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Creating Curricula: Uplifting the Next Generation of Activists in Theatre

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ABSTRACT

Musical theatre is an art form that is deeply connected to issues within our society. Our social and political history has been showcased on the stage since its beginning. Though musical theatre has a reputation of inclusivity, that is not always the case. Historically speaking, musicals might have been revolutionary in their time but lack a true specificity when it comes to the portrayal of underrepresented groups. Musicals such as *Show Boat*, *West Side Story*, and *Oklahoma!* are revered in our industry but have a deep history of harmful material. Since the global pandemic of 2020, the theatre industry has had a plethora of conversations about the problems and current needs within the industry ranging from accessibility to fair wages. From these conversations, an organization called Broadway of Tomorrow was formed (BoT) by college students, for which I am the Community Outreach Specialist. In my position, I was able to create curriculum for future theatre artists at universities to bridge the gap between art and activism so that they can have tools for their entrance into the industry. My current title for this curriculum is Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists. The goal is for participants to assess themselves and the theatre industry, strategize based on the current needs chosen for the curriculum year, and implement change in their own creative way. The current needs chosen for the curriculum are accessibility, anti-racist theatre, and intimacy direction. This paper addresses the need for art activism curricula and provides my example of such a program. My hope with this curriculum is to disseminate it in the summer of 2024 through Broadway of Tomorrow.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

From its inception, musical theatre has been connected to current struggles within society. Many people cite musical theatre as a great example of art that comments on issues within society. The issues that they comment on are baked into the history and current practices of theatre itself. One of the musicals to revolutionize this form of musical theatre, *Show Boat*, consists of extremely racist material that portrays African Americans as stereotypes (Hoffman, 31) in its portrayal of themes of post-civil war segregation and passing (a mixed-race person who passes as white). Stereotypes continue throughout history with shows like *The King and I*, *West Side Story*, *Hot Mikado*, and more. During their time, many of these shows were hailed as revolutionary by critics. Still, many issues were a part of their inception, rehearsal practices, and performances. The harmful nature of Musical Theatre was not just racial and ethnic; sexism, ableism, homophobic, and fatphobic issues are riddled throughout the history of theatre. Musical theatre's structure is inherently intertwined with social and cultural issues throughout history (Wolf, 27). In 2019, *Tootsie*, with a man-in-dress jokes rooted in transphobia, premiered on the Broadway stage (Lewis). Samuel Yates states how "shows are usually built and cast on the expectation of a non-disabled performer" leaving the needs of differently abled people to be created or left out (Brown). Overall, the centered ideas and practices within theatre were created by straight, white, cis, able-bodied men. How can anyone outside of that sphere of those lived experiences expect to

feel seen within this industry? As a theatre artist who hopes to see change within her lifetime, I desire a field that is safe and equitable for all people, especially those of underrepresented identities. To combat these issues and create change, I've worked with an organization called Broadway of Tomorrow (BoT). Its mission is to create safe and equitable learning environments in theatre institutions, which will impact the practices occurring in the industry. As the Community Outreach Specialist, I worked on a program called The Bridge Initiative. The workshop bridges the gap between art and activism. By leading this workshop, I discovered the importance of disseminating actionable practices to theatre students. Thus, I decided to create a curriculum that addresses the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) needs of the theatre industry. Creating curricula that teaches future theatre students the connection between art and activism will help ensure equitable practices in the theatre industry.

History of Musical Theatre

To create solutions, it is important to understand the problem and its inception. The art form of Musical Theatre can be connected to many predecessors. The main entertainment that it derives from is vaudeville and the minstrel show (Williams). Minstrel shows were a collection of songs with light scripting involving the stereotyping of Black Americans. In many of these shows, White Americans would use blackface: a stereotypical characterization of Black Americans. The shows would feature traditional plantation songs and skits. The height of its popularity coincided with the beginning of many famous movie musical performers—Judy Garland, Shirley Temple, Mickey

Rooney—who are cited to have performed in Blackface (Blackface: The Birth of An American Stereotype). Movie musicals such as *White Christmas*, *Holiday Inn*, and *Babes in Arms* showcase this “art form” through tropes, structure, and even Blackface (Tucker). Therefore, there is a clear connection between musicals and blackface and its foundation is inherently racist.

The musical that is cited as a classic that “revolutionized the form structure, and content of the American musical” is *Show Boat* (Hoffman, 54). It was first performed in 1927, and immortalized with three movies in 1926, 1936, and 1951 (*Show Boat*). The story follows a performer trying to hide her mulatto roots before she marries a white man, which is illegal during this time. During its time, it was monumental for its integration of racial diversity and highlighting important issues in our history. Analyzing it from a current lens shows the consistent stereotypical portrayal that is embedded into the three Black characters (Julie, Joe and Queenie). Having *Show Boat* as the beginning of the musical theatre cannon doesn’t set the art form in a great direction.

In 1943, *Oklahoma* ushered in the integrated musical. This combined story, music, and dance (Hoffman, 92). Yet, the show celebrated western expansion without acknowledging the harm it created against Native people. Hoffman writes that “the plot of *Oklahoma* may appear tame...there is much more at stake on a national, political, and racial level” (Hoffman, 94). Yet, the musical does not acknowledge or highlight the Native experience in any way. Another musical popular during this time, *Annie Get Your Gun*, portrays Native people as the stereotypical “violent Indian savage” (Hoffman, 105).

The 1960s and 70s of musical theatre began a new era of the art form. With musicals like *Hair*, the art form continued to highlight struggles within our society while

attempting to portray underrepresented identities specifically and with thought. The issue with some of these shows is that they continue to be written by people who do not identify with the experience they are writing. In the 30s and 40s, this manifested in the outward stereotypical portrayal. In this era, the stereotypes are inherently embedded in the musicals. For example, *West Side Story*, tells an important story of gang violence in New York City. In the movie production, some of the Puerto Rican characters were played by people who identified as white (Acevedo). This story is meant to highlight the immigrant experience, yet the main character, Maria is played by a white woman. This era of stories highlighting underrepresented experiences lacked the genuine thought and care, which is inherently racist.

The 80s and 90s ushered in a revitalization of the New York theatre scene. The HIV/AIDS crisis is directly correlated to the creation of musicals during this time. The musical *RENT* was a direct commentary while *Into the Woods* presented an allegory; both were strong stories that have withstood the test of time. Though they are not perfect shows when it comes to representation, they are in the right direction. The 2000s have a plethora of revolutionary musicals. *The Color Purple* is adapted for the stage and highlights Black queer relationships, sisterly love, and female independence (Wolf). *Wicked* is a book adaptation that gives voice to the outcast, Elphaba. The show emphasizes the importance of female friendship. Both shows share immense heart and a strong feminist viewpoint on the world.

On March 12, 2020, Broadway theatres went dark for the first time “since the stagehand strike of 2007” which lasted 19 days (Playbill). The shutdown of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lasted for a year and a half. The reopening began in September

of 2021. The shutdown period gave the theatre community a chance to figure out ways to better our industry. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the industry began having conversations about systemic racism in their industry (Seymour). Townhalls and forums were prompted, which allowed advocacy groups like Broadway for Racial Justice to form (Playbill). Conversations between students led to the social media campaign called “See Our Truths” on Instagram. The goal of the Instagram was to expose systemic racism within Pace University’s musical theatre program (See Our Truths: BIPOC Students Expose Racism Within Pace University’s Musical Theatre Program). The theatre industry is far from perfect, but steps are being taken to achieve equity. Michael R. Jackson won a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for best musical for *A Strange Loop*, the story of a Black queer writer writing a musical (A Strange Loop). In the 2022-2023 season, stories like *&Juliet* and *New York, New York* depict stories that center underrepresented identities. There have been immense changes since 2020 because of the work that many underrepresented communities put in.

Chapter 2

The Current Diversity Equity and Inclusion Needs in Theatre

Despite all these changes, there are still needs within our industry. We would like to ensure that people of all backgrounds and identities feel safe and included within the realm of theatre. Because of its inclusionary history, we cannot expect everything to be fixed. Though there are many changes that can be made, this chapter will focus on accessibility, intimacy direction, and theatre practices centering underrepresented communities.

The first need that has become a larger conversation in the theatre world is accessibility. In 2015, the Guardian wrote that the “number of audience members with a disability has increased to 7% from 5% three years ago” (Flynn). The first actor in a wheelchair on Broadway was Ali Stroker in 2015. When she won a Tony for Best Supporting Actress for the Oklahoma! Revival, she was unable to come from the audience as there was no ramp at New York’s Radio City Music Hall (Wanshel). She also couldn’t be on stage with the rest of the cast and crew when they won for “Best Revival of a Musical” (Wanshel). Some current solutions that have occurred are national and international festivals. InterAct is a disability arts festival with live performances, art parades, drumming, singing, and creative workshops which occurs in an environment where everybody can thrive (Interact 2022). There are theatres that center differently abled people. Still, there are more ways that the industry can implement large scale changes, such as required ramps and conversations that lead to more changes.

In theatre, films, and television, there is an array of intimate contents for audiences to consume. An aspect of the performance that the audience doesn’t always

think about is how the intimacy is directed. Intimacy choreography was a term first used in 2006 by Tonia Sina. Sina created the “Intimacy for the Stage method” and is a co-founder of Intimacy Directors International (Purcell). In her thesis, Sina states that an intimacy director “ensures that there is an outside control of the scene so that the actors have the ability to feel safer and more comfortable with each other” (Sina). The current framework for learning about Intimacy work is through an organization called Intimacy Directors and Coordinators. The organization is one of the seven accredited by SAG-AFTRA, the actors union (Intimacy Directors and Coordinators). Within my own years in theatre, I’ve seen a shift in how intimacy is directed. Many of the problems Sina talks about in her thesis—“actors controlling the intimate scene, intimate scenes blocked in front of the entire cast”—were common practice for my theatre company in high school (Sina). During 2021, intimacy training became consistent for the actors within our university. We were taught to use button, a phrase that pauses the work for whoever calls it, as well as physical boundary setting. Recently, I’ve learned that these are not common practices throughout the theatre industry. How can we create art if the space isn’t safe for everyone? Intimacy direction as a commonality in the theatre industry is a must have.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the inherent racism that is embedded within the theatre industry. Many other artists, directors, and designers have come up with their own lists of needs in this aspect. In 2020, an organization called “We See You White American Theatre” (We See You WAT) made a list of demands based on the needs of people of underrepresented identities. Though the organization hasn’t consistently updated its social media since March of 2022, their list still has some very crucial needs that can be addressed. The three points that We See You WAT states on their website

are: equitable presence, code of conduct, and transformative practices. The former states that they demand “a bare minimum of 50% BIPOC representation in programming and personnel, both on and off stage” (We See You WAT). There hasn’t been a demographic update, so it is unclear if this need has been met, but there are still solutions for this issue. The second states the need for consistent anti-racist training and Native land acknowledged during rehearsal processes and performances (We See You WAT). I believe that this is one of the first changes to occur at a multitude of theatres. Before the pandemic, the practice of a Land Acknowledgement was not common. Now, many theatres that I attend state a Land Acknowledgement during performances. Also, in each of my classes a declaration about anti-racist theatre practices occurs. The latter states the importance of radical change (We See You WAT). Within this section, they talk about the importance of “funding for BIPOC theatres,” “healthcare without dependance on work weeks,” and higher salaries and budget transparency (We See You WAT). None of these issues have fully been addressed, as the per diem for tours continues to be a topic of conversation, as well as the struggle for healthcare with enough work weeks. Overall, these are issues that can continue to be addressed in a myriad of ways.

Chapter 3

Activism Curriculum

In order to understand the curriculum I created (described in Chapter 4), it is important to learn about where my framework for activism curriculum comes from. Activism was inherent to my life. Growing up outside of Washington D.C., it was not uncommon to attend a protest, learn about activism through exhibits at Smithsonian museums, and find ways to speak out at our schools. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines activism as “the use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one” (Activism). Many people view activism as strictly political and social issues but there are many reasons to activate. Every organization may come together as a reaction, but they stay together because of the community they’ve built. To understand what activism curriculum looks like, it’s important to study practices of current organizations.

The first organization that I would like to analyze is Anakbayan (AB) USA. Anakbayan USA is “the comprehensive national democratic mass organization of Filipino Youth and students in the U.S.” (Anakbayan USA). Its goal is to “realize true national liberation for [The Philippines]” (Anakbayan USA). I was first introduced to the Anakbayan chapter in my area through a friend. I’ve been able to see their work; I believe their success derives from strong community building and consistent curriculum. A few programs that they have put on are “Philippine Society and Revolution,” “Women Over Profit March & Rally” and fundraisers to send them to AB Congress (Anakbayan DC). The first program focuses on educating their community on their history. The second program is a direct response to a current issue that they are navigating as a

community. The last program is uplifting their grassroots organizations future goals.

From studying this organization, I have learned that the key to a successful community is understanding where you've been, where you are, and where you're going.

Another great source I began to learn about is from the book *Girls, Performance and Activism* (Edell). This book offers an “analysis, celebration and critique of the ways in which teenage girls create and perform activist theater” (Edell). The writer talks about the origins of “Girl Activism.” The 90s and 2000s were important time for teenagers marginalized by gender. Younger people took a stand against injustices locally and nationally. This wasn't because they want to; many of them needed to. Instances like the election of 2016, the Parkland Florida shooting, and other occurrences led younger individuals to activate where they could. This action is because standing up for themselves and others “saves [their] own lives” (Edell 31). Edell continues to explain the positives of theatre activism, stating that it “can lure the audience into the content with emotional urgency” (Edell 37). The beauty of theatre is its truly immersive process that allows artists to showcase the current issues within our world. Another aspect of this book that I enjoy is the framework the writer comes up with for theatre activism. Out of Edell's seven principles, the two that stuck out to me are “operating with intersectional, antiracist, and feminist lenses as the white facilitator of mostly Black and Brown ensembles of girls, and choosing an abundance of joy, play, and love whenever possible” (Edell 14). The former speaks to something that is talked about within my curriculum: identity. Identity affects so much of how you see the world. Having a nuanced understanding of the identities of people that you share a space with is important. It creates room for conversation and relation between people. The beautiful part about

identities is the intersectionality that comes with them. The latter is something I am actively working to integrate into this curriculum. Joy is such an important aspect of activism. Someone once told me that doing activism work from a place of anger burns you out, while working with hope and joy in your heart sustains you abundantly. For the students to create long lasting bonds, they must use their joy to help them push through these tough conversations. This source provided many important takeaways and thoughts for my curriculum.

Chapter 4

Curriculum Outline

Curriculum Goals

The curriculum that I developed derives from my work with an organization called Broadway of Tomorrow (BoT). BoT is an organization that is working to create safer and equitable learning experiences. After the events of 2020, a group of students met to talk about how we were feeling about the world around us, specifically in theatre. Some of us decided that we could create change from our sectors of theatre, so we formed the organization. It is comprised of six theatre students from different programs throughout the nation. In January of 2022, we began the Bridge Initiative, a program to bridge the gap between Art and Activism for collegiate theatre makers. With my role as Community Outreach Specialist, I devised a curriculum to teach art activism to other current theatre students. The initial program was 10 sessions taught over a four-month period. Students were tasked with finding solutions to problems within their schools, while also learning about key parts of activism that they should understand.

The Bridge Initiative was my first time creating curriculum and I was able to learn a lot from it. The class consisted of ten participants and was taught every other Sunday for about 2 hours. Students ranged from schools all over the United States. The sessions began in January of 2022 and ended in May 2022. The main takeaways about the curriculum were the length and goals. College students are already extremely busy, but theatre students have 12-hour schedules that are very sporadic. By the 5th session, the attendance wasn't consistent. From this, I considered whether the program should occur during the summer. For the Bridge Initiative the goal was to help participants navigate

the issues within their universities. The challenge with this goal was working within the unique structures of the universities and musical theatre programs and trying to meet the need of the wide-ranging issues. Thus, the goal for the curriculum were updated to focus on goals that could have wide applicability.

My new title for this curriculum is Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists. The goal with my current curriculum is to focus on specific needs in the theatre industry rather than universities. Participants work to come up with their own solutions for their needs based upon the topics they learn in this course, as well as their own innovative ideas and practices. Each year the program will focus on three current issues within the industry. The facilitator will choose them prior to the start of the program. Over the course of the five sessions, the guiding framework for the curriculum is Assess, Strategize, and Implement. Assess begins the conversation about looking inward at personal beliefs and values, and understanding the history of the industry they are trying to change. The participants will also begin to learn about the current needs within the industry. Strategize focuses on finding innovative ways to create change within a flawed system. Implement is a culmination of information they've learned from peers, sessions, and conversations with current art activists. By the fourth session, participants will begin to work on solutions in small groups, which they will present to the class. In a perfect world, this curriculum would include panels, training sessions, and chances to see a show or two. Because of this, some of the sessions might be fully programmed while others will be more open ended, following an outline of topics and issues. Still, the end goal of finding innovative solutions to the needs in the theatre industry will be met. Below is an outline of five sessions that I have developed for the curriculum.

Session 1: Introductions and Creating the Container

The purpose of session one is to build group cohesion and provide an overview of the program. Important parts of this section are the community agreements, group introductions, unpacking the knapsack, and trust building exercises. This day is meant to be a reflective period with the students. If they don't understand each other, how will they be comfortable enough to share their opinions and values? In this paper, I will list the agenda for each session along with the reasoning behind it.

- 1) To begin the session, participants will share the following information: their name, pronouns, major, and their hometown.
- 2) From there, participants will discuss community guidelines. This is crucial to the overall work that they do together. Because of its importance, they will make the community guidelines together to understand what everyone needs to feel safe and valued within the space.
- 3) To build trust, participants will do a speed dating exercise called Back-to-Back Drawing. They start by sitting in pairs back-to-back. One person has a blank pad and pencil while the other has a picture with a shape. The person with the picture must instruct the one with the pad on what to draw. The overarching goal is to ensure that they learn how to communicate specifically and rely on their cohort.

Resource: <https://www.tinypulse.com/blog/team-building-activity-trust>

- 4) The next section of the session will start **Assess**. The goal of Assess is to take time to understand themselves, the rest of their cohort, and the industry that they would like to

enter. They start by assessing their knowledge. They define terms like social justice, activism, and what has led each of them to the world of activism.

Resource: <https://www.sdfoundation.org/news-events/sdf-news/what-is-social-justice/>

- 5) The next topic is speaking your fullest name. This activity is about introducing your identity. On one side of a paper, write your fullest name. On the back, write the top three identities you feel closest to. They come together and discuss our fullest identities as well as the importance of identities. Then they'll discuss a quote from UC Denver about understanding identity: "Think of your own overall identity (who you are as a person) as a bowl of soup. Your identity is made up of different *"ingredients"*: race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability status, socioeconomic status, geographic location, education, family structure, hobbies, beliefs, career, experiences, etc. There are times where you will share the same *"ingredients"* as others, and there will be times you will have completely different *"ingredients."* No one will ever have the same exact *"soup"* as you. This is because all the components of your authentic self (*your "ingredients"*), interact together within an oppressive system that influences/cultivates your lived experience. A white, cisgender woman will have a very different lived experience than a Black*, trans woman; while both may share similar experiences/understandings of oppressive systems as women there are many experiences that each woman will not share based on additional oppression a Black, trans woman will experience. Regardless, both lived experiences are valid and true" (Office of Equity).

Resource: <https://www.ucdenver.edu/offices/equity/education-training/self-guided-learning/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-101>

- 6) Participants will discuss a picture depicting equality vs equity vs reality vs liberation.

See Appendix A, page 33.

- 7) Finally, participants end the session with a quick discussion about takeaways. The assignment before the next session will be to create a short presentation about their assigned chapter in *The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical* by Warren Hoffman. Participants can use their public speaking skills and find innovative ways to debrief their fellow participants on the important aspects of their chapter.

See Appendix A, pages 26 to 31, for example of content in Session 1.

Session 2: History Time!

This session will focus on the history of musical theatre and its current state. This session will also introduce the three current needs that the curriculum will focus on this year.

- 1) The exercise that I'd like to start this session with is "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh. This is an exercise that will help participants understand privilege as a concept and how it relates to their lives. It will be an interactive exercise that involves standing, walking around, and self-reflection.

Resource: https://nationalseedproject.org/images/documents/Knapsack_plus_Notes-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf

- 2) Participants review the community guidelines before they start presentations. Appendix A, page 35 provides examples of community guidelines from past conversations.

- 3) Participants will present their chapter of *The Great White Way*. This resource was chosen because of its helpful analysis of specific times in theatre. After the presentations, they will discuss takeaways make their own timeline to refer to.
- 4) Next, they will discuss the article, *We're Not Going Back: Inside Broadway's Racial Reckoning* by Lee Seymour at Forbes. They will read and discuss based on the questions in Appendix A on page 36. This article highlights an important time in the theatre industry.
- 5) Before meeting with Nicole Brewer, we will begin **Strategize**. Participants discuss the three current needs that we will be highlighting in this year's session: Intimacy Direction, Accessibility, and Anti-Racist Theatre. They will have discussions about why these are needs form the 2023 season which will segue into the end of the session.
- 6) The last part of the session will be a conversation with Nicole Brewer about anti-racist theatre. Nicole Brewer is an important pillar of anti-racist theatre training. She is the creator of Conscientious Theatre Training as well as "Anti-Racist Theatre" (Brewer). Her three core principles are harm reduction, harm prevention, and relationship repair (Brewer). I believe that a 2-hour course would be beneficial to the participants. It helps them build a framework for the work that they will do in the next three sessions. The participants will learn more about how to ensure theatre is anti-racist through tools like de-centering, inclusion, and accessibility.

See Appendix A, pages 32 to 36, for example of content in Session 2.

Session 3: Biases, Decentering and Anti-Racism, Oh My!

This session will recap what participants learned from Nicole Brewer, start talking about accessibility.

- 1) First, they will start with an icebreaker called High, Low, Buffalo; this is an icebreaker that asks about the high, low, and something you're looking forward to during the week.
- 2) Before the conversation for the session begins, they will review our community guidelines. See Appendix A, page 36.
- 3) They will review what the participants learned from Nicole Brewer. See Appendix A, page 41 for the questions.
- 4) Then, participants will discuss implicit biases. To begin the conversation, participants will provide their ideas about what implicit biases are.
- 5) Then, examples of implicit biases will be discussed.

Resource: <https://lattice.com/library/how-to-reduce-unconscious-bias-at-work>

- 6) Then, the concept of calling out vs. calling in will be discussed. This is important to learn as students will need to understand how to communicate effectively when harm occurs.

Resource: <https://diversity.tufts.edu/resources/interrupting-bias-calling-out-vs-calling-in/>.

- 7) They will begin to have a conversation about accessibility in theatre. The participants will take some time to read two articles: the 'Theatre of the Mind,' Sure, But How About a Theatre Accessible for All Bodies? By Leo Adam Biga and Incident at 'Hadestown'.

Resources: <https://www.americantheatre.org/2022/12/06/theater-of-the-mind-sure-but-how-about-a-theater-accessible-for-all-bodies/>

<https://www.onstageblog.com/editorials/2022/10/13/incident-at-hadestown-over-captioning-device-calls-for-greater-understanding-of-accessibility-needs-in-theatre>

- 8) Then, a panel on accessibility will occur. There is no way for me to officially confirm the people who would be in attendance, the panelists that I would love to see are DJ Kurs (artistic director of the Deaf West Theatre), Ali Stroker (Tony-Winning Actor), and Blake Stadnik (TV/Theatre Actor). All of these panelists are changemakers in theatre that ensure accessibility is at the forefront of theatre artists minds. In Appendix A page 44, I have pictures of these panelists for an example of the slide in the curriculum.
- 9) The session will conclude with a takeaway conversation before the next session. See Appendix A, pages 37 to 43, for example of content in Session 3.

Session 4: Intimacy Direction and Final Project

Session 4 will introduce intimacy direction. Participants will take a workshop from Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, recap the three current needs, and introduce the final presentation and provide time for participants to work on it in their small groups.

- 1) First, participants do an ice breaker called Diversity Bingo. “This game help participants to get information on each other in a fun, competitive way. First, create a bingo card containing a grid of squares with a statement or question in each square that will apply to some members of your group and is in line with the objectives of your class, workshop, or event. After each player gets a bingo card, they mingle around introducing themselves and finding other participants who can sign their cards indicating that a statement applies to him/her. To avoid having people only talk to one or two people and filling up their card, limit the signatures they can give to 1 or 2 per card. When everyone has reached bingo or is super close, you can share something you’ve learned about each other, yourself, and the experience of this ice breaker activity.”

Resource: <https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/icebreaker-games/#diversity-bingo>

- 2) Then, participants will review the Community Guidelines.
- 3) Before the people from Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, participants will discuss the reading 'Art and Craft Intimacy Direction' which talks the importance of intimacy direction and its inception.

Resource: <https://howlround.com/art-and-craft-intimacy-direction>

- 4) Then, the participants will receive training from Intimacy Directors and Coordinators under the private workshops. This will be beneficial for them to learn practices that should be industry standard.

Resource: <https://www.idcprofessionals.com/private-workshops-consulting>

- 5) Then, the final project will be introduced. The purpose of the final project is for participants to take what they've learned about the current needs in our industry and create something creative to spread awareness. It can range from a program that they want to create, or a series of posts related to the issue. My hope is that they can use their knowledge to create something innovative for people in the theatre industry to learn from. See Appendix A, pages 44 to 48, for example of content in Session 4.

Session 5: Final Project Presentation

Session 5 will be the final presentations and then a final conversation before the curriculum ends. The final session will focus on presentations and final thoughts and takeaways.

- 1) Participants do a repeat of an activity from session 3, high, low, buffalo.
- 2) Participants will begin their final presentations!

3) Following presentations, participants will complete a survey providing feedback about the curriculum. Appendix A, pages 53 to 55, includes the google form.

4) The session will conclude with final takeaways and goodbyes.

See Appendix A, pages 49 to 52, for example of content in Session 5.

Chapter 5


Conclusion

The history of musical theatre is riddled with inaccurate representations of underrepresented communities. Recently, there has been a growth in knowledge, conversations and calls for change within our industry. Thus, an evolution from musicals such as *Show Boat* and *Oklahoma* to musicals such as *New York, New York* and *&Juliet* has occurred. This curriculum is my way of contributing to the work, by helping teach future theatre artists about the connection between art and activism so that we can continue to create radical change within our industry. Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists' curriculum was developed to evolve with the changes that occur in our industry. My future plan for this curriculum is to keep refining it and start a new program under Broadway of Tomorrow in 2024. I would like for the program to occur during the summer and possibly in person. This thesis has helped me flesh out my ideas and fully realize the curriculum I've always had in mind. As a graduating fourth year obtaining my Bachelor of Fine Arts in Musical Theatre, this thesis has personal meaning. This paper has become a program that I will continue to shape with our ever-evolving industry.

Appendix A Curriculum Sessions

Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists

Session One

 This presentation has live captioning.



Agenda

Use links to go to a different page inside your presentation.

Highlight the text you want to hyperlink, click the link symbol that appears above that text, then select from the dropdown the page that you want to connect.

Group Introductions	03	Your Fullest Name	08
Community Guidelines	04	Identity	09
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Introduction

Group Introductions!

Share your name, pronouns if you'd like, major, and hometown

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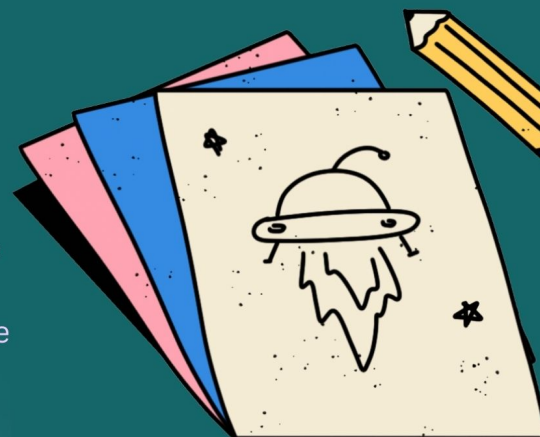
Community Guidelines

Discussion with others about what you need to be successful in this space!

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Back-To-Back Drawing

In this exercise, choose a partner you'd like to work with. Sit back to back. Let one person use the blank pad and pencil while the other has a picture with a shape. The person with the picture has to instruct the one with the pad what to draw. We'll do 3 rounds!



Let's Start Assessing

Let's discuss these two terms

**Social
Justice**

Activism

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Definition from a few different organizations

Remember that definitions can be specific to your understanding of it

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United Nations

Social justice may be a broad understanding as the fair and compassionate distributions of the fruits of economic growth

National Association of Social Workers

"Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need."

Center for Economic and Social Justice

"Social justice encompasses economic justice. Social justice is the virtue which guides us in creating those organized human interactions we call institutions. In turn, social institutions, when justly organized, provide us with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others."

 Sprig & Sky



Your Fullest Name

.Write out your fullest name and tell your story. On the back of the piece of paper write the top three identities you feel closest to. The facilitator encourages participants to go around the circle to share any meanings, significance, culture, significant ancestors and the top three identities they hold dearest. Everyone will have a chance to share and be heard by the group.

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The importance of identity

Think of your own overall identity (who you are as a person) as a bowl of soup... Your identity is made up of different "ingredients": race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability status, socioeconomic status, geographic location, education, family structure, hobbies, beliefs, career, experiences, etc. There are times where you will share the same "ingredients" as others, and there will be times you will have completely different "ingredients." No one will ever have the same exact "soup" as you. This is because all the components of your authentic self (your "ingredients"), interact together within an oppressive system that influences/cultivates your lived experience. A white, cisgender woman will have a very different lived experience than a Black*, trans woman; while both may share similar experiences/understandings of oppressive systems as women there are many experiences that each woman will not share based on additional oppression a Black, trans woman will experience. Regardless, both lived experiences are valid and true.

Equality vs. Equity

Once the project begins to move forward, log the development of each phase.



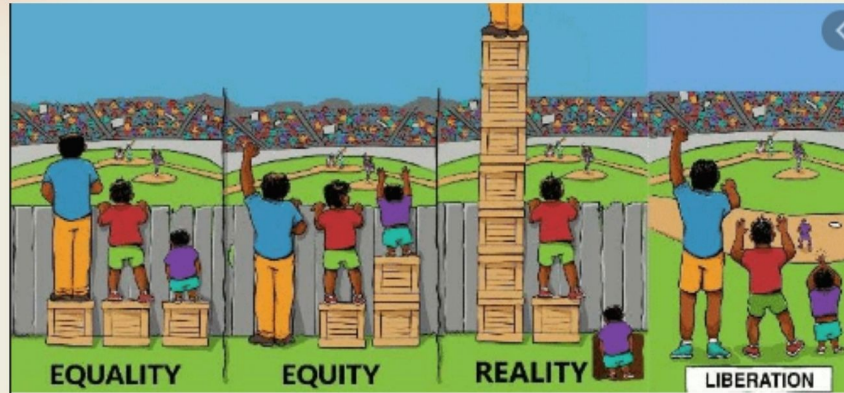
Equality

What is equality to you?

Equity

What is equity to you?.

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Takeaways from Today

Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists

Session Two



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Agenda

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We're Not Going Back Summary and Discussion	06

Current Needs 2023-2024	08
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Takeaways	10

Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Let's refer to the article written by Peggy McIntosh



Community Guidelines

Here's our community guidelines for review!

Speaking from the "I"

Don't take constructive criticism as an attack on your personally

Disagree with the statement, not the person

Ability to prime the space when needed

Intent vs. impact: confront someone if something bothers you

Safe Space Rules: what is said here stays here, what is learned can be shared

Remember that we are all learning together

Leaving biases at the zoom door

Respecting people's pronouns and referring to them as such pronouns

Listening and respecting the views of others in the group

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Musical Theatre History Presentations

We're Not Going Back Summary and Discussion

Let's discuss!

- The article was written in 2021. What do you think has stayed stagnant since that time?
- “The real result of George Floyd's murder, for many white people I know and love in this industry, was an eye-opening,” What was something you learned during this era of theatre?
- What is the Broadway League? Why did We See You WAT call their problems to attention?
- How does producing on Broadway work? Do you have a guess as to why there aren't many producers of color?
- What are needs of theatre artists that you found in this article? Do you have any ideas on solutions to them?
- Do you think there has been change since the article came out?

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Break!

Current Needs for the 2023-2024 Season

Let's discuss!

- **Accessibility**
 - What does accessibility look like in theatre today?
 - What are differently-abled theatre artists asking for?
- **Intimacy Direction**
 - Why is intimacy direction important?
 - Is intimacy direction a constant in our industry?
- **Anti-Racist Theatre**
 - We'll be talking about this one with Nicole Brewer today!

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Introducing Nicole Brewer



NICOLE BREWER is a passionate advocate for anti-racist theatre. She has spent the last twelve years refining and practicing an inclusive method of theatre training and practices which she calls Conscientious Theatre Training (CTT). She has authored four articles about the need for the theatre industry to shift from racist and oppressive models to anti-racist and anti-oppressive. Why Equity Diversity and Inclusion Are Obsolete was reported by American Theatre as one of their top ten most-read stories of 2019.

Nicole is invited all over the US to teach and speak about CTT and facilitate anti-racist theatre (ART) workshops. She's also facilitated ART workshops in the UK providing workshops for The Globe and Cambridge University.

Takeaways from today!

Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists

Session Three

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Agenda

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High, Low, Buffalo

03

Review Our Community Guidelines

04

Nicole Brewer Recap

05

Implicit Biases

06

Calling Out Vs Calling In

08

Accessibility In Theatre Panel

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Takeaways

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High, Low, Buffalo

Tell us a high, low, and something you're looking forward to



Community Guidelines

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Nicole Brewer Recap



- Do you have any key takeaways from what you learned from Nicole Brewer?
- Has your idea of anti-racist theatre changed? Why or why not?
- Do you think our industry creates/supports anti-racist theatre? Why or why not?
- How can you ensure that the theatre you support is anti-racist?

What are
Implicit Biases?

Examples of Implicit Bias

Let's discuss these examples

The Halo Effect

- People who think highly of an individual in a certain way are likely to think highly of them in several other ways

Preferring Certain Names

- One study found that candidates with foreign-sounding names were 28% less likely to be called into an interview than candidates with "Anglo" sounding names

Gender Bias

- At the office, an assertive woman might be perceived as "aggressive" while a man with the same attributes might be described as "confident."

Similarity Bias

- Companies often prefer hiring candidates who've worked at specific companies or schools.

Confirmation Bias

- once we make a decision or opinion about something, we tend to look for information that confirms our beliefs and overlook information that goes against them.

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Calling Out

Wow. Nope. Ouch. I need to stop you right there.

I need to push back against that. I disagree don't see it that way

Okay, I am having a strong reaction to that and I need to let you know why.

It sounded like you just said _____. Is that really what you meant?

I feel obligated as your peer/colleague/co-worker/friend/supervisor to tell you that your comment wasn't okay.

You may or may not realize this, but you're talking about me/my story/my identity markers.

I need to leave the room if the conversation is going to continue down this road.

It sounds like you're making some assumptions that we need to unpack a bit.

That word/comment is really triggering and offensive. Be mindful and pick a different word.

Calling In

I'm curious. What was your intention when you said that?

Okay, I am having a strong reaction to that and I need to let you know why.

Why do you think that is the case? Why do you believe that to be true?

Why do you think others have/haven't moved in that direction?

What sort of impact do you think your decisions/comment/action might have?

How might someone else see this differently? Is it possible that someone might misinterpret your words/actions?

What criteria are you using to measure/assess etc?

What is making you the most fearful, nervous, uncomfortable or worried?

What would other stakeholders say/think/feel?

Discussion

- How can we as artists use what we've learned to inform our work?
- What are some ways that we can remove biases/ blind spots in our decision making?
 - When should we call out vs. call in?

Accessibility In Theatre

Read these two articles we have passed out and answer the following questions:

- What are the needs stated in these articles?
- Do you have a guess as to why these issues exist?
- What can you do as a theatre artist to help change these issues?

Accessibility Panel!



**Takeaways
from today!**

Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists

Session Four

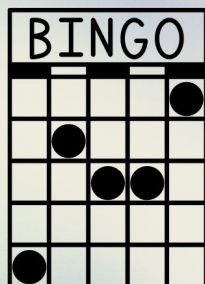
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Agenda

Diversity Bingo	03	Intimacy Directors and Coordinators Training	07
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Diversity Bingo



First, we'll do an ice breaker called Diversity Bingo. Diversity Bingo is one of our favorite group ice breaker games. This game help participants to get information on each other in a fun, competitive way. First, create a bingo card containing a grid of squares with a statement or question in each square that will apply to some members of your group and is in line with the objectives of your class, workshop, or event. After each player gets a bingo card, they mingle around introducing themselves and finding other participants who can sign their cards indicating that a statement applies to him/her. To avoid having people only talk to one or two people and filling up their card, limit the signatures they can give to 1 or 2 per card. When everyone has reached bingo or is super close, you can share something you've learned about each other, yourself, and the experience of this ice breaker activity.

Community Guidelines

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Listening and respecting the views of others in the group

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Accessibility Panel Recap

- Do you have any key takeaways from what you learned from the Accessibility Panel
- What does accessibility in theatre need to be?
- Do you think our industry creates/supports accessible theatre? Why or why not?
- How can you ensure that the theatre you support is accessible?

The Art and Craft of Intimacy Theatre

- What is Intimacy Direction?
- Have you ever come into contact with Intimacy Direction? If so, what has your experience been?
- What are your main takeaways from this article? Is there any part of Intimacy Direction that stuck with you?
- Any other thoughts?

Intimacy Directors and Coordinators Training


Intimacy Training Recap

- Do you have any key takeaways from what you learned from IDC?
- Why do you think we need Intimacy Directors?
- How can you bring this training into your rehearsals/performances?

**Takeaways
from today!**

Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists

Session Five

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Agenda

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High, Low, Buffalo

Tell us a high, low, and something you're looking forward to this week!



Community Guidelines

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Final Presentations

Quick Survey!

Please fill out this survey that was emailed to you!

**Takeaways
from today!**

Art Advocacy for Theatre Artists Final Survey

This will be an anonymous survey to get your opinions about the curriculum!

*** Required**

1. What are the major skills you took from this curriculum? *

2. How would you rate the time frame of each session? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Helpful

3. How would you rate the speakers of the session? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

4. How would you rate the final project? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very helpful

5. What was your favorite topic to learn about? Why? *

6. Did you enjoy the delivery of this curriculum? Why or why not? *

7. If you could take this course again, would you change anything? *

8. Is there anything else we should know? *

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Education

B.F.A., Musical Theatre, 2023, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA

Honors and Awards

The Valley Family Award

Fainor Family Award for the Arts in Musical Theatre

Professional Experience

Show	Role	Location
<i>R+H's Cinderella</i>	Ella	Eleanor Roosevelt
<i>Brigadoon</i>	Kate, Dance Capt.	PSU Centre Stage
<i>Hunchback of Notre Dame</i>	Esmerelda	Talent Machine Company
<i>The Wild Party</i>	Nadine	PSU Centre Stage
<i>A Chorus Line</i>	Judy	PSU Centre Stage
<i>Monty Python's Spamalot</i>	Ensemble	PSU Centre Stage
<i>Sweet Charity</i>	Carmen	Talent Machine Company