used* to be houses, you know.

There's nobody out there being the voice for these—I guess for the camp. But, I mean, it's not just Okies, you know. It's not just people from Tejas, you know. There's a whole continuing thing. I mean, some of the people are out here right now because they're still picking grapes out on the Lano area.

But this is *The Grapes of Wrath*. This right here is *The Grapes of Wrath*. This is everything that everybody was talking about, that everybody sees in the movie. This is Tom Joad. This is everything that is in the books and it's a continuing thing and it has to be preserved.

I think there's a lot of us that are Tom Joad. In that scene where he says, I'm going to be in those little kids' laughter when they're getting happy, because they know food's about to be served to them because they're hungry. You know, whenever there's a cop beating down a guy, I'm gonna be him. It's just the realization that doing the spoken word and doing these things, you have to be the voice. It can't always be someone else. Everybody always complains, you know, who's gonna do this, or how come they don't do that. Well, fuck all that, it has to be you. If you don't take action and do it yourself. I mean, you know, fuck it, we're all Tom Joad. We all have to go out there and we

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all have to fight. And if everybody had that state of mind, as opposed to being whatever denomination of Republican or Democrat or Green Party or Libertarian. None of that shit matters. If we were all more like Tom Joad, then this world would run a lot more simpler because it would just have some fucking common sense.

Nah, I mean, I guess, think about what Steinbeck was talking about. Think about what Tom Joad was talking about. Think about what Woody Guthrie said, in that, you know, we're all in this together, and if we're not helping each other out, I mean, there's really no point to this world. You know, people talk about there being a heaven or a hell and, like, you have to enjoy what you can because nobody's ever come back and told you anything about anything. You know, once we're gone, that's it. Life's waited for your moment. We're all going to be Tom Joad at some point, and if we never use our voices, who's going to hear us? You know, you have to use your voice and you have to speak up. You know, it doesn't matter if you're a little kid in some little town in Iowa, you know; a little—a little chicanito in Brooklyn, you know; a little African kid in Wyoming; a little white boy in Florida. Pursue your dreams, and just do it, man. You know, just go for it. If they call you a dreamer, then good, you know. You have some sense of mind in your head, you know. You have to pursue what you have to pursue, you know. But, we're all Tom Joad. Tom Joad isn't dead, you know. Tom Joad's never going to die. Tom Joad's always going to exist.

I mean, let's just imagine if John Steinbeck didn't write this book, you know? Like, what if he didn't write