

Social Change from the Mainstream

Combining Process Work and
Theatre For White People Who Care
Deeply About Racial Justice

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by Lolo Haha

Process Work Institute, Portland, Oregon

Abstract

This essay describes the development of and implementation of a project which used a mix of social justice theatre (Theatre for Living/Theatre of the Oppressed) and Process Work to explore the potential for creating compelling social justice drama that would help white people grow in their relationship to, and engagement with, racial justice work. The author facilitated a series of workshops that culminated in the development of three short scenes that brought attention to some of the core struggles white people face when engaged with racial justice issues. These scenes were then performed in a 'Forum Theatre' format, where audience members were invited to interrupt the scene, replace one of the characters, and try an intervention to change the unfolding of events. This paper shares the intentions and philosophy behind this project, a thorough look at the methods used and struggles faced throughout the project's development process, and core learnings from the project's implementation. This paper would be of interest to social activists, change facilitators, theatre-makers, and social psychologists, amongst others.

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“What drives white anger at the core are traumas from their family of origin, in the literal sense of childhood, and the cultural sense of ancestry. Racism happens because white people, often unconsciously, misdirect and inflict their emotions from the past on to [people of color] by using their position of power.”

Tada Hozumi, 2017

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Introduction

A bit of background

Over the last twelve years, I've dedicated my life to social change work in various forms: as an organizer of city-wide social issue campaigns with churches and labor unions, a grassroots housing justice organizer and advocate, a youth worker, a race dialogue facilitator, a Process Work workshop facilitator, and more. Throughout all of these experiences, I've had the opportunity to build relationships across race, gender, class, ability, religion, nationality, and more. However, in building these relationships and deepening in the work, I've also had to learn a great deal about my own identity as a straight, white, cisgendered, owning class, able-bodied, American-born man engaged in the work of social justice. I've seen first-hand the incredibly complex nuances of power that show up within interpersonal dynamics between me and those from more marginalized identities, and how often I have been oblivious to them.

In noticing and confronting these power dynamics from all of my mainstream/dominant/oppressor identities, I have also encountered countless moments of difficulty and struggle that I never expected when first engaging in the work. Naturally, sometimes I struggled when learning to understand perspectives that were foreign to me because of my various identities. The most significant and consistent struggle I encountered, however, was being regularly overcome by feelings of indignation, defensiveness, shame, and frozenness.

As these reactions continued to show up for me, I became deeply self-critical. I had learned that those in a dominant/oppressor position often reply to calls for accountability when harms occur with these reactions. Though I *knew* and *understood* that these dynamics were typical responses from dominant/oppressor culture, I wondered why, if I knew this and cared so deeply about the work, was I *still* reacting this way? Was there something wrong with me? Had I not done enough work on myself? No matter how hard I tried, it seemed that these responses and reactions continued to show up over and over again. I had been going to therapy for years, had been training in a conflict facilitation training for several years, and had been engaged in this work for over a decade — how was it possible that I was still having these reactions inside of me after all of these years?

With these questions in mind, this project and the path leading up to it became a personal, as well as a collective, study of the challenges and complexities within social change work as a person who comes from an oppressor/dominant identity. In effect, I sought to begin a deeper study of the nuanced inner and outer change process within those coming from an oppressor/dominant identity that believe in transforming systemic oppression; and what challenges and opportunities for change exist in this deeper work of accountability and reconciliation.

Project overview

Project topic, summary, and guiding question

This project explored the potential of using a mix of interactive/social justice theatre methods and Process Work to create compelling social justice drama that would help white

people grow in their relationship to, and engagement with, racial justice work. To that end, I facilitated a workshop series that culminated in the development of three short scenes that aimed to bring forward some of the core struggles white people face when engaged with racial justice issues. These scenes were then performed in a 'Forum Theatre' format, where audience members would interrupt the scene, replace one of the characters, and try an intervention to change the unfolding of events. In response, the other players in the scene would improvise in character, and then I would facilitate a small dialogue with the audience member and players afterwards, gleaning key learnings and core themes. Over two nights of these shows, we hosted over 100 attendees and facilitated about 17 interventions in total.

The guiding questions that informed the creation of this project were: *Can a mix of Theatre of the Oppressed/Theatre for Living and Process Work be used to help white people to identify the core edges we face when engaging in racial justice work? and Can this sort of process help to unfold these edges toward being more effective change agents in the mainstream role, all while not burdening people of color (POC)?* At its core, this project also asked: *How can one make compelling social justice drama that is deeply democratic¹, invites dialogue, and brings about inner transformation for those involved?*

Why focus on racial justice?

Over the last several years, racial justice movements have increasingly centered the ways that white people, even well-trained and/or well-intentioned white people, unconsciously enact racism in small and large behaviors, and how this continues to be a

¹ See a more thorough definition of deep democracy in *Process Work Concepts* in the *Core Concepts and Methods* section.

source of division and systemic impact in a post Civil Rights Act era. From my own personal experiences of personally causing or witnessing other well-meaning and progressive white people cause harm in ways that were often unconscious and intimately tied to personal histories of trauma as well as internalized whiteness, I have come to agree with Robin DiAngelo that “white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color” (2018, p. 5). For me, this doesn’t make an enemy out of white people. Rather, it emphasizes the need to support those white people who care deeply about racial justice to gain a deeper set of skills and awareness that mainstream racial justice training doesn’t seem to provide. In my own personal experience, I’ve seen how the mainstream approach to training white people around issues of racial justice has led to a greater awareness of, and ability to speak to, racial issues amongst progressive whites. However, I’ve also witnessed first-hand that many of the progressive whites who attend these trainings, or hold these values, often cause harm when leaving the cognitive framing of these issues, through defensiveness (i.e. wanting to be seen as ‘good’ and not ‘racist’) or frozenness (i.e. not being able to actually hold space for reconciliation when being called out for unintended harms).

With this project, I dreamed of making more space for white people get support around these and other challenges within the path of self-transformation implicit in the work of racial justice for white people. I believe that decolonizing our minds and bodies is a long, arduous, and painful process; while it ultimately leads to collective liberation, it is a bumpy road along the way, especially for those who have been born and raised in the West with white culture as their main training. This cultural unlearning, the unintended harms caused, and the occasional social ostracization/loneliness on the path of decolonization and

relationship-building across racial lines is a major undertaking, and I seek to find ways to offer loving support to white people along the way, while also maintaining a firm directiveness to go over the edges of our known reality into one that is less known, but ultimately more liberatory.

Approach and structure

The approach for this project contained two parts: a workshop series and two nights of interactive theatre events. For the workshop series, I worked with 9 individuals over the course of five full-day workshops and two 4-hour rehearsals that culminated in two nights of the interactive theatre event. All but one participant (who had to leave the process just before the last workshop due to personal life demands) continued through the series, with each participant performing in one of three scenes devised through the workshops.

The approach within the workshops used a mix of theatre exercises and Process Work tools in order to: 1) create a strong container within the group, 2) begin to uncover deeper truths about struggles we face as white people engaged in racial justice work, and 3) craft 'activating scenes'² that audiences would engage with in public performances. To design these workshops, I pulled from a mix of inspirations and mentors. I pulled directly from exercises and experiences in both *Theatre of the Oppressed* workshops with TOPLAB NYC³ and in David Diamond's *Theatre for Living*⁴ workshops. I also gathered exercises and possible sequences from books by *Theatre of the Oppressed*-inspired practitioners, specifically *Theatre*

² According to Michael Rohd (1998), an activating scene, "rather than soothe the audience with a satisfying resolution, *demands* the audience's help in figuring out WHAT TO DO!" (102).

³ www.toplab.org

⁴ <http://theatreforliving.com>

for *Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual* by Michael Rohd (1998) and from *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community-based Dialogue* by David Diamond (2007). I also received significant support in processing the experiences of the workshops through personal conversations with *Theatre of the Oppressed* facilitator Marc Weinblatt of the *Mandala Center for Change*⁵ and *Theatre for Living* facilitator David Diamond.

Because this project would be led by me, a white cisgendered man, and be focused on and developed by white people, I also hired two *people of color (POC)* consultants who provided oversight on the whole process and helped me remain accountable to the deeper vision of having this project truly be in service of racial justice. I met with each of these consultants once soon after beginning the workshop series, and once after the show was complete. I paid out-of-pocket for these consultation sessions and also for these consultants to attend the show so they could experience the work and offer direct feedback on it. I chose these consultants due to their experience and location within racial justice work, both as POC as well as well-known trainers and facilitators in the Portland area. One of the consultants hired was a *Theatre of the Oppressed* practitioner and so felt very fitting for the role, and the other was a major community leader in racial justice work who also came to the work with a popular education lens, and so felt equally important to bring on-board for the process.

For more information on the details of how I facilitated the workshops and performances, see the sections *The Workshops* and *The Performances*.

⁵ <http://www.mandalaforchange.com/>

Hopeful contributions to the field

What called me most deeply to Process Work was its emphasis on deep democracy; on seeing the value, depth, and importance of all experiences as a means for working with the whole. I hope that my learnings through this project might offer a way forward in working with social issues that finds a balance between a more activist approach and a deeply democratic approach; a method that invites a deepening of awareness for all, yet also a firm hand in supporting all to move toward a more just world.

I also believe that in the Process Work world, there is a continued need to deepen our contribution to the work of racial justice both in North America as well as internationally. At the Process Work Institute in Portland, Oregon, there are no black students or faculty; the most common non-white identities are Asian-Americans or people from East Asia. While this is slowly changing, race is a central issue that continues to bring itself into our work at the Institute. Through this project I hope to offer a voice seeking more attention to racial justice issues in the Process Work community, both locally and internationally. Through inviting spaces that encourage white people to process amongst one another, I hope to encourage additional approaches within the Process Work world for white people to work on issues of racial justice while not always asking the POC in our community to hold all the space for our learning and growing.

Perceived limitations of this project, and how I tried to work with them

As a white man engaging in a project focused on racial justice issues, I had to acknowledge all of the limitations in my perspective, understanding, and knowledge of the

depth of these issues from the onset . Throughout this project's development, I faced a lot of inner conflict about whether to move forward with it or not due to these limitations. As I will explain more in the section *The Journey of This Project's Development*, while many of these voices of inner conflict were helpful guides in considering how to move forward, others were voices that I came to realize are common voices that show up within other white people, serving to keep us from engaging in the work of racial justice in the first place.

I also came to this project with awareness of my own personal work to do, both as a white person, but also as someone who has my own personal trauma history that has impacted the way I show up when engaging in racial justice work. I've learned that my personal process of healing combined with internalized white culture, has gotten in the way countless times of my ability to listen, empathize, and reconsider my position or emotional state when being asked to pull myself back, to deeply question my position, or to own impact for unintentional harms. Knowing that I still had these processes I was working on, I regularly doubted my capacity and legitimacy as the one to host a project of this type; I worried that my personal trauma and internalized white supremacy would encourage a direction in the work that would not only be ineffective at moving other white people toward a deeper commitment to racial justice, but would cause more harm to POC.

In response to these limitations, I committed to centering these issues and questions in my personal therapy work as well as in my advisor and supervision sessions. I also hired two POC consultants to offer feedback throughout the process through 1-1 consultation sessions as well as attendance at the shows to offer feedback on their impact and efficacy.

While these were important efforts to attempt to remain as self-aware as possible, there was at no point an expectation that the limitations of my perspective would be transformed before the project's completion. In *Core Learnings and Next Steps*, I share a bit about the learnings that came from these limitations and how I will do this project differently in future iterations, having experienced the ways these limitations impacted the project's outcomes.

Who should read this manuscript?

When I began my studies at the Process Work Institute, I tore through the manuscripts of past final projects, seeking a Process Work project where someone who, like me, was an artist/activist exploring ways of doing social change work with an artful lens. While I found several examples of people using Process Work to make solo shows with a social justice focus, or to create art with a social activist orientation, I was unsuccessful at finding examples of people specifically looking to use group work with a Process Work lens to create compelling social justice drama, or to work with interactive theatre, such as that found in *Theatre of the Oppressed* or *Theatre for Living*. Additionally, very few of the final project manuscripts I read centered dynamics between oppressor and oppressed or mainstream and marginal roles, and even fewer with a focus on the experience of and work with the oppressor/mainstream role. With this project, I hope to fill that gap.

You may enjoy reading this manuscript if you identify as someone who dreams big about social change, while also seeing how social change is intimately tied to your own personal change process; as an artist, creative, or activist that is curious about ways of

working with people with high rank toward social transformation; as someone called to the magical power of group-based change work; as a Process Worker looking to learn more about ways theatre and theatrical exercises can be used to work on larger cultural edges, both for public group process as well as within small group processes; or as someone interested in learning more about an experimental social change project that combined interactive theatre and Process Work.

Chapter overview

The first section of this paper, *Core Concepts and Methods*, shares more about the methods used and some core concepts that may be useful when reading this paper. First, it looks at some key Process Work concepts that will be of use when reading this paper. It explores the history of *Theatre of the Oppressed* and several of the forms from it that formed a core foundation of the practices that informed this project. It also looks at the history and practice of a later evolved form of *Theatre of the Oppressed* called *Theatre for Living*, which played an essential role in the practices used in both the workshops and performances.

The following section, *The Journey of This Project's Development*, specifically seeks to chronicle some of the path I took to arrive at this form of the project, and to share a bit about some of the core edges and challenges I faced along the way, and how the work on these edges also related to the landing on this particular form of the project. This section may be especially of interest to those who are looking to take on a project that is a very risky undertaking for them, or for those who are looking to work on social justice issues from a mainstream/oppressor identity.

The sections that follow, *The Workshops* and *The Performances*, focus on the actual project itself, and how it looked in practice. *The Workshops* explores the different methods I used within the workshops to ultimately develop the scenes that were performed and interacted with by audience members. *The Performances* offers summaries of each scene performed, the core themes intended from each, as well as some examples of audience interventions and the ways I facilitated those interventions. Both sections also speak to the Process Work methods and tools that I used in both the workshops and performances that made the work unique.

The final section, *Core Learnings and Next Steps*, shares a summary of core learnings throughout the process and how these learnings might inform future work of this nature. It specifically explores challenges I faced in developing and facilitating the work, and how I will do it differently in future iterations. This section may be useful for those looking to do a project of this type looking to learn some core takeaways from my journey with this process.

Core Concepts and Methods

Throughout this paper, I employ several concepts from Process Work, Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre for Living, and race studies to explain the nature of the project and the considerations that went into its development. This section aims to offer a brief explanation of these concepts in such a way that the paper can be easy to read for those for whom these

concepts are new, as well as deepen the understanding of these concepts for those already familiar with them.

Process Work Concepts

This project was developed as a part of my final project at the end of four intensive years of training at the Process Work Institute. My Process Work training has brought about incredible changes in my life that have profoundly expanded my awareness, my self-confidence, and my love for the mystery of reality. It has also offered me a strong set of skills for working with individuals, couples, groups, and myself in moments of pleasure and pain, conflict and peace, and all types of change processes. It has formed an essential foundation of this project and continues to bring new depths of awareness to me to this day.

In this section, I'll share some of the core concepts and principles within Process Work that have strongly informed this project. These concepts specifically are ones that I'll not only name as useful in the development of the project, but also as concepts that will help the reader to better understand my analysis of the outcomes of this project and hopes for future iterations.

Edges

A core concept that will be employed throughout this paper is the concept of the *edge*. In Process Work, the edge is the system of values, beliefs, and previous experiences that hold a boundary between our everyday selves and the more unknown aspects of our identity

(Diamond & Spark, 2004). Throughout our day-to-day lives, we have typical ways of behaving that help us to feel safe, comfortable, and at ease. When we are asked to connect to parts of ourselves that are less known, we suddenly have experiences of “discomfort, nervousness, or excitement” that often lead us to do whatever we can to stay within our known reality (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 20). This experience of unease can be explained with the concept of the edge. When beginning to touch an unknown part of ourselves, we feel a discomfort that indicates we have reached the edge of our identity. In response to this discomfort, we often fight or defend ourselves to maintain our everyday identity.

As an example, many groups “have edges against expressing personal feelings in public,” and there is a clear sense of an unspoken, or “tacit group agreement that personal feelings do not belong in the group” (Mindell, 1992, p. 34). This tacit group agreement would be a part of the *edge* system for that group. If someone is in a group that *marginalizes*, or has an edge against, expressing personal feelings in public, they are likely to marginalize their own emotions. If a group member suddenly has something very emotional happen to them, i.e. a family member passing away, it is rare that this person will give themselves permission to share their personal feelings in the group. They may feel comfortable speaking to someone privately, but rarely will they give themselves permission to express whatever true feelings may be present in the group. On the contrary, if they were to express their emotions openly in the group, group members may suddenly become uncomfortable and seek to change the subject, or fix the person with strong emotions, as sharing emotions publically would be crossing the group edge, or tacit agreement to not share personal emotions publically.

As I worked on this project, I reached many different edges both personally and within the workshop group that led to both exciting and disappointing results. At times I was able to work with these edges in such a way that I was either able to appreciate the edge and grow my awareness of it, and sometimes in such a way that I could actually cross the edge into unknown experience. In the moments where I was able to cross the edge, exciting and challenging experiences ensued. In other moments where I was unable to gain awareness of my or the group's edges, the work remained in a place of discomfort and felt somewhat shallow. I share more about the experiences of crossing the edge personally and in the group in "Process Work Methods Used" in the chapter *The Workshops*. Experiences where I was unable to notice and work with the edge are explored in *Core Learnings and Next Steps*.

Deep Democracy

A core philosophy that underpinned my calling to this project was the concept of *deep democracy*, which "suggests that all voices, states of awareness, and frameworks of reality are important" ("Deep Democracy, Its Impact and Evolution," n.d.). Deep democracy aims to move beyond democracy where a majority rules, and a marginal role is always reinforced, to a deeper democracy where one holds "awareness of the diversity of people, roles, and feelings, and a guesthouse attitude is toward whatever comes to the door of one's attention" (Arnold Mindell, 2002, p. vii). In this, an acknowledgment of the importance of all parts as indicators of what is truly happening in the moment is most valued.

In many of my experiences in social change work, as mentioned previously in this paper, I've found myself struggling with experiences of defensiveness, indignation,

frozenness, or fear to act. In the midst of these social movement cultures, I have experienced these responses as invalid or unwelcome and so I either marginalized them myself, or when I brought them forward, was attacked and criticized for them. As I've deepened in my awareness in the work of social justice, I've learned to understand these reactions as important and valid — that when I'm having these experiences as a white, straight, cisgendered man in the room that I may be, in the moment, showing something more unknown for the group where they may be having impact on that role in a way that they are unaware of. Asking social movement spaces to grow into more sensitivity about this reaction is to me both important and terrifying, knowing the important response arising in the other side when asked to make space for these types of reactions. While I've struggled with what feels like a strong resistance to the other side, from a deeply democratic viewpoint, even the one-sidedness that I characterize as central to social movements is important and shows an essential part of the larger process that must be understood to support its evolution and unfolding.

In making a project that seeks to center the experience of white people, deep democracy has proved essential in validating this pursuit. It has offered the inspiration to believe that centralizing this experience might help the whole system to know itself better, and thus to identify the emergent processes around issues of racial justice.

Phases

A major aspect of my calling to Process Work's method of group work has been through experiencing the profound connection that one can reach through deep conflict

work. In both facilitated group processes and relationship work, I've witnessed the transformative power inside moments where previously polarized positions see one another's truth in a deep way. In these moments, I have felt almost timeless, and have connected a semi-transcendent state that I identify as connected to ancestral or generational healing.

Arnold Mindell, in his book *Conflict: Phases, Forums, and Solutions*, proposes a system of phases of conflict that aim to help change facilitators determine which methods for working with an organization, group, or couple will work best. He identifies four main phases of conflict:

Phase 1. Let's enjoy! Here personal or relationship atmospheres are characterized by "let's be happy" and not ask ourselves to deal with any tensions.

Phase 2. Tension or conflict. We can't avoid noticing bad moods, tension, and conflict. Let's run or fight!

Phase 3. Role switching. Sometimes it is possible to "role switch" and dream into the "other side" of an issue or relationship, the side that is bothering us. In this phase, as in dreams, we can imagine and sometimes even feel into the people or things that are bothering us.

Phase 4. Detachment, sensing how the universe moves you. Inevitably, through relaxation, some detachment often occurs. At such times, our minds open up and we become more accepting of life. Phase 4 is a *phase*, however, which means that it too will change, and we move to another phase, often phase 1, hoping to avoid

problems—which then eventually evolves once again into the tension of phase 2 and/or other phases (2017, p. 5).

The experiences I speak of, of being moved into a transcendent state when resolution or meeting of previously opposing sides occurs, is what I would consider connecting into a Phase 3 or Phase 4 state of consciousness.

Within social justice movements, I would argue that one spends much of their time in a Phase 2 state. We identify the issue that we are against, and we identify the others that are in the way of the freedom we seek. We seek change and are against the current state of things. Of course, Phase 2 is essential when speaking to power, and in naming issues that are causing harm in the world, as well as to clarify the different and sometimes polarized points of view in the world. However, as someone who cares about having a deeper spiritual path in the midst of social change work, I've also yearned to bring more of a Phase 3 state into social justice movement spaces. I've dreamed of ways that social justice movement groups can oscillate more regularly between Phase 2 and Phase 3, while not judging one as better than the other.

Yet, Phase 3 is across the edge for social movements. There is a strong need inside of social movement spaces to see the problem as part of the system, the other, the not-me. And so there is a cultural edge within social justice movements that prevents us from seeing how *we are* the oppressor *as well as* the oppressed. From my experiences inside of social movements, I have witnessed first-hand how both my reactions as well as the reactions to me or others expressing challenging viewpoints, have mirrored energies of the oppressive nature of the outside world — how the 'other' that we are fighting against is actually living

inside of the room with us in our group dynamics. As Arnold Mindell mentions in his book *Sitting In the Fire*, “even while we are fighting revolutions to make world change, we may simultaneously put others down and think we are just telling the truth. This is why social activists, while fighting against oppression, are often bogged down by infighting in their own communities around issues of power and rank” (1995, p. 58).

In yearning for a more Phase 3 orientation, one that seeks to see sides connecting and seeing one another more fully, I’ve recognized that I am, in effect, Phase 2 *against* Phase 2, or *against againstness*. As I’ve deepened in my work around social issues, I’ve grown to recognize just how important a Phase 2 state, one that sees the other as the problem, can be in social change movements, while also appreciating a desire for also more spaces that are Phase 3, that allow for a deeper mutual appreciation and acknowledgment of each side’s truth and reality. As I work to deepen my capacity to hold the diversity of truths in the room, I’ve also needed to grow to understand that, as a facilitator, I have a sometimes unconscious bias toward a Phase 3 orientation that seeks more harmony or peace. Sometimes this is needed and important, yet also it can be yet a replication of the polarity that brings about Phase 2, or a calling out of the issue, amongst those who have been marginalized.

Metaskills

Another central concept from Process Work that has informed my approach in this project and in my work in the world in general is the concept of *metaskills*. According to Amy Mindell, in her book *Metaskills: The Spiritual Art of Therapy* (2003), a metaskill is the “feeling background to [facilitation] work which implicitly or explicitly influences the quality, tone and

atmosphere of human interactions” (p. 24). In effect, metaskills are the feeling attitudes and beliefs that inform *how* a facilitative intervention is felt and experienced.

This may make a bit more sense through an explanation of this concept through a thought experiment:

Imagine for a moment two people who use a hammer. One of these people uses a lot of force when pounding a nail. The other uses a more gentle and cautious approach. The tool is the same, but the way of using the tool is very different and mirrors something about the individual’s beliefs about hammering and the task at hand. Even though both people perform the same task – pounding a nail in the wall – the whole flavor and ambiance of this hammering is different. This insight is a first step in distinguishing techniques from the attitudes behind them. (Amy Mindell, 2003, p. 25-26)

Mindell uses this illustration to explain how, while the technique or method being employed may be the same by both people, the feeling attitude inside of their technique is different and this may lead to different outcomes. For example, the person who hammered the nail in with force may drive the nail in so deeply that it would be nearly impossible to remove it, while the person hammering with gentle caution may need to drive the nail in further to have a strong hold. Depending on the context and the need within the task, one of these metaskills may prove more useful for the moment.

In each context, with each task, and with every individual and group, the same technique applied with different metaskills can mean the success or failure of the technique. Sometimes a group may benefit from their facilitator having a strong teacher metaskill as

they offer the group awareness about something, whereas at other times this metaskill may feel condescending and cause the group to rebel against the facilitator. In another context, a group may benefit from a clown metaskill in a moment of severe conflict, where even though the facilitator is using the same facilitation techniques, the group feels the absurdism of the situation through the feeling attitude within the facilitator, while in another context this clown metaskill may be disturbing to the group who feels the facilitator is not taking the group seriously enough.

Throughout this project I questioned how I was using my Process Work skills as such a new facilitator seeking to combine skills from two similar yet distinct paradigms. As I reflected I learned more and more that my metaskills played an essential foundation toward the work in ways that led both to unsatisfying and deeply satisfying results. I'll get into more detail about this as I share more about the project and the Process Work methods used in *The Workshops* and *The Performances*.

Theatre of the Oppressed

For the workshops and performance of this final project, the work of Augusto Boal and his method the *Theatre of the Oppressed* formed an essential foundation. Nearly all of the exercises used, and the central format of the performances came from his work, as well as its evolution through David Diamond's *Theatre for Living* (which I will describe further in the next section). For those unfamiliar with Theatre of the Oppressed and its forms of Image Theatre, Cops-In-The-Head, and Forum Theatre, this section will explain a bit about the history and foundations of these methods.

History

In an interview on Democracy Now, Augusto Boal (2005), the founder of *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO), shared about the history that led to TO's international acclaim and success. Boal was a Brazilian theatre-maker who was deeply inspired by the work of his colleague, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, best known for the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, from which *Theatre of the Oppressed* owes its name. Inspired by Freire's ideas of democratizing education and problem-solving, Boal sought to make theatre that gave the "means of production" of theatre to regular people. With colleagues, Boal initially developed 'newspaper theatre' which was a means by which communities could make theatrical works that were initially in response to newspaper stories, and then in response to their own issues. Despite success with this approach, Boal dreamed of having theatre serve more "as a rehearsal for transformation of reality," and so eventually developed the method for which *Theatre of the Oppressed* is best known: 'Forum Theatre' (described in more detail below). As Forum Theatre gained increasing popularity in the world, Boal went on to develop more and more games and tools for developing theatre within communities, as well as tools for working with internalized oppression called *Rainbow of Desire* and *Cop in the Head* (explained in more detail below)(Boal, 2005). Boal passed away in 2009 but his legacy lives on through countless theatre companies and TO practitioners across the world .

Image Theatre, Cop In The Head, and Forum Theatre

Image Theatre

In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the use of images is central to working nonverbally with core dynamics of struggle around issues of social justice. Images serve as a core building block for inviting a group to begin to explore their shared struggles around a particular oppression not by talking about them, but rather by showing them.

“[A]n image is a frozen tableau, made by a workshop participant using their own and other participants’ bodies. The tableau is like a living photograph of a *moment of struggle* in the participant’s life. Images can also be made by groups of participants working together. Because the image is silent, it is also highly symbolic and can be interpreted in various ways” (Diamond, 2007, p. 93).

Like the common saying ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’, Image Theatre has the incredible power of bringing out a deeper truth around certain dynamics of oppression and power within an issue that typical dialogue can rarely reach.

In a typical Image Theatre process, participants are frozen in an image that they have created, either together, or by one person. Then one animates, or activates, the image by asking each participant in the image first feel into their posture and body shape, notice their body in relationship to the others in the scene, and then to make a decision about who they are in this image that might actually exist in the real world. For example, if they are standing over someone with their hands holding something that could be a gun, they might decide they are a police officer, or a hitman. In most images, participants have been placed into position by someone else, or have developed the image without talking about what they are making; the decision to become a particular real character can help the metaphor of the image become real.

Different TO practitioners use different methods to activate images. As my main inspiration came from my experiences in workshops with *TOPLAB NYC* and *Theatre for Living*, I largely used personal experiences of image activation from these workshops in the workshops I held for this project. During one workshop with *TOPLAB NYC*, we activated images by asking all to make a sound that expresses the strongest emotion living inside of the character in this frozen moment. This sound turns into a word, then that word turns into a phrase – in each of these, all in the image make the sound/say the word together and then individually.

David Diamond, founder of *Theatre for Living*, uses many powerful methods for activating images. One such method is the *internal monologue*. While still frozen in the image, the facilitator asks the participants to all speak aloud at the same time, sharing an internal monologue of the thoughts, feelings, desires of the character in which they find themselves in this image. After they've shared aloud for 20-30 seconds, the facilitator then taps each person on the shoulder and asks them to share one phrase from their character's experience beginning with the words 'I want...' (Diamond, 2007). Another method is asking each to share their *secret thought*, "the thing [their] character is really thinking deep inside right now but would never actually say out loud in the situation" (Diamond, 2007, p. 103). I used all of these and more inside the workshop development process.

Cop in the head

During the third workshop day, we did a Theatre of the Oppressed exercise called *Cop in the Head* which seeks to look at the internal voices that we have internalized from

others that get in the way of us doing something that we may know is best for us, or is something that we may want to do. Augusto Boal, in his paper *The Cop in the Head: Three Hypotheses* (1990), explains that while Theatre of the Oppressed often seeks to find ways to support the oppressed role to figure out ways to move past external oppressions, such as staging a strike, “[t]here are many people who dare not participate in a strike or other political actions. Why? Because they have cops in their heads. They have internalized their oppressions” (p. 35). Boal conceived of this method as a way of working with these internalized oppressions, or ‘cops’, as a means for reaching the psychological through the theatrical. This process is explained in more detail in *Appendix B: Workshop series curriculum* for Day 3.

Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is “a form of participatory theatre” that is “an opportunity for creative, community-based dialogue” where the “theatre is created and performed by community members who are living the issues under investigation” (Diamond, 2007, p. 39). In Forum Theatre, a scene or short play is shown that showcases the issue being explored. This scene is typically a ‘failure’ where audience members are left wanting something different to happen; in the scene, a common problematic social dynamic is replicated, and is intentionally left unresolved.

In the *Theatre of the Oppressed* the [scene] is then run again, with the audience members able to freeze the action at any point where they see an incident of oppression. An audience member yells “Stop!”, comes into the playing area, replaces

the oppressed character and tries out her idea. The other actors respond in character.

This is called an *intervention*. (Diamond, 2007, p. 39)

Forum Theatre poses problems without a solution, inviting the audience to explore possible ways of challenging this oppression, rather than providing answers. It honors and asks for the wisdom of the collective to find a solution, or way of working with this issue. This can bring up solutions and possible ways of working that no one could have ever dreamed of alone, or helps us understand what is living inside of the different characters that may be getting in the way of social justice.

In the final performances during this project, we showed three different scenes (that are described in the section *The Performances*) and did Forum Theatre with each of the scenes in order to collectively problem solve the issues presented within them.

Theatre of the Oppressed

A core philosophical underpinning of *Theatre of the Oppressed* is its focus on exploring possible solutions for the *oppressed* to challenge the oppression and oppressors that they face in their lives. In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal clarifies this, saying that “[f]or a Forum Theatre showing to qualify as true *Theatre of the Oppressed*,” only audience members “who are victims of the same oppression as the character (by identity or by analogy) can replace the oppressed protagonist to find new approaches or new forms of liberation” (1992, p. 240). Boal further clarified this distinction by also rarely allowing individuals to replace the ‘oppressor’ role (1992).

In most *Theatre of the Oppressed* pieces I've personally witnessed, this is still followed. Most often at the beginning of a Forum Theatre piece, a clear distinction is made between the oppressor and the oppressed characters, and audience members are invited to replace the oppressed character, not the oppressor character. Others (Leeder, personal communication, June 26, 2019) only allow for those in the audience to replace a bystander role, unless they can personally identify with the experience of the oppressed character. Additionally, while I have heard that Boal did work to make the oppressors complex characters in the Forum Theatre plays he developed, in most contemporary Forum Theatre I've witnessed, the 'oppressor' is typically a pretty simplistic character; at its worst, I've found the oppressor roles to be nothing more than a caricatured villain. Coming from my Process Work training, and caring about deep dramatic conflict, I had always struggled with this aspect of *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

Theatre for Living

I felt my strongest calling to creating social justice theatre after attending a training with David Diamond's *Theatre for Living* in 2017. We engaged in games (many of which were originally developed by Augusto Boal), dialogue, and play-making over the course of a week. Through the training, my love for the craft was completely renewed, and I felt a new drive to bring this work into the world. Diamond brought an approach to the work that focused on creating excellent theatre and also took a deeply democratic approach to the different characters in the scenes by not having clear oppressor/oppressed roles, but making each more human.

I was fortunate enough to form a friendship with David, and in doing so was able to receive one-on-one support from him while developing and working on this project. His work deeply influenced how I designed the workshop series, how I worked with the players to make the final scenes, and how I facilitated interventions from audience members during the shows. The ways that he has evolved *Theatre of the Oppressed* feels much more in alignment with my philosophy and ways I'd like to work in the world. I am deeply indebted to David's generous support throughout this process. This section will share a bit about the history of *Theatre for Living* and, most importantly, what distinguishes it from *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

History

In his book, *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community-Based Dialogue* (2007), David Diamond shares the history that led to the founding of *Theatre for Living*, the first workshops that led to Diamond's formation as a *Theatre of the Oppressed* practitioner, and the steps that led to his evolution of the form into what would eventually become its own.

Theatre for Living began as the *Headlines Theatre* in 1981 with the creation of a musical play called *Buy, Buy, Vancouver*, which focused on housing struggles in Vancouver. Diamond was one of the writers, and the success of the show led to the creation of several following pieces, one of which toured nationally. In 1984, the collective that formed *Headlines Theatre* elected to have Diamond run the company, and he became the lead director, running the day-to-day operations of the theatre.

Despite the success of their work, however, Diamond writes how he felt that something was missing (2007, p. 29). While he believed that the theatre "had been very good

at making theatre *for* and *about* people living the issues under scrutiny,” that he still hadn’t discovered how one made “theatre *with* people living the issues” (2007, p. 30). Soon after in 1984, Diamond discovered the work of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal, and it formed a major inspiration that led him to start doing his own TO work back in Vancouver and throughout Alberta and British Columbia.

Over the years, Diamond has worked with hundreds of communities and hosted dozens of long-form stage plays (~30 minutes each) using Forum Theatre. He has worked with diverse groups of all types: from businesses, to nonprofit organizations, to indigenous communities across Northwestern Canada. His most recent Forum Theatre stage play, *šxʷaḡmət* (*home*), focused on reconciliation issues between Canadians and the indigenous communities on the lands called Canada (Theatre for Living, n.d.).

Power Plays

Over the years, Diamond’s experimentation led to the formation of what he calls a *Power Play* process: a 6-day workshop held within a particular community that uses theatre games and exercises to dive deeply into a particular issue facing that community, then culminates in a Forum Theatre performance for the larger community. In developing this form, which originally started as a 5-day process which was then expanded to six days, Diamond sought to develop a dynamic process that could work with a community’s needs and be a space for deep exploration of the issues being investigated, “while still retaining a sense of the steps necessary to get to public theatrical performance at the end of the week” (Diamond, 2007, p. 32).

The Power Play process format hugely influenced my decision with the workshop series. As I explain in the section where I describe the form and format of the workshops, all invited to take part in this process were asked to attend five full-day workshops and two rehearsals, followed by two nights of Forum Theatre performances.

As I worked with the group over the two or so months that the process lasted, I was in regular conversation with Diamond and learned about nuances in how he approaches the group over the several days of the process. He shared how with some groups, he begins developing the final scenes on day 4, while with others he begins developing them on day 5. He shared about how, typically on day 3, he'll either do *Cop In the Head*⁶ or *Rainbow of Desire* (another method from TO for working with internalized oppression within interpersonal dynamics)(D. Diamond, personal communication, April 3, 2019). These tips strongly informed how I went about developing the workshop series.

What makes *Theatre for Living* different than *Theatre of the Oppressed*?

A major distinction between *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO) and *Theatre for Living* (TfL) is how TfL applies a systems theory lens to the oppressor/oppressed dynamic. TfL looks to address the root causes of systemic issues by seeing them through a lens which “recognizes that the binary poles of the oppressor and oppressed are actually part of the same large organism living in some kind of dysfunction.” While TfL sees investigating the experiences of the oppressed roles within a social issue as essential to the work of social transformation, it also “makes space to investigate the fears, desires and motivations of the oppressor – with

⁶ For more information, see *Cop in the head* in the section on *Theatre of the Oppressed*

integrity.” While in some ways this is a social faux-pas, especially within the worlds of social justice, this aspect of the work called me to TfL. TfL justifies this focus on the oppressor’s fears, desires, and motivations by stating clearly that “oppressors of the world do not come from outer space. Living communities grow them. The clear boundaries we like to think exist between oppressor and oppressed are very often not clear” (Diamond, 2007, p. 38).

This core distinction also plays out in how TfL invites audience participation in a Forum Theatre event. While in classical Forum Theatre, audience members may only replace the oppressed character(s) in the scene, in TfL’s version of Forum Theatre, audience members can replace anyone whose struggle they can honestly relate to. By doing so, one actually makes space for the diversity of experiences in the audience, inviting audience members into a theatre experience “in which both the oppressed and the oppressors [that are almost certainly in the audience in some way or another] see themselves on stage as real people and legitimate members of the community, who are engaged in their own complex struggles.” While this doesn’t mean that TfL “condone[s] oppressive actions...[i]t does mean, however, that the plays we create must contain as much of the complexity of real life as possible” (Diamond, 2007, p. 40-41).

As a Process Worker who believes in deep democracy, this approach resonated with me more deeply than the binary approach of TO. While I echo Diamond’s emphasis that it is not right to condone oppressive actions, I believe that by showing a greater degree of curiosity in the lived experiences, fears, and desires of the ‘oppressor’ role, we can learn more deeply about how these systemic issues manifest within individuals’ actions and worldviews and how we might work to transform them. Allowing for this focus on the

oppressor role as well as the oppressed role, I think can help us to explore together how our “living communities grow [oppressors]” and then how we might change our world to grow something else, something more community- and human-oriented (Diamond, 2007, p. 38).

The Journey of This Project’s Development

Core themes throughout the process

As I grappled with what direction to take on this project, a few themes continued to remain central: a fascination with, and desire to make space to engage around, my lived experiences within contemporary social change movements as a straight white cisgendered male from economic means; a desire to make space for people to engage more deeply with those they are in conflict with (whether through differences in political viewpoints or social ranks) and to find a common ground on which to build community; and a curiosity about the potential to accomplish these aims through theatre and/or visual media developed from facilitated dialogue and embodied explorations with groups. Through the journey of this project’s development, I came up with many different possible directions, all of which had different ways they would combine these core themes. Below is a chronology and narrative

account of the path I took to land on this form of the project, and the struggles that showed up along the way.

The various ideas that led to this project

‘Theatre of the Oppressor’ with white men

In the fall of 2017 I began the Advanced Certificate program at the Process Work Institute, with awareness that I would be given the opportunity to complete a final project as a part of the program. As I considered possible project directions, the first strong project idea that I felt called to was the making of a theatre piece that would be devised, or co-developed, with a multiracial group, specifically focused around issues of race. In my mind at the time, I imagined this as a process group around race that used the situations, dynamics, and conflicts that arose within it as material for the writing of a play that would artfully show the complexities living inside interpersonal healing around issues of race. I hypothesized that a piece coming out of experiences from the group would be able to portray qualities of the broader dynamics happening outside the group and how they might be worked with, or at least brought into greater awareness.

However, I was dreaming of doing this project as a white man, and this complicated the choice to host and facilitate a multiracial group. Additionally, I had never done something like this before, so the question of how well I could set up the group to hold the diverse experiences in the room became central. After processing with my advisor and others in my life, I came to believe that this project would be too challenging and potentially harmful for

reasons of my inexperience as well as my identity as a white man. Instead, the suggestion was made to go after something similar, but where the stakes were lower.

I considered a few different options, and eventually decided I would make a devised theatre piece with and about white men. While this felt like a compromise of my bigger vision, I had struggled for the past several years to really manifest any projects related to my dreams because of critical voices inside of me that would shoot down ideas if they didn't feel like they were big and impactful enough. This voice would consistently hold me back, preventing me from being able to go forward with any ideas, so the thought of making a compromise while still working on issues of race and gender, but from the experience of the oppressor / dominant identity felt like a still controversial and difficult project to take on. I was excited about taking on something so controversial and challenging, and with, I thought, such a needed focus. I had never seen media of any sort specifically oriented toward white men that care deeply about gender and racial justice, let alone white men in general. In preparation, I began considering men I would ask to be involved, signed up for another TO training, and applied to a distance mentorship program with Marc Weinblatt of the Mandala Center for Change in Port Townsend, WA that was to begin in the fall of 2018.

Despite all the big plans I had been developing, I also struggled heavily in wanting to stand for the making of a project that would not only center the experiences of white men, but would also seek to treat those experiences with compassion and understanding. In February of 2018, I wrote:

I am in constant struggle with criticisms to [my dream of bringing a Phase 3 approach to social issues], especially as I hold this dream strongly while being in a white cis male

socialized experience. When seeking to stand for my dream of more phase 3 oriented social change, voices come up that doubt my capacity to really know which way to go; the voice that I should actually be following the lead of those most marginalized arises, questioning whether it's legitimate that I hold onto my dream at all. There is truth in this criticism and it deserves space and honoring — yet, I think, paradoxically, by working to connect to phase 4 more, working to connect to my convictions and feelings of truth in terms of my experience, that I'll be able to more effectively hear and open to feedback from these voices. When I begin to feel strength in the conviction toward my vision of bringing phase 3 oriented social change work into the world, both inner and outer critics are quick to bring me back into a phase 2 dynamic that leads me to doubt myself, become defensive, and get into a depressive state. By learning to love myself, to stay more deeply in a phase 4 mentality toward my knowing, while also remaining humble and acknowledging that much of me truly doesn't know and has doubts seems the essential next step in this growing process.

This will be a huge part of the struggle inside my final project over the next year. Making a piece centered on the experience of men is a very controversial and challenging approach to take. In my bigger dreams, I want worldwork on national television for all to see. Yet for now, just discovering whether theater/media making around social justice issues that look into the complexity of a supposedly black/white issue is part of my first steps on this journey. In this journey I know I'll face countless levels of challenge, both internal and external. For now, work on the internal is a major

aspect of where I'll need to focus — believing in and following the truth inside myself as I work on this project will help with all of it.

Through this early phase of the project's development as well as its ultimate implementation, I have continued to struggle with these dynamics. A desire to make space for healing work for the oppressor role has been at the foundation of my calling, yet has been a very controversial voice to hold and believe in.

Dreams of creating a social justice TV show pilot

In the middle of April 2018, I had to complete an assignment called the *Project Topic Shortlist* in which I had to identify three possible topics for my final project and the guiding questions that would inform them. I felt clear that I would move forward with this project as a theatre piece made by white men, yet in coming up with possible research questions, I landed on a set of questions that really caught my attention and piqued my curiosity: *Is it possible to make media (theater, video, etc.) around a polarized social issue that encourages a Phase 3 state in the viewer? How does presenting a group process that reaches temporary resolution around a polarized social issue affect those witnessing the process?*

After arriving at these questions, it became clear that my energy was most excited by heading in this direction. The first form I landed on was making a television show that would be a scripted group process, a form within Process Work that identifies an issue to explore, then enters the conflict by intentionally identifying the polarized views/roles within that issue and inviting people to process those views by speaking from those places and then making it personal. Group process felt like something that the world needed, and I imagined

that by making a television-ready version of group process, I could discover whether media that shows a group reaching a phase 3 state would be able to transform the beliefs and values of the viewer. I met with Jan Dworkin, a faculty member at the Process Work Institute, who I learned had explored the possibility of making a TV show of this nature, and we were jazzed. I started developing methods for working with this idea.

Over the following weeks, however, my vision changed again, and I determined that I would like to explore the same question, but through a more traditional dramatic television show. I worried that a television version of group process would be too niche and only of interest to students of conflict resolution and/or Process Work, and that a more television-style drama would be able to reach people from many walks of life. In June, I brought this change to Jan who, though surprised at the change and unsure how exactly it would work, encouraged me to begin writing vignettes that I could imagine being a part of the pilot for this show.

I was grappling with several different questions around how to make the show work, most notably how to go deep within the different character's experiences without being too process-y and psychological, which I thought would make the show less accessible. In response to this concern, I didn't want there to be a facilitator on the show. To me, a facilitator was an exciting role when available, but felt like it wouldn't be of service to the drama of the show, and I wanted the show to feel real. So in July I came up with a narrative device that I thought could help go deeper inside of the characters' experiences: going inside their head and seeing the drama of their inner voices as a part of the show. To convey this

new idea, I started explaining the show as something like *Inside Out*⁷ for adults grappling with issues of social justice.

As I began trying to write vignettes for the show, however, I came up blank. While I believe that this was, in part, due to my own edges to bringing my voice in and writing in general, another part that I identified at the time was how much I wished to develop and design this process with a group. I returned to my original vision, where I would gather a multiracial group that would meet over a series of sessions where we'd do a mix of dialogue, embodied exploration, and theatre-making in order to develop the seeds for what would be the script for the TV show pilot.

I believed I couldn't do this alone as a white person, and so started seeking out a person of color that would like to develop and co-facilitate this process with me. I reached out to several colleagues of color, some of whom I had already facilitated with before, others who I knew less. Over and over again, however, I received the feedback from the POC I talked to that they felt concern about the process because their experience had been that multiracial spaces were only of benefit to the white people participating. This was heartbreaking to me, and led me to question the foundation of the project.

Despite this concern, in August of 2018 I found a co-facilitator, M, and we began developing plans for the workshop series. M reached out to friends of hers and was gathering interest. I started making plans for fundraising and recruiting. I made a general plan that sought to offer a stipend to all the POC participants of the group, both because it would make it easier to attend with the time request, as well as to acknowledge the

⁷ *Inside Out* is a Disney/Pixar animated film from 2015 that largely takes place with Joy, Anger, Sadness, Fear, and Disgust, all characters inside the head of the film's lead character.

emotional labor they would need to provide as participants in the group. I made a draft curriculum for the workshops, and M and I started meeting regularly to plan. In our meetings, however, the issue mentioned before of who these workshops would actually be of benefit to continued to come up. I believed the workshops would ultimately be of benefit to both the white people and the POC involved, while M felt absolutely sure that the POC participants wouldn't derive any benefit from the workshops and it would only be of benefit to the white participants. I struggled heavily with this, but tried to accept it. A part of me wondered whether it should happen at all if only for the benefit of white people.

This and other issues came to a head in meetings with my advisor in October of 2018. She brought to my attention that from the way I was designing the project and developing it, it seemed to her that I was simply using M as a token person of color so that I could say that I had a POC co-facilitator. At first I was resistant to this idea, feeling sure that I wasn't simply tokenizing M. But upon further reflection within the session, I came to recognize that what my advisor was saying was true: I was leading this project and was not offering a true co-facilitator role to M. While on a general project it may be totally reasonable to have a lead facilitator and an assistant facilitator, discussion with my advisor led me to believe that in a project where race and racial dynamics were the central focus, having a white man as the lead facilitator with a POC assistant facilitator was not only problematic, but unethical. The likelihood of harm to the POC participants due to my dominance in the group as the person with significantly more facilitation experience led me to determine that moving forward with the project as I had planned was not possible. I met with M to share these learnings and proposed continuing to move forward on a project together, but feeling a need to do so as

equal collaborators. Despite some disappointment (and a disagreement with the assessment my advisor and I had made), M agreed and we began moving forward on the project, but outside of the final project context.

In a self-assessment paper I wrote in November 2018, I shared more about how this all occurred:

“All the ups and downs, challenges and opportunities, and blind spots that get exposed along the way, these are all a part of my final project, and really all a part of the broader work I’m looking to do in the world as a straight white cisgendered man who is passionate about working on social issues from the mainstream position — and in this particular work more specifically, how as a white person working on race, I’m a hologram of the larger social processes that are unfolding in the moment around race work. I’d like to share a bit about these processes and how they’ve have unfolded and how they relate to my broader work and it’s unfolding direction.

About 2 months ago, I believed that I was ready to move forward on my final project after getting buy-in from a woman of color who I thought, through being my co-facilitator, would bring balance to the experimental race work project I was hoping to facilitate as a white man. Because I was coming with a particular vision for the project and its unfolding, we had clarified our roles with me as the project lead while she supported me and served as a sort of oversight committee for the project as it unfolded. However, after sharing about my project vision/direction with my advisor, I got the feedback that the way I had set up our roles was inherently problematic; that I was really kind of just using this woman of color as a token when not actually sharing

the project vision or direction with her. When receiving this feedback, at first I was defensive — I had no intention of making an unfair sharing of power in the project, and yet didn't realize just how much I was holding onto realizing my vision. After I sat with this, I recognized my possessiveness over the project, and it became clear that the way that I had set up our roles was, in a way, a replication of racial issues in the world, where I had recruited a queer woman of color that would more serve as a support to me and would not necessarily have an equal part or voice in the process. I had made her a sort of token person of color who would legitimize my project by holding the title of co-facilitator, while being in much more of an assistant to me throughout the project.

During the next meeting with my co-facilitator, I shared these learnings and that I wanted to continue working together, but that I wanted to do so in a truly collaborative capacity. Unexpectedly, my co-facilitator disagreed with the idea that I was tokenizing her — she felt that while it was true that she would be in more of an assistant role to me, to her it was a clear part of the agreement she had made with me. She felt the agreement was clear, or else she wouldn't have gotten involved. So I asked why she was willing to be involved in the project if she knew she would just be in an assistant role in a project working on race led by a white man. She shared that she believed in the project as something beneficial for the white people involved, not for the people of color. She saw her role as supporting my project to work with the white people involved in the process while making sure it didn't become exploitative toward the people of color that would take part. This wasn't new; in previous meetings, she

would regularly emphasize her focus of work with POC as working with one another, supporting one another to undo their internalized oppression. She, along with several other people of color I consulted with, consistently expressed this view: that cross-race dialogue/process work had only been felt as beneficial to the white people that attended.

While after discussing it more, it became clear that a true collaboration was the only way forward (she and I will be meeting the day before my next study committee meeting to hash out details for this collaboration), the issues inside of this process have continued to bring up a major question for me that I'm still sitting with, and that I hope through the continued work of reflection and research in my final project I can find more decisive answers to: if all of the POC involved in race work that I'm discussing this project with believe that cross-race work only holds the potential for transformation for white people and not for POC, is my agenda as a white man to do cross-race work, my belief that doing deep cross-race work with a Process Work awareness/approach can be healing or beneficial for both white people and people of color, a sign of a deep rank unconsciousness? Is holding onto my belief that cross-race processes hold the potential of mutual transformation an act of not listening and receiving feedback? What is inside my stubbornness in this belief? Is it entitlement? Is it holding tight to a high dream? What does it say about white people at this moment in time? I hope to be able to more effectively express this question and identify the answers living inside of it through my continued inner and outer investigation.

These explorations, questions, and challenges feel simultaneously so true to what my inner process is working to unfold, yet expressing them feels incredibly wrong. There is too much complexity living inside of me around this and it is still too messy to bring to a broader public; this much I know. My dream at this point is that, through a deep and intentional focus on it over the next months of work on this project with my co-facilitator and in my inner work, I will refine, solidify, and clarify the pieces in this that are needed and right inside of this, and work out the pieces that are hurtful and unconscious. I really hope that by remaining both the guinea pig and the researcher of my own process throughout this project, I will ultimately be able to offer something of true use to white people and perhaps even to those in the mainstream role of issues they dream of transforming.”

Through all of these questions and insights, I started moving toward developing a new direction for the project that would still hold on to aspects of my dream for this work as well as honor the feedback I was getting from the various voices in the field of this work. I still felt called to the dream of bringing out more of the vulnerabilities inside of the change process around issues of racial justice, the complexities of the power dynamics and the difficulties inside their transformation. So I began to consider other possibilities for ways I could still move towards touching these more vulnerable and complex places without asking people of color to take risk in what was clearly still a developing and unrefined direction.

A solo show focused on oppressor identity

After considering a few different options, in late November/early December 2018 I landed on the idea of doing a solo show that would offer a performative look into some of the core challenges facing those passionate about or engaged in social issues that also identify with the oppressor/dominant identity of the issue they seek to transform. In order to develop this piece, I would host three workshops, each focused on a key oppressor/dominant identity: one focused on white people engaged in racial justice work, one focused on men engaged in gender justice work, and one focused on owning class people engaged in economic justice work. Through these workshops, which would contain a mix of dialogue, embodied exercises, and theatrical explorations, I believed that I would discover some core themes, possible scenarios, and hot dynamics that could form the basis of the writing of the solo show that I would perform. The belief with this project was that through doing a deeper investigation of the internal struggles of those from the oppressor/dominant group seeking to change the system, we might build a deeper awareness of the larger system as well as identify ways to help transform these issues more rapidly.

The failed first attempt

The first workshop of this series was a 4-hour experimental workshop for white people to use Image Theatre and TO/TfL methods to explore the struggles we face when engaged in racial justice work. I invited about 40 friends and colleagues to attend. Some were close friends who I knew would be supportive. Others were acquaintances that I knew had

some experience with theatre, or were engaged in racial justice work. Others were people I had co-facilitated with in other racial justice space.⁸

Of the 40 invited, 13 people came to this introductory workshop which, in all honesty, was somewhat of a failure. We only had only 4 hours – which really meant 3 hours – with bathroom breaks, a late start, and a lunch break. We really only got to scratch the surface around the issue. We did some warm-up games, some beginning Image Theatre exercises, then had the chance to make a series of images that we then animated. For many, it showed the incredible power living inside of Image Theatre, and left them wanting more. For others, it was too slow, and didn't get to the point of why they had come to the workshop.

Landing on the final form of the project

Though it didn't go exactly as I wished, this first four-hour workshop was of benefit to me in that I got the chance to practice some TO/TfL exercises, and we did get to practice some Image Theatre. I had the chance to feel myself in the role of hosting a space specifically for white people to do inner exploration, as well as make connections with others who showed an interest in this work. Yet, I found myself hungry for more, and eventually this turned into the formation of the longer-form process.

The longer-form workshop design was heavily inspired by the *Power Play*⁹ process, developed by David Diamond and *Theatre for Living*. I conceived of five full-day workshops in which we would spend the first three days focused on container-building, dialogue, and image theatre, then spend the last two building our improvisation skills and developing the

⁸ See this email in *Appendix C: Emails and outreach materials*

⁹ For more information on the Power Play process, see 'Theatre For Living' in *Core Concepts and Methods*

scenes. In addition, I asked all participants to be present for two 4-hour rehearsals. While I had changed my mind so much about the project and so some doubt remained in the background, I had started to make forward motion through simply starting to do something, and felt confident enough to move forward with this new plan.

In the following sections of this paper, I'll share a bit more about the workshops, the performances, and the core learnings that came through each that will inform future iterations of this project.

The Workshops

Overview of workshops

The recruitment process

In order to gather participants for the workshop series, I sent an email to those who had come to the original 4-hour workshop that I held¹⁰, as well as others I thought might be a good fit for the project.¹¹ Of the 24 people invited, 9 agreed to take part in the process. With each person that expressed interest, I made sure to have a phone, video, or in-person interview with them to make sure they understood the nature of the process we would be undertaking and to make sure that they would be up for it.

However, with two interested participants in particular, I noticed that they seemed less steeped in leftist white antiracist culture. My interest in this project had been aimed at

¹⁰ For more information on this process, see *A solo show focused on oppressor identity* in *The Journey of This Project's Development*

¹¹ See this original email in *Appendix C: Emails and Outreach materials*

working specifically with those who had already surpassed a kind of “Anti-racism 101” and even an “Anti-racism 202” training level, yet who were still discovering challenges in showing up for the work after having a strong set of understandings about contemporary leftist anti-racist beliefs. I also had recognized that, for me, the majority of my experiences of struggle and difficulty had come from very leftist anti-racist spaces and that I had an interest in this group to explore the challenges inside of that culture specifically. I worried that people in the group that were less steeped in that cultural space would not have interest in working on the same experiences of difficulty and struggle as I wished to focus on. However, after talking with several friends and colleagues about this question, I decided that prioritizing diversity in the group around our different beliefs and cultures around racial justice work would be more of benefit to the group than not.

Workshop design and structure

Logistical details

The workshops were aimed at developing a series of short plays that would offer opportunities for an audience to explore some of the struggles that white people face when engaging in issues of racial justice. They took place on a series of Sundays in 2019: March 31, April 14, April 28, May 5, and May 12, all from 10am-6pm. The final rehearsals took place on Monday, June 3rd and Wednesday, June 5th from 6-10pm, with a last-minute rehearsal for Scene 2 taking place on Saturday, June 8th, from 4-7pm. All workshops took place either at the Process Work Institute in Northwest Portland, or at the Waterline Studio in North Portland, which was rented at a discounted rate due to my friendship with those who run it.

The rehearsals happened mainly at the Process Work Institute, though our last rehearsal together happened at the Headwaters Theatre, where the performances took place.

Group-building phase

Every day of the workshop series began with a check-in circle of different types. Sometimes these check-ins would come following a series of small body warm-ups; sometimes first-thing. Some check-ins were more Process Work-inspired: inviting participants to share their internal state as if it were a weather system, or through a body gesture and sound. Check-ins of this type were often accompanied by a more traditional check-in where participants could share verbally, sometimes sharing what was most alive for them in the moment, or what was happening back in their life outside the workshop space that may be with them in the moment. Other check-ins would be simply verbal check-ins where people could bring into the group what was most alive for them in the moment, though this typically followed a series of warm-ups, such as walking through the space in different ways: fast/slow, in straight/curvy lines, etc.

After the check-in, most workshop days began with a mix of group games and trust-building exercises that were pulled from both the TO/TfL collection of games as well as from Michael Rohd's (1998) book *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope Is Vital Training Manual*. Games that invited body movement, playing with communication, and closed-eye trust-building exercises were common. Typically these games, used for deepening group trust, as well as just for having fun, would be used to get the group into a flow with one another to allow for smoother and deeper explorations later in the workshop. After each

game, I would offer time for participants to process and share about their experience in the larger group, often asking people to relate how their experience related to some of the struggles they face as white people engaging in the work of racial justice.

After doing a series of warm-ups and trust-building games, in the first two workshop days we focused on making images that would speak to some of the core struggles we face as white people working around issues of racial justice. First, I had to introduce most of the participants to Image Theatre work, and I did so through an exercise called *Complete the Image*. In this exercise, one person freezes in a gesture (i.e. arms up in the air), and a second person goes in and enters with a frozen gesture that is somehow in relationship to the first person's gesture and makes a story (i.e. gesture: kneeling and looking up at the first person; possible story: the first person is a deity that the second person is kneeling in awe to). They freeze for a moment, being in a frozen image, then the first person relaxes and steps away, leaving the second person in the frozen gesture they were in before (in this case, kneeling and looking up). Then the process repeats: the first person now goes in and creates a new story by making a frozen gesture that is in relationship to the second person's image, etc. This exercise offers a strong introduction into the work of Image Theatre, and is a lot of fun!

Toward the end of the first day, participants were put into groups of four or five and each person used all the individuals in the group to sculpt an image of a scene that represented a moment where they felt they really struggled as a white person engaged in racial justice work. Without sharing the story, each individual guided each person in their group into a particular shape, facial expression, and in relation to the other bodies in the image. Participants memorized their positions in each other's images, then both groups

showcased each image, with 9 images in total. The group witnessing the images then took note of which image spoke most strongly to them, and voted on one image to work with from the others' group. One image was chosen from each group to work with.

At this point, we did what is called *image animation/activation*. I used many of the skills I learned from David Diamond and *Theatre for Living* with the group when doing this. The way I did image animation was as follows: with all participants in the image, I would ask all to feel into the character they are inhabiting in the moment. In this particular exercise they haven't chosen who they are, or why they are; the image maker has simply placed them in this configuration, or they have put themselves in this image/posture without having discussed it beforehand. I would then invite them to make a decision about who they are, considering the shape, posture, and relationship to the other characters that they've been put into by the image maker. On the count of three, I would invite each person in the image to make a sound that represents the strongest emotion of their character in this moment. It may be loud or quiet, ecstatic or devastated. They would all make their sounds together, and then I would tap each to make their sound individually. This same process would be continued, but turning that sound into a word, then that word into a short phrase.

David Diamond offers several other techniques for doing this. He uses internal monologue (2007, p. 100) as a central technique within Image Theatre. In an internal monologue, all are asked to speak aloud, at the same time, the internal thoughts that may be going through the mind of this character that they find themselves in. The shape that they are in gives so much information and people have a relatively easy time doing this. After about thirty seconds of internal monologue, the facilitator taps individuals on the shoulder

and they share one sentence as the character. In Diamond's approach, all start their sentence with the words "I want..." (p. 101). This can be very powerful as it can show the different needs and desires in a group; even if no one necessarily knows the story they're in, a story emerges that often profoundly speaks to dynamics we all know well. After activating the images, we typically sat together and had a discussion about what we noticed and what emerged from the image's activation.

To close the day after completing images or the other key exercises, we would sit in a circle and share reflections, feelings, and takeaways from the day. Typically this would take the last 30-45 minutes of the day, and would allow everyone to feel one another and to reflect on what we had done together. Sometimes this was a feeling of gratitude, other times exhaustion, and still others had complex feelings inside of themselves after certain exercises.

Piece development phase

On the fourth day of the workshop series, we started preparing to make the pieces for the final show. The morning focused on improvisation practice games, and then in the afternoon we broke into groups that made the seeds for the final pieces. We broke into groups using an exercise from the *Theatre of the Oppressed* called *Song of the Mermaid*. In *Song of the Mermaid*, everyone lies on the ground, and is invited to reflect on the different images and experiences inside of the workshop series. Then they are invited to recall one feeling of struggle inside of a moment from the workshops that felt most impactful for them. After a few moments, all are invited to imagine a sound that expresses the strongest emotion inside of that moment of struggle. Three individuals with different sounds are picked and placed on

different sides of the room. All three make the sound of the strongest emotion inside of this moment of struggle, and all other workshop participants, with eyes closed, move toward the sound that they most resonate with. The three groups of three that formed were asked to identify the core struggle between all of them that called them to that sound, and then to make a short scene that represented a moment where that struggle became the central crisis.

After working for some time, each group showed the very beginning stages of their pieces, and we had the skeleton of what each piece would become. It was a tough day, however — nearly all participants, during the talking circle at the end of the day, shared their nervousness and concern about whether we were going to have enough time to really finish all of the pieces in time.

On the final workshop day, we spent the whole day working on the pieces, and developing more clear structure, form, and purpose for each. One of the workshop participants, unfortunately, had some serious personal issues that came up and had to drop out of the rest of the process. This was a big challenge, as that meant the group that they were part of had to come up with a whole new piece on day 5. Despite this difficulty, we worked hard and eventually pulled the pieces together, both through day 5 and over the two rehearsals (and one extra rehearsal!) that we held over the next month.

Process Work methods used

Welcoming disturbances

Throughout the workshops, my Process Work training and skills played a pivotal role in my facilitation. My sensitivity to the group's field and willingness to work with disturbing energies was essential to keeping the strength of the group and creating the final scenes. When doing check-ins on some mornings of the workshops, many in the group checked in from a very hard place, whether that was feeling overwhelmed with life, not wanting to be there, or being concerned about what we were doing. Many times I would welcome all these into the group, encouraging all to show up exactly as they are. Sometimes after a check-in of that type, I would have people move through the room, amplifying a small body sensation and unfolding it in order to make more peace with it. Sometimes pieces brought up in the check-in were so strong that space needed to be made in the day to have a group-based dialogue around it, such as in Day 2, where we ended up holding more space to talk about how, in this process, we would be accountable to POC.

Working with group edges

I also had to help the group at the edge while working on the final pieces. By the end of our fourth group, all participants had broken into small groups and made the skeleton of what would become the final pieces to be performed at the Forum Theatre events. All were feeling incredibly nervous, doubtful, and afraid that we were going to make bad, problematic work. Having done a ton of my own inner work on the internalized roles of the perfectionist, and worked strongly with my own inner critics that doubted the quality and legitimacy of the work, I was able to hold the other side and encourage folks to let go of their concerns and know that everything was going to be O.K. Even though I shared this position, it was too far

over the edge for most, and so was not relieving and even a bit dismissive of the issues being brought up by various participants who felt real concern.

In the next group, our final workshop, I was able to relieve the group a bit more by sharing the different roles in our check-in when most were coming very nervous about what we were going to be making. A previous self may have been swayed by the group and gotten into a doubtful and critical mood where I, too, would think that it wasn't going to go well. But having done work on myself and my edge to just go for it despite its imperfections, I was able to speak to that side, as well as the side of doubt. In the morning check-in I spoke to the different voices of doubt, fear, and insecurity I imagined were in the room. Nods came from around the circle, all feeling like their voice was seen and that they weren't being led to some uncertain social death from this director! Instead, I acknowledged the voice that doubted, and responded with love, saying that what we're doing is an experiment, and we're going to do it messily, but it needs to be done, and this experiment deserves to exist. The group was significantly relieved from that point forward. Working the edge by speaking to both the voices that were against us and the voice that said to just go for it allowed for most participants to find a place of peace with the process and accept the unknown.

The ability to feel the different voices, name them within the group, and sit in a place of peace with them came from a significant amount of innerwork that I had done with myself over the years leading up to the project. I had worked strongly on the figure that was arising in the group — a figure that is deeply critical, doubtful, and dismissive of effort being put toward a project of this type if not perfect. This 'perfectionist' figure had, in the past, led me to a place of inner torture, stopping me from moving forward on projects that mattered to

me. However, through inner work I learned to both find allies inside that appreciated that it would never be able to be perfect, and so were able to stand up to this perfectionistic voice; while also turning the perfectionist into an ally by appreciating how discerning and critical this voice could be toward whatever I was doing that might be used to help me make the work even stronger. Through this inner work I was able to sit in the discomfort in the unknown that the group had been struggling with and hold all sides without being stuck inside any of them.

Metaskills of Loving

Another core piece that I brought in throughout the workshops that helped to strengthen the group and its work were my metaskills of loving around the issues we were working on. Often inside of social justice and racial justice spaces where the focus is on white people, there's a tendency to approach the work with a cautiousness, and perhaps even an on-guard-ness that is ready to call out problematic behavior and views expressed. What made the group so different for many of the participants was the degree of loving and caring that they felt from me as the facilitator of the group. Many named through feedback sessions and in our closing circles a feeling of gratitude for the space, and for how I held a space that felt very accepting, welcoming, and honoring of each participant's experience. I believe that my metaskills, these more subtle feeling attitudes of love and acceptance toward the group, allowed us to do the work in a way that truly honored the experiences in the room and encouraged those involved to really believe in a way forward in the work for themselves. In *Core Learnings and Next Steps* I speak to some of the complexity inside of the balancing of

being loving and caring while also seeking to push the group beyond its known identity. However, I do believe that this metaskill of loving toward the group really helped the group to do something that was so unknown and unusual with grace.

The Performances

Overview of the performances

For the performance phase of the project, there were two nights of Forum Theatre events on June 9th and 10th of 2019 at the Headwaters Theatre in Portland, Oregon. I ultimately decided on this space because it was the most cost-efficient method of having the show take place in an actual theatre. Another option could have been to hold the shows at the Process Work Institute, but I wanted a theatrical experience that only a theatre could offer, and the Headwaters Theatre was the best fit, mainly due to my pre-existing relationships with the people who ran the space.

In the invitation I sent¹², I invited people to “a private showing of an interactive theater piece investigating some of the internal dynamics of white people who care deeply about racial justice.” The choice to have the piece be a private showing came from both a desire to honor the experimental nature of the show by not requiring the show to be ready for a general public. The additional reason for the private showing was that it was clear from the beginning phases of this project’s development that a show centering the experiences

¹² The full invitation can be seen in *Appendix C: Emails and outreach materials*

and struggles of antiracist white people was a controversial proposition. Keeping the show as a private event ensured that we could explore and make mistakes in various aspects of the piece without it having an impact on those from the public that might otherwise struggle with such a show's existence. As previously mentioned, I sought to mediate these concerns as well as receive feedback from experts in the field of racial justice, by hiring two consultants of color to attend the shows and then offer criticisms to help me refine the show if for a public audience in the future.

The show took on the form of a Forum Theatre event. I described this kind of event in the invitation:

This show will be in the form of "Forum Theater". After the performance of each scene, you as an audience member will be asked to consider what you might do in the scenario presented that you believe would help move it toward a more just world. To share your idea, you will be invited to come onto the stage, replace one of the characters, and try out your idea in the scene. Together we'll witness how the other characters respond to each audience member's intervention, and consider how their intervention and its impact might be relevant/applicable to our everyday lives. While not all audience members will have the opportunity to participate on-stage, we encourage you to try out your idea!

Many people who received this invitation that had never experienced a Forum Theatre show before (which, from a show of hands over the two nights, was at least 90% of the attendees) had understood that *all* audience members would need to participate, and this discouraged many invited from attending. Despite clarifications, this was a helpful learning in how

particular to be in language when describing something new to people! Though some didn't attend because of this misunderstanding, over the two nights, more than 100 people attended the shows. On the second night, we had a sold out audience of 65 people. It was exciting and terrifying!

Each night would begin with an introduction from me, for which much of the content was pulled from videos I had watched of David Diamond from *Theatre for Living* facilitating in his own productions. I would begin by welcoming everyone and thanking them for coming to an experiment that was new for all of us. I would then share a bit about the piece, why I developed it, and how we developed it together through the workshops. I would ask how many people had ever experienced Forum Theatre before, then give a brief explanation of what Forum Theatre is (without describing the mechanisms of it until later). Lastly I would ask everyone to watch the scene with their eyes, ears, and hearts open, inviting them to pay attention to their bodies and to notice whose struggle in the scene they could relate to the most. Then we would begin the scene.

After the first run of the first scene, I would have the players leave the stage and then explain how the rest of the Forum would go. I would first ask people to raise their hand if they can relate in some way to the issues presented in the scene, then explain how Forum Theatre works. I would explain that if they can relate to the struggle of one of the characters and they have an idea about what that character could do to help move the situation toward a deeper sense of racial justice, that they should yell 'stop'. Once we would hear 'stop', the action on the stage would stop, the person who said 'stop' would come out of the audience onto the stage, take the place of the character whose struggle they understand, and try out their idea.

Typically I would ask where they wanted to go from, and if they weren't sure I would suggest a line that was a common 'marker' within the scene that we had worked on. Once they started trying the intervention, the other actors would improvise in response to their intervention in character, and we would see what happens.

After explaining this, I would also make sure to emphasize that we weren't looking for the 'right' answer, but for ideas for how to move the scene toward a deeper sense of racial justice. I would share how even a 'wrong' idea, or idea that goes badly, can give us a lot of information about what might not work, and why. I would also share that any idea gives other people ideas and helps to deepen our creative dialogue.

After this, I would do two body-based warm-ups with the whole audience taken from *Theatre for Living*. In the first warmup, all are asked to make a big 'X' in the air with one hand and then a big 'O' with the other hand. Laughter ensues — it's just not physically possible! Then all are asked to make an 'O' with their dominant hand, then to write their name with their foot of the same side. More laughter ensues. It's a great way to get people to loosen up.

Then I would go through the steps of Forum again and ask people to again consider whose struggle they could most relate to and to yell 'stop' if they have an idea that they believe could move the scene toward a sense of racial justice. Another clarification I would make is asking people to *not* replace a character that they want to change, because that would be 'magic' — a common point brought up in *Theatre for Living* and *Theatre of the Oppressed*. This would mean that someone who's an alcoholic couldn't suddenly not want to drink anymore, a depressed person couldn't suddenly feel great and not depressed, etc.

After clarifying all these points, the scene would play again and then at some point in the scene, an audience member would shout stop and the real fun would begin. The audience member would try their intervention, then either once the interaction between the players in reaction to the intervention had reached a natural ending, or hit a moment that felt powerful, I would shout 'freeze'. This would begin the debrief process of the scene. Sometimes this would begin by doing several *Theatre for Living*-style facilitations by asking the players to make the shape of the strongest emotion they're feeling, or to take one step toward what they want. These would often be powerful images.

After this, I would start to ask the audience member what they had come up to the stage with intentions to do, how they felt it went, and anything else I thought seemed important. Similarly, I would often ask questions to the other actors to see how the intervention had impacted them. If it seemed to move them to a new position, I would ask them about what the other person had done that moved them. Often during these question and answer sessions, I would frame something that was being said and ask if others in the audience could relate to the situation being presented, to which people would raise their hands. I would ask the person from the audience if they had anything they wanted to say before they left, they would share, then return to their seat. After going through this intervention cycle three times, we would applaud the actors and move on to the next scene.

We had one intermission that was between 10 and 15 minutes depending on the bathroom line. Many shared that the conversations in the bathroom line were always fascinating!

The show started at 7pm (thought typically around 7:15pm due to latecomers), and ended by 9:30pm both nights. After the end of the last scene, we would applaud all the actors, thank all for coming, and end the show.

Summary of scenes, interventions, and my facilitation

Scene 1: The protest

Scene description

Margaret, a young white teacher at a local high school, her father Gary, an older white retired teacher, and Margaret's housemate Crystal, a young and recently politicized white woman, are at Margaret's house making dinner. Crystal learns of a protest happening at the high school that Margaret works at in response to a racist comment that a teacher there made. Margaret feels excited and wants to go, but her father Gary thinks it's not worth risking her job, which she just got a year prior. Margaret pushes back and so does Crystal, but Crystal comes from a wealthy background and Margaret and Gary are working class, so Crystal doesn't really get it. Gary eventually says that Margaret shouldn't go to make sure that she can continue to take care of her son, especially after Crystal learns that riot cops are there. Crystal stands for the need for white bodies to be there, but after a lot of dialogue about it, Margaret eventually decides she'll do something about it from the inside at her school (though doesn't specify what/how) and that she's not going to go. Crystal leaves really disappointed.

Core themes intended

With this piece, we wanted to speak to the struggles that many white people face in taking risks to support POC through protests, or other means of risk-taking that stands in solidarity with POC-led movements. We wanted to investigate what it takes to move past this frozenness and what ways to take action can be most effective.

Example intervention and facilitation

One audience member who replaced Margaret believed that the way forward was to try to figure out who could go in her place so that she could take care of her son, Joey. She also wanted to encourage Crystal to let go of her need to have Margaret go with her, and instead to meet up with other people to go. She asked to start when Gary was saying “no, you are not taking Joey [to the protest].” The audience member entered the scene, empathized with Gary by saying that she thought he had a point, and wondered if they could come up with any other white teachers that they could ask to go since Margaret was not going to go. Crystal immediately replied “wait, you’re not going?” The audience member replied saying they didn’t know and Crystal went on, saying “I thought we made this commitment together,” to which the audience member replied “I think there’s a lot of ways to show up, and I think it would be good to get other teachers there that have less to risk than our family.” Gary loved this, but Crystal replied that she thought Margaret not going is basically making typical white people excuses to not show up. The audience member replied, “maybe, and I also have to figure out what’s gonna work best for my family and for the school and there’s a lot of ways to make that happen. And I think you should go, I definitely think you should go.” In this moment, the audience laughed and a focus was clearly placed on Crystal, who was at some

sort of edge to go. Crystal pushed back further, bringing up concepts of allyship, and the audience member pushed back saying “is that the only way you can be an ally is if I’m there?” to which Crystal said “...no” and the audience laughed. The scene resolved with Gary and the audience member agreeing to help find other white teachers and allies to join Crystal at the protest.

My facilitation began with appreciating the audience member’s strong intervention, then asking how it went for her. She replied that the situation and how they responded was true to them, but that they didn’t know if it accomplished greater racial justice out in the world. Then I asked about the statement she had made, saying that there were other ways to show up for this work than going to the protest. Her reflection was largely emphasizing that she wanted to find a way to meet her needs and her family’s needs while also knowing that she wasn’t the only white teacher at the school and that there must be others that could go in her place.

Then I moved on to asking questions to the other players in the scene. I started with Crystal, asking what shifted her to be willing to go without Margaret. Crystal began by saying that she thought that Margaret was being a bad ally by not showing up to the protest. What ultimately shifted her was that the audience member’s interventions really pushed her on her edge to go alone, both by questioning that and by offering ways to find others to go with her.

Then I used an intervention that I learned from David Diamond and *Theatre for Living* where I asked the audience if anyone can relate the experience of feeling like if you don’t go to a protest that you’re not a good ally — many in the room raised their hands.

This was the first intervention on the first night, and so as the show went on and through the second night, my interventions became much stronger and deeper. I wished to share this intervention and facilitation to give a sense of how it looked early on and to give some perspective to what some of the other interventions and facilitations felt like.

As another example of an intervention for this scene, a man came and replaced Margaret. He thought the risk around the protest was being overblown and that he and Crystal should just go. They talked for a little bit about it, and then just left, with Gary very upset and disappointed that Margaret just dismissed his concerns and left. Instead of just ending the scene there, I said “okay, so you’ve gone to the protest, now Margaret is coming home and Gary’s there waiting.” The audience member playing Margaret came onto the stage and Gary was sitting in a chair, visibly upset. The audience member tried to soothe Gary by saying that he was fine and that the protest was great, saying “see, I’m still in one piece!” Gary sighed heavily and put his head into his hands. The audience member walked up to him, saying he was sorry, and put his hand on Gary’s back. I told them to freeze in that moment, then used two Tfl techniques: taking one step toward what you want, and sharing a secret thought. I told them that when I say ‘go’, using as much of their bodies as possible, to take one step toward what they want. The audience member went in and tried to put his arm around Gary, and Gary put his hand up to the audience member’s chest to hold him back. The audience member, feeling Gary’s hand on his chest, reached up to hold it, but because of the initial movement being different I asked him to leave his hand at his side as it had been before. They stayed frozen in this position: the audience member reaching out to support Gary, and Gary reaching up and trying to push the audience member playing Margaret away.

In this moment there were audible hums of acknowledgment in the audience. Then I told each that when I tapped them on the shoulder, I wanted them to share their *secret thought*, a thought they would never share aloud with the other person. Gary shared “I really thought I was going to be taking care of this family.” The audience member shared “it was so important that I be there. I don’t regret it.”

In the debrief of the scene, I began by asking the audience member what about him was able to move past the concerns that kept Margaret from going to the protest. He shared that he just wanted to shift away from a place of worrying about what was going to happen, and instead to do what needed to be done (going to the protest). I then asked the person who played Margaret in the scene whether her version of Margaret would be able to find it in herself to drop the worry and just go to the protest. She shared that she wasn’t sure, but that finding a way to be made aware that she was acting out of fear and instead should be acting out of love that it could have maybe moved her to just go despite her concerns.

I followed up on this by asking the audience if any of them can relate to fear getting in the way of doing something they believe is something they should do. Then further asked if any can see how this specifically has gotten in the way of showing up to do much of anything around racial justice work; about half the audience (of 50+) raised their hands.

I then checked in with Gary, asking what was going to happen in the relationship between him and Margaret after this. He shared that he was still in such a state of panic that he was going to need a while to process it and that he would need some time to talk with her and rebuild trust. When asking the audience member if he had anything to say before he went back into the audience, he shared that he thought there could be a really good

conversation there between him and Gary; that he felt okay leaving because he felt sure that when he came back he could make it right and process it.

In retrospect, I wish I had let the scene go on for a little bit longer, and received this feedback from several others. While inviting the scene to continue after Margaret returns from the protest was a powerful intervention in the sense that it looked to investigate the relational impact of going to the protest without Gary being okay with it, I could have let the scene go on for longer to look at ways that the audience member could have worked to repair the situation.

Scene 2: Friends at a bar

Scene description

Kelly, a young white woman, is waiting at a bar for her friend, Monica, also a young white woman. When Monica arrives, she asks Kelly for support in talking through something that happened the night before that has her upset and confused. Monica shares about how she was out with 'John' last night, and how he was the only person of color at the bar. John didn't like his drink but the bartender wouldn't make him a new one. John said that it was racist that the bartender wouldn't get him a new drink, and became upset. Monica, thinking she was solving the situation, went to buy him a new drink from another bartender, and John was upset with her. Monica shares about how she's not sure if John was yelling at her, or what, but she got frozen and now is feeling super bad about it. She's asking Kelly for support, and Kelly is a bit dismissive, saying that John gets upset a lot about a lot of things. Monica justifies that because of being a POC he has the right to be upset a lot. Kelly shares that she

just thinks that Monica deserves to be treated with respect even when she messes up; that she and John are allies together. Monica gets increasingly upset. Kelly suggests Monica take some space and Monica thinks that would be just avoiding the situation. Kelly says that it seems nothing she is saying is going to help and asks to talk about something else. Monica says they should just go play pool.

Core themes intended

With this scene we worked with a scenario of one of the workshop participants that had been similar, where she struggled with the question of when she can ask her friend who is a person of color to show her more respect when she's messed up around a racial issue, or when that's tone policing (asking POC to be 'nicer' when they have the right to be upset) and not being a good ally. This was a live conflict in the group and we thought that bringing it to the Forum Theatre show would be a great way to work on the issue further.

Example interventions and post-intervention facilitation

In one intervention, a woman replaced Kelly's character. She offered a huge amount of reflections back, appreciating how much Monica was criticizing herself with hopes of doing it better next time, then asking if what she shared was feeling supportive. Monica was grateful that she was acknowledged as having fucked up rather than told to not think that what she did was wrong. The audience member also appreciated that Monica was coming to her about it as another white person rather than asking John to process it with her. She also

appreciated that we as white people fuck up and that, while it's not okay, it happens all the time and has to be worked on.

After Monica shared that she was grateful and starting to calm down, I asked both people to freeze. I asked them to, using as much of their body as possible, take one step toward what they wanted. When I said 'go', both turned toward one another and put their arms out toward one another, looking into each other's eyes. At first they were uncomfortable and pulled away, but I encouraged them to go back and hold that position for a bit longer. I asked each to share one word that expresses what's inside them in the moment. The audience member said 'support', and Monica said 'care'. Once I asked them to relax, they stood up and hugged each other.

When I started facilitating the debrief, I first went to Monica, who had tears in her eyes, and asked her to share what was happening for her. First, Monica shared that the fact that she reached out and received back the same reach of care and support was a big deal for her. She also named how touching it was for her to be seen in her upset rather than asked to leave it. The audience member, when asked to share her experience, shared that she felt she was stumbling through it but tried to connect from a 'heart-centered' place, offering that energy of support and holding space for Monica where she was at. She acknowledged that while what she did wasn't totally true to Kelly, the character she replaced, she felt that when you have a friend that is experiencing something really intense that she wants to meet them where they're at and provide that support. I asked the audience if they could relate to the experience of having caused a harm and wanting to process it but feeling there was no place to do so, and most audience members raised their hands.

Scene 3: The white caucus

Scene description

Three attendees at a racial equity are breaking into white caucus small groups to talk about their reflections on the mixed group session. Aster, a young white trans person, shares about how they were really impacted by one black woman's sharing of her experience with a physically abusive father. Aster shares how they also had a really abusive father growing up and the parallels make them want to approach her, but they know it's not a good idea. June, an older white woman and Aster's neighbor, shares about how they wondered how Aster was when that woman shared, and thinks it would be a great idea to go talk to her. Tony, a young white man who has been in racial equity groups with Aster, vocally expresses that this is a bad idea. A conflict ensues where June and Tony argue about whether it's a good idea for Aster to reach out to this woman. June shares that she feels like we shouldn't be so cautious around POC and that the point is to make connection at events like these, especially across racial lines. Tony expresses his concerns about potential harm by Aster, and shares about personal experiences having related his experiences to POC and having it backfire and cause unintended harm. It escalates. Aster doesn't want to be talking about this, and asks if they can just move on to the next reflection question for the breakout session.

Core themes intended

In this scene, there was an attempt to focus on a common experience amongst white leftists and liberals that is about questioning when it's right to reach out and try to make

relationship and when it can cause harm. In particular, two of the three individuals in the group that made the piece had personal experience of holding themselves back from reaching out to POC because of fear of causing harm. We wanted this scene to be an opportunity to explore this polarity between reaching out with good intentions and holding back with the intent of reducing harm.

Example interventions and post-intervention facilitation

The last intervention on the first night of performances offered a set of strong moments that I'd like to share. The audience member replaced Aster, and she started from the place where June was sharing how the woman of color who shared was so 'articulate'. After June shared the word articulate, the audience member responded by saying "ouch" loudly. This stopped June, who was silent for a moment, then asked what was wrong. The audience member shared that the dynamic that was problematic was happening in the moment. She asked what June meant when she said that the woman who shared was so articulate, and June said that she meant that the woman had shared her story in a way that really touched her deeply and that she felt inside of the experience with her. The audience member shared how she felt her heart pounding and that she was feeling really hot. She shared that when June said 'articulate', she heard "whoa, black woman, really articulate, that's like amazing." She felt that there was something so racist in that statement; something that says that black people aren't articulate and so when they speak well we think that they're so articulate and that that "fucks [her] up." June paused, and shared that she definitely didn't mean it like that and didn't think of it that way. June said she'd think about

what the audience member had said, because that's what they're there [at this workshop] for. June then shared that she could get defensive but that Aster had called her on a lot of stuff and that she really appreciated it. A bit more discussion occurred and then ended again with June saying thanks and that she would think about what the audience member had said.

I asked all the players to freeze, and then asked each to take one step toward what they really wanted. All of them ended up doing more of an inner feeling gesture — Tony holding his hands out in front of him as if making a bubble, the audience member leaning back, seemingly exhausted, and June with hands up in the air, almost touching and looking up. Then I asked each to make a sound that expressed how they were feeling in the moment. Most were tonal hums. Then those sounds turned into a word, Tony's being 'okay', the audience member's being 'fuck', and June's being 'us'. Then I asked those all to become a short phrase. June's was "we're all human and imperfect," the audience member's was "fuck, this is so hard," and Tony's was "I am okay."

In the post-scene debrief. I first asked the audience member to share about what was happening for her in the first part of the intervention when she said 'ouch' and the silence happened. She shared that in the silence there was a relief, as her common experience with these sorts of experiences was that there is no silence, and the person is immediately defensive. I was curious about the silence, and so asked June whether she would have had the same response if the 'ouch' had come from Tony. She replied, "probably not." The audience member shared that she had struggled to decide which person to replace to address June for that reason. I asked June what it was about it coming from Aster that made it work for her to hear the 'ouch'. She shared that firstly, because she and Aster already have a

relationship, it made it easier to hear them. And then she shared that also Aster is not a man, and that made it easier for her to hear what the audience member was saying from Aster's role. I reflected this back, saying that it's interesting that something being said from someone who's not a man and with whom June already has a relationship made it easier to take a pause and reflect. I asked the audience if they have experience with call-outs from people they don't know well versus those from people they do know well landing totally differently, and many raised their hands.

Someone from the audience yelled out "raise the gender part!" and I followed them by appreciating June for being honest about that. June raised her arms in a 'well of course' or 'duh' fashion, looking at the audience and saying "am I right?" and I caught this moment saying "you're raising your arms like this, maybe you want to say something from that place." There was an edge right there in the moment, June being hesitant, saying "oh dear," and subsequent big laughter from the audience, but I encouraged her to go over the edge and to share honestly. She shared that she, as well as, she thought, most of the women and 'non-men' in the audience have probably "been hearing lots of strong opinions and directions from white men all of our lives."

Someone from the audience spoke up at this moment, saying "yes, I had so many strong experiences with that even tonight – I had so many reactions of men taking women's positions and feeling [groan] of course you're much stronger here...so something about that." There were nods and sounds of affirmation through the audience. I seized this moment, framing that nodding was happening amongst the group and that it's true, there's a question about who replaces who, and what they're capable of within their gendered experience. I

then also framed that while this scene and piece was about race, this moment is centering how race and gender may play together in different moments.

Process Work methods used

The Metaskill of Love and Acceptance

Throughout the different performances, my Process Work skills showed up in multiple ways. A core skill or philosophy that presented itself regularly throughout the performances was a metaskill of love and acceptance, where no matter what an audience member did as an intervention, my approach as a facilitator was to support their side, acknowledge their intentions, and encourage them to be seen in who they are and what voice they represent in the work. I also brought this philosophy and approach to all of the debrief conversations with the other players, who may not have been acting in ways that my more antiracist self would agree with. I sought to value the truth of what was being brought in and to support all to feel loved, supported, and acknowledged in their process. As I named in the *Process Work Methods Used* of the chapter on *The Workshops*, I brought this metaskill of loving and acceptance in my facilitation both in the workshops and performances. I received feedback across the spectrum of responses around this. While some wished that I had been more of a trainer that had teaching points and a critical view to bring to some of the interventions, most who attended the performances overtly named appreciation of my loving and accepting energy as a facilitator. Some spoke to how this acceptance in the facilitation brought them a sense of permission to try something on stage in a way may not have in another space. This metaskill of loving and acceptance toward white people who are

seeking to engage in racial justice work feels essential for me, and was a core energy I brought to the work. While there is a need for spaces where white people need to show up with more resilience in the face of deep criticism or hurt, especially when in relationship with POC who have been harmed by their actions, I believe that making more spaces for white people to engage in the work with a more loving and accepting energy is also essential for helping to inspire lasting internal shifts within those who are seeking to transform their relationship to their social rank as a white person.

Catching subtle body movements and double signals to unfold deeper dynamics

Another major Process Work tool I used throughout the debriefs was centering nonverbal signals, or movements and gestures that were less overt. Many of the TfL interventions centered around nonverbal, body-based relating that often would give deep messages about the dynamic occurring in the moment. In several interventions I asked the players to make the shape of the strongest emotion inside of them and share from that place, or to move toward what they wanted without words. These all offered a movement-based way of expressing the deeper process within the scene. I also would be sensitive to watching the subtle body movements and facial expressions of the players during the scene and bring that in during the debrief.

I also specifically worked to catch double signals as a way to deepen the debrief of an audience intervention. For example, in one intervention during scene 3, June went along with a criticism of her view but looked down and pursed her lips a bit before moving on. This clearly was a double signal, where the intended message is nodding, or saying 'okay, sounds

good', but the body offers the 'secondary message', a message that the person may not even realize they're sending, of the head down and lips pursed that says 'I'm not actually okay with this'. I brought this in during the debrief, and it exposed that while June was verbally agreeing to move on, she hadn't moved on internally and was still in a strong place of defensiveness. This allowed us to look more deeply into dynamics at play and to build awareness of the subtle relational pieces occurring in the moment. By exposing this double signal, we got to learn about the intended 'yes, okay' that June was sending, but then, even more importantly, the secret 'no, not okay' that June was holding in the background. In learning about this secret 'no', we were able to deepen the debrief and discuss ways that the intervention led June to a place of 'no' and what may have helped June to reach a true and sustainable place of 'yes' to the intervention.

While working with the body in this way bears some resemblance to David Diamond and the Theatre for Living, which has individuals use their body to make the shape of their strongest emotion, or to take one step toward what they want, a new element that I offered was catching double signals as a way to notice what might be unsaid or avoided. In traditional TO/TfL, a facilitator might ask the audience member who intervened how it was for them and invite them to bring these elements out — as a Process Work facilitator, I would use body-based signals, or overtly asking about a double signal as a way to invite the audience member to notice what may have been going on for them in a way that they may have been less aware of. By bringing attention to these double signals, we can learn what might be the acceptable response, and then what the real response is in the background. In identifying

double signals, we are offered the chance to explore what might bring about lasting change versus temporary accommodation.

Framing to invite audience members to relate to the struggles on-stage

I also made creative use of framing during the debriefs of each intervention. While in a traditional framing, a facilitator will name what is occurring (which I also did at different times), I especially used framing by asking audience members if they could relate to a certain experience happening for one of the characters. For example, in the first scene where Margaret's fear of getting hurt led her to not go to the protest, I asked audience members if they could relate to having their fear of getting hurt act as a reason to not do anything in response to a problem in the world. I would invite audience members to raise their hand in response to these framings, and many would be able to see how this somewhat challenging dynamic to relate to was actually quite shared amongst the audience. In framing in this way, I sought to expose edges inside the work that may be less obvious. Often the more common approach to racial justice work is to sit in a place of criticism about how everyone should show up, and yet not acknowledging one's own limitations and challenges in the work. By asking the audience to identify with the struggles presented on the stage that led to less ideal outcomes, I invited audience members to go to a deeper place of self-honesty that acknowledged that they, too, are imperfect, and have places to grow in how they show up for the work.

In feedback from audience members, many found these framings very helpful. Many would share about how they found my framings/questions to the audience both helpful in

terms of better understanding what was really happening in the scene, as well as ways for them to truly question how they *think* they should show up versus how they *actually do* show up. Several named that when being asked to raise their hand and seeing so many others also raising their hand that it helped them to feel less alone and to also recognize how important it is to discover ways to push past these collective edges of inaction due to fear, defensiveness, etc. These framings offered a way to bring audience members along in a way that watching alone may not have offered, and brought in Process Work skills of 'weather reporting' by naming dynamics present, then asking audience members to name whether they could relate to those dynamics.

Core Learnings and Next Steps

A Preface: Self-love despite the need for growth

Since completing this project and receiving significant feedback from paid consultants, colleagues connected to this world of work, and friends who attended, as well as having the chance to personally reflect, there is so much that I've recognized I will do differently in future iterations of this project. However, sometimes my focus on the countless changes and modifications I could make in future iterations can cloud my consciousness and begin to feed parts of me that are more self critical, doubting, and unproductive. I am so quick to dismiss the hard work I did, and I believe that this natural inclination toward self-criticism/self-hatred (whether aware or unaware) is a part of the inheritance of

whiteness. In response to this, I have chosen to give more attention and energy to a deeper sense of self-love and generosity as I integrate and consider these takeaways. In being more generous and loving to myself as I consider how to make this work more effective, I am also doing the inner work that is a core part of transforming white supremacy.

As a part of that generosity, it feels important to acknowledge how new almost every element of this project was for me. This project was both the first time I had ever done a workshop series with a Forum Theatre event as a product of the work, as well as the first time I had ever hosted my own full-day workshops as a solo facilitator. While in the past, I had supported others as an assistant in weekend workshops, this was the first time I had ever designed and implemented my own multi-day workshop series, and the first time I had ever hosted a social justice theatre performance as a result of those workshops.

With so many firsts, I believe that the project went exceedingly well overall. Naturally, since it was my first time facilitating a workshop series using TO/TfL methods, developing scenes intended for Forum Theatre, and facilitating Forum Theatre, especially around issues specific to the oppressor/dominant position, I learned so much that I will do differently in future iterations. From how to structure, frame, and facilitate the workshops, to how to develop scenes and facilitate them strongly in a Forum Theatre context, I know that there are many ways that my future projects of this type will be significantly stronger and closer to the dream that called me to develop this project initially.

Core challenges and learnings

In this section, I'd like to share some of the core challenges I faced when taking on this project and throughout its implementation, and some of the learnings around what I will do differently in a future iteration. In each section I will share about a challenge I faced and then the learnings related to that challenge. While I certainly believe that some of these challenges and learnings are specific to a project of this type which uses TO/TfL to work around issues of social justice, I believe that many of the challenges and learnings can be applied to anyone engaging in social justice work from a deeply democratic philosophy and to those who are new to bringing deep democracy into the world.

The challenge of the new facilitator, and the dream of riskier, deeper work

Challenge: Playing it safe, and being a new, less experienced facilitator

As this was my first time ever facilitating a workshop series, and especially one with a TO/TfL focus, I relied heavily on my experiences from trainings and books by TO/TfL practitioners to inform the design of the workshops. In doing so, I often ended up playing it safe where I stuck a bit too firmly to the exercises and facilitation techniques I knew from TO/TfL, rather than bring in my own voice and vision for how to deepen into the work in a way that felt best for me. In playing it safe, I often passed up the opportunity to facilitate emerging conflict and diversity within the group, which meant not being able to do deeper emotional work within the workshops. While playing it safe in this way worked to maintain a

sense of positivity, openness, and safety in the group, it also meant that we didn't do much edge work in the group.

Had we done more edge work in the group, we could have gone more deeply into the topic in a way that would have made the Forum plays we created even stronger. In many of my journal entries after the various groups, I found myself puzzled why the group didn't seem to be going as deeply as I had hoped/intended with the workshop series. I didn't know if it was my facilitation, the group's edge to go deeper, or something else. In retrospect, I believe that my reliance on the form of the exercises from TO/TfL meant that I didn't make enough space for the group to really work with emerging conflict and diversity in a way that would lead to a deeper relationship to the issue, stronger questions about how to show up in the work of racial justice, and therefore stronger scenes during the Forum that would really open up something new for all involved.

We also didn't discuss after activities as often as we should have. Often when discussion took place after exercises, it would be in a way that didn't really leave a ton of space for generalizing the reflections to the issue we were working on — instead the reflections felt more centered around the direct response to the activity rather than to the issue itself. This meant that a lot of the scenes we made were some of the first times we were truly directly engaging with the issue in tangible and verbalized form, rather than in images or nonverbal explorations.

Another challenge was that due to only meeting for five days, as well as my newness and subsequent shyness to go deeper into the issues focused on at different times, our last workshop days felt very rushed and it was questionable whether we would actually be ready

for the performances in time. Though I scheduled rehearsals with the group, the first rehearsal ended up being entirely focused on finishing two of the three scenes, and an additional rehearsal needed to be scheduled to finalize the third scene.

Learnings: More time, stronger activity sequencing, and more dialogue space

The need for more time

In David Diamond's *Power Play* process, he works with a group for six full days consecutively before going to Forum. In this project, I only asked participants to attend five full days that were each 1-2 weeks apart. Because of my newness to, and the experimental nature of this process, I was afraid that if I asked for six full days, especially six consecutive days, no one would sign up to take part in the project, and the form I had decided to take on absolutely required that there be at least 5-7 workshop participants. While I think it may have been true that no one would have signed up if asked to do six consecutive days, I believe that I could have at least asked for another full day workshop.

In future iterations, I will stick to six consecutive days. If the group could only do several one-day workshops over a few months, I would make sure to schedule at least six, but ideally seven full days to allow for a deepening into the work. I learned that breaking up the days causes a loss of momentum that means more need for group building each day to start to rebuild the container.

Stronger intention in activity sequencing and more space for dialogue after each activity

Sticking firmly to the exercises and facilitation techniques I knew from TO/TfL was great in one sense, as all were new for me. Following these methods more faithfully allowed me to feel myself and the group's response through them, learning how they work and what they can accomplish. However, due to my newness in facilitating these exercises, I had less experience knowing which exercise to use when that would serve the ultimate goal of deepening in the topic and making compelling short plays. I would often use a series of warmup games and exercises that ended up taking up a significant amount of the time in our workshop space but I didn't have a plan for what made them meaningful to be done at that particular time within the workshop series, and didn't do a very good job at using the debriefs following each exercise to really deepen into the topic, instead allowing the debrief discussions to remain more surface and generally just about the exercise, and not the issue we were working on.

In future sessions, I would intentionally choose warm-ups, trust-building games, and image exercises that would lead to deeper discussions following each exercise that could help us to deepen into our topic. I would also plan to make sure we have at least another workshop day in order to make the pieces more deeply impactful, lower the amount of games (a little) to make more space for intentional dialogue and group process as well as for more image work. I can also imagine more space being made for work with emerging conflict in the moment through work in the middle. Lastly, I plan to continue to work on the edges that got in the way of being more of a provocateur in the group that challenged the group to go deeper into the issue.

Tone policing and the nuanced growth path of white antiracist activists

Challenge: Siding with tone policing

The third scene of the show focuses on a group of white people in a break-out group after a multiracial group session. In the scene, they get into conflict around the questions of whether to be more or less cautious about potential harms to POC when reaching out and trying to connect. One of the characters, June, represents a role in society which is critical of white people being cautious about how they approach and engage with individuals of color. June believes that rather than be cautious, intentionally connecting across racial lines is the core to deep racial justice work. In one intervention, an audience member replaced Tony, the character who is most outspoken in his criticism of June's position. This audience member came out strongly, criticizing and questioning June's position. They asked why June was focusing on this topic, when the point of the workshop was to investigate our whiteness. The intervention was strong; June ended up quite defensive and just wanting to drop it, and the audience member ended up feeling very frustrated and exhausted by it all.

In a following intervention, a different audience member replaced Tony and offered reflective listening, where they heard and reflected back what June was saying, then offered a critical view that supported the idea of being more cautious when approaching and engaging with POC. For June, this seemed to land, and bring a moment of pause where she was more open to reflecting on her beliefs. In the debrief, I asked June what it was about this intervention that landed for her and allowed her to take a pause, and she said that "this Tony was a lot more humble and a lot less self-righteous about knowing the right thing to do. So it made me be able to hear and receive that and be open to it." I asked the audience if they

could relate to “the experience of feeling like when there’s a self-righteousness [in the person calling you out/criticizing your perspective, that] it’s challenging to receive, but that when there’s a humility you can take it in easier.” Many raised their hands, and then I followed up by stating that this sort of need/preference is “challenging with this topic when actually there’s a lot we have to learn and to be challenged around.” I wished in framing it this way to speak to the difficulty of wanting to be treated in one way when coming from the position that’s directly benefiting from the system.

In a follow-up session with one of the POC consultants, this moment was highlighted as one where I had sided with one way of approaching the work versus the other. To the consultant, despite my disclaimer at the end stating that it was challenging to have this preference, I had still sided with June’s position, supporting her preference to be talked to kindly and compassionately as what worked, rather than coming in with more strength and directness. From their perspective, siding with June was siding with a very common voice among white people that will only listen to and receive critical thoughts when they are offered in a way that is kind, understanding, and/or sweet. This dynamic of white people wanting critical voices or call-outs to come to them with a kinder quality is known as *tone policing*; only being open to addressing the harms if spoken to with kindness, regardless of the harm one may have caused. From the consultant’s point of view, I should have been more of a trainer in this moment, calling out the fact that it was unsurprising that this white person wished to be spoken to with more kindness than firmness; that she became more defensive when being spoken to directly and critically versus when spoken to with sweetness. In that moment, the consultant argued, I should have moved away from supporting the different

views and stepped into the role of naming the problematic dynamic occurring in the moment. In reflecting on this, I've recognized that inside of this was an unconscious bias I held as a facilitator of a more compassionate approach toward white people engaged in this work. I hadn't done much work on this and was only made more deeply aware of this through being called out about it. This unconscious facilitator bias is something that is always important to identify and work on, and by not having done so, I unconsciously sided with my bias and marginalized another approach in my interventions.

Learnings: The need to grow awareness of my siding *before* facilitating

Through this conflict and subsequent reflection, I've come to recognize just how much growth I'm needing as a white person around my unconscious bias toward compassionate engagement with white people and therefore support of tone policing when white people are speaking to other white people, as well as in the work in general. Both in the work that has led me to this project, as well as throughout this project's development, I have come to learn about two parts in me around this issue. One part feels a strong need to support white people to hold a stronger internal space when being called out in a way that may feel harsh or intense; to build an inner resilience that can recognize that being called out is actually a request to process and heal the legacy of racism as it has manifested in the moment. The other part believes that there is a need to hold greater patience with white people in the work of reconciliation around racism; to attempt to meet them on their level. From this perspective, this work asks white people to regularly shatter their known reality

and to unlearn deeply trained perspectives and beliefs, which I believe is a deeply challenging process, and should be treated with patience and understanding.

There are so many voices, both inside of me as well as in the world, that overtly criticize the thought of being more patient or accommodating to white people in the face of the brutality of racism that is still ongoing. I deeply criticize myself as a white man doing this work who has the privilege to preference this way of treatment toward those who benefit from this system. While I openly own that I believe that I still have significant growth left inside of me around this, I believe that the fact that this inner conflict exists indicates a larger process within white people that is still unable to drop a desire for a particular kind of relating or being engaged with. Somehow this is pointing to something that I am still in process with, and as I consider it, I also see myself as one of many within the experience of white people who care deeply about racial justice work who struggle with this. If anything, this means that I have the opportunity, as I continue to work on and grow with this, to bring my learnings to the world of white people that may be struggling with this same issue.

In a more facilitative sense, I've also learned just how important it is to do intentional processing of the different voices and perspectives that may come up within the issue being worked on through a show of this type. Had I done adequate processing of the different perspectives and voices, I would have known I was a bit sided against a certain way of calling people out, and would have been able to learn more about this part in me and the value inside of it. Doing so would have shaped my facilitation in this moment where I would have been able to facilitate that interaction more fully and therefore been able to bring out a deeper learning inside of it. In future iterations I'll make sure to do a deeper processing of my

internal world as relates to the issues so I can make extra space to process the sides of me that are against certain parts of the piece, or certain voices that may show up when doing them.

A need to focus the work around central collective edges

Challenge: The scenes depicted strong issues, but not strong enough drama to emphasize the struggle within each issue

In classical Theatre of the Oppressed, a major focus of the work is having a protagonist who is identified as an oppressed role failing to get what they want due to an oppressor role getting in the way or preventing them from getting what they want. In a Forum Theatre event, this offers audience members the opportunity to explore the edge to act on the part of the protagonist, and to explore how the protagonist, or allies to the protagonist, could do something different to go over that edge in an attempt to get their wants/needs met in the face of an oppressive figure. Theatre for Living complicates this by making less clear identifications of a protagonist and antagonist, instead opting for seeing each character as in their own unique internal and external struggle, and exploring how each character may be in the way of the wants/needs of the other. This piece tried to follow on the footsteps of this approach, by making each character its own complex world that wanted something that may have been in opposition to what another character wanted, but without defining a clear protagonist and antagonist.

As we finalized the scenes and throughout the performances, we used this less overt antagonist/protagonist approach, yet I felt that the scenes that we ended up devising weren't

as strong and impactful as I had hoped. As I explored this challenge in conversations following the show, I came to learn that one piece that was regularly missing inside of both the workshops as well as the performances was a strong clarity about the core collective edges being worked on. By this I mean that in developing the scenes, while we did a good job once the pieces were somewhat developed to identify the core inner and outer *polarities* that brought about difficulty when determining ways of doing the work as a white person, we never identified the *edges* on either side of these polarities.

Let me explain what I mean here. In scene 1, Margaret needs to decide whether to go to the protest or not. This scene offered the strongest core edge — whether to take risk or not when one has a child and precarious financial situation at home. I believe this was partially due to the fact that it offered the strongest protagonist, as well as due to it being the first scene to be completed within the group and therefore the most developed at the moment of performance. The other two scenes, on the other hand, were only finalized during the final two rehearsals, and so had gotten less opportunity to be as well-developed. This meant that while the issues being raised in the scenes were important and valid, the drama between the characters was a bit less pointed toward the core struggles that the scenes sought to emphasize.

However, even when debriefing the scenes, the first scene was not exactly a representation of the issue/core struggle that called the individuals to the group to make that piece. They had come together with an interest in making a piece where the struggle is getting frozen and not knowing what to do. While the scene was strong and one of the more compelling of the scenes for audience members, it still didn't touch on what I would argue is

an even more challenging edge for white antiracist activists, which is the experience of getting frozen and dealing with fear to act.

Learnings: The need to develop a stronger sense of the core edges being worked on

In future iterations, as stated in other core learnings, I will make sure that the pieces have more time to be developed before being taken to Forum. This will mean not only having more time in future iterations, but also doing more scene development before developing the final scenes, and exploring some of the core edges in the group before making the scenes ready for forum. Some core challenges in the group were around defensiveness and frozenness. While the scenes somewhat touched on these issues, had we done more edge work as a group *before* the scene development, we might have come up with scenes that touched more precisely on these core edges amongst white people who care deeply about racial justice which are arguably very edgy and difficult to talk about. Doing so would help to realize the dream of this project more fully, which in a sense is doing deeper emotional vulnerability work with white people who care deeply about racial justice in a way that helps to build resilience, sensitivity, and self-awareness in the work of racial justice.

Making more space for audience involvement

Challenge: Few opportunities for audience involvement in the Forum Theatre process

Long interventions and debriefs

While we made space to have at least three interventions per scene, the show ended up lasting about two and a half hours on a weeknight, which was a pretty big ask for most people that I spoke to. With the typically late start, intermission, and show introduction, each scene had about 40 minutes to be performed, for three audience members to intervene, and for each intervention to have a debrief/facilitation session. While that may not seem like a lot of time, in reviewing recordings of the shows, it felt very long. Many audience interventions went on much longer than they needed to, many of the debriefs were a bit more long-winded and unfocused at various moments, and the scenes were longer than they needed to be.

No room for audience feedback/involvement beyond on-stage interventions

Many audience members shared that they were finally ready to bring their idea in when we had already done three interventions and then moved on to the next scene. Others shared that they didn't feel comfortable coming up onto the stage but did want to share some thoughts or ideas that were coming up for them. Others wanted to hear thoughts from more than just those who had gone onstage. In effect, the only way that audience members were able to bring their voices in was through coming up on stage and trying an intervention in the scene. There were no other opportunities for audience involvement other than when I would ask audience members to raise their hand if they could relate to a dynamic happening in the scene. It seemed from talking with people that a huge opportunity for deepening the conversation was missed by not having intentional space for audience members to share their thoughts or to process what was coming up for them.

Learnings: Tighten up facilitation and make more space for audience involvement

Tightening up the facilitation, scenes, and intervention focus

As named in the previous challenge/learning about the scenes not having a focused core edge that they were working on, I believe that many of the interventions in the scenes ended up lasting a long time because the scenes were less focused and pointed at a core issue. This meant that it was hard to know when to come in, and when the intervention was really getting what the audience member wanted to get at,. In future iterations I will make sure to tighten the scenes to maximize their depth and efficacy. This tightening will come both through focusing on scene development when centering core edges, as well as having another day to develop and really work the scenes so that they can be tighter and have less room for improvisation.

While my facilitation also improved over the course of the two nights, I believe it can tighten even further. Similar to not being as intentional in activity sequences and what they were after in the workshops, I believe that in future facilitation / post-intervention debriefs I will need to make a stronger choice about core aspects of the audience member's intervention and its impact that I want to focus on, and more intentionally ask questions and do exercises from that place.

Making more space for audience involvement

It was so disappointing to see how the form I brought didn't make much room for audience members to bring their voices in beyond the on-stage interventions or raising

hands in response to my questions. In future iterations, I hope to bring in a mix of tools and exercises that will ask for more engagement from audience members.

When talking with Abigail Leeder, who runs *Rehearsals for Life*¹³ at the University of Oregon, I learned of a method that she uses to increase audience participation when debriefing an audience member's intervention. After the general debrief with those on stage, Leeder asks audience members to share, in a sentence or two, what they saw as the gains and losses that came from the audience member's intervention. In doing so, she asks the audience to bring their voices and thoughts in, and to consider the outcomes of the intervention collectively (A. Leeder, personal communication, June 26, 2019). In future iterations I would like to try using this format to bring audience members in more.

Additionally, Leeder shared that, after the first play-through of a scene, she'll ask audience members to share what dynamics they noticed within the scene. This will bring about people naming certain power dynamics, and identifying points of oppression/struggle (A. Leeder, personal communication, June 26, 2019). In this, the audience is asked not only to be involved and use their collective wisdom to name the different issues within the scene, but also to identify potential points of intervention in the scene in a way that can make it easier to intervene. In future iterations, I hope to use this form for gaining more audience involvement as well as to help audience members identify more entry points for possible interventions.

¹³ <https://dos.uoregon.edu/rfl>

Turning ideas into action

Challenge: No direct connection to concrete action steps for further engagement

While I asked audience members to intervene in a way that would “move the situation toward a deeper sense of racial justice,” most of the scenes in our show didn’t focus on how any of the situations would be directly connected to impacts for POC, or tangible support toward the work of racial justice. Most of the scenes emphasized internal conversations among white people about how to respond to, or feel about, issues of racial justice, but few really centered an action step that was directly coming out of the work that would have a real impact. Additionally, when people left the show, all simply left with their thoughts, feelings, and reflections. Nothing was asked of audience members to consider how they might use those thoughts and feelings toward supporting racial justice work.

Learnings: Focus on action in the scenes as well as for audience members after the show

In future iterations of the show, I want to have a more intentional ask toward action for audience members. One idea would be to have audience members be invited to reflect after the show is over but while they’re still in their seats. The reflection could be paper and pens handed out to audience members with a series of questions asking for reflections on the show and something they can commit to doing that will be directly connected to the work of racial justice. Another could be that there is a more direct ask for volunteers or donations from a particular racial justice organization that people are asked to consider signing up for.

Additionally, it seems that there are two potentially different kinds of show. One is using Forum Theatre to host a kind of dialogue around *issues* of racial justice — perspectives, beliefs, ideas, etc. and how we relate to them as white people. This show was a bit more centered on this approach. Another form could be more specifically centered on tangible actions and the edges to those, like being a bystander to something that seems racially charged, the work of repairing when being called out, etc. This show offered less in this form. At the moment, I believe that I am more called to the former, which seeks to make a deeper dialogue space for white people to engage around the asks of racial justice and how we relate to them, but would like to imagine ways of making work that is more direct action focused as the latter. If making work that *is* more like the former, where it is more of a dialogue *about* the issues and perhaps more psychological, it feels even more critical to have a component at the end that asks audience members to reflect on their next steps in directly contributing to the work of racial justice, rather than just having it be a thought exercise.

Next steps with the work

Balancing the trainer/facilitator role and work on unconscious facilitator bias

As I consider where to take this work next, I continue to struggle with the question of how to make this work most effective within the broader movement for racial justice while also maintaining a deeply democratic approach. This means finding ways to hold a loving, accepting, and patient approach with white people and their process of coming into awareness of their rank, while also holding a firmer sense of what places of growth the

scenes are inviting the audience members to come into awareness of and pushing for the audience to leave with those take-aways.

This question arose specifically in talking with the POC consultants I hired after the shows. The question was raised as to how, as a facilitator, I was either challenging or permitting the interventions of certain audience members that may have been part of problematic patterns of whiteness. The example of tone policing emphasized this question. What is my role as the facilitator? In that moment, should I have defaulted to a more trainer-oriented role and named that there may be something worth questioning about the fact that it was easier for June to hear the kinder intervention versus the more pointed and critical one? Or was it my role to simply hear and acknowledge the different voices being brought in? I believe that as I work on my unconscious bias as a facilitator, I am learning that I will need to work on identifying how I can both hold the metaskill of loving, caring, and patience while also naming and framing where patterns of whiteness may be showing up in interventions that seem to be going well, or interventions that seem to be going poorly. With this in mind, continuing work on identifying my unconscious bias as a facilitator will be a central part of the work ahead.

Possible opportunities for future iterations

As I explore where to take this work next, I have been in dialogue with several different people who attended this show who are interested in the possibility of bringing it to a community that they are a part of. This means I may bring this work to a men's work organization in San Francisco, a white people's antiracist organization in Southern Oregon,

or schools in Portland. In addition to all of this, I hope to host a second iteration of this process that incorporates many of the core learnings from this first iteration.

As I explore doing a future show of this nature, however, there are some core elements of the shows that I named in the *Core Learnings* that I will want to make sure are present. For example, I am sure that I want to have a facilitated dialogue process following the show in order to distill the learnings and takeaways for any future iteration of a show of this nature. This would mean that the final performances would occur less as a one-night theatrical event and more as a half-day workshop or similar form. I believe that doing this will allow for a much deeper dive and will mean that the various positions and perspectives raised will be able to be processed both through the Forum Theatre event as well as through more traditional dialogue formats; in a sense, realizing the issues from the scenes with others who are present.

Conclusion

As I gain some distance from the performances and process as a whole, I feel deeply accomplished. Considering the years it took to take on such a bold and challenging project, I conclude this first iteration with enormous pride and gratitude for the support I've received along the way that allowed me to reach this point in the work. As I bring this work into the world, I continue to meet more and more individuals, both white people and POC alike, who see a need for a new way of holding space for healing work around the trauma of racism, and I feel excited to be one of the many voices and actors in this work. I feel hope that as I

continue to bring my skills and awareness in combining these different paradigms that I may be able to offer yet another means for offering healing and growth space for all, and especially for those who come from a white experience that are doing their own healing work as they seek to become stronger agents of change around issues of racial justice. I know that this path will not be an easy one, and will come with significant doubt, criticism, and scorn along the way. I continue in this work despite these voices of doubt while also appreciating that I am not perfect and know there is a lot to expand in this work. I feel eager to get strong feedback from the world as I make this work more and more public and, in receiving this feedback, to refine the work to be more and more effective an aspect of the work of healing and transformation needed around the work of racial justice. I only see possibility from here, and feel excited for all the future learnings still yet to be discovered.

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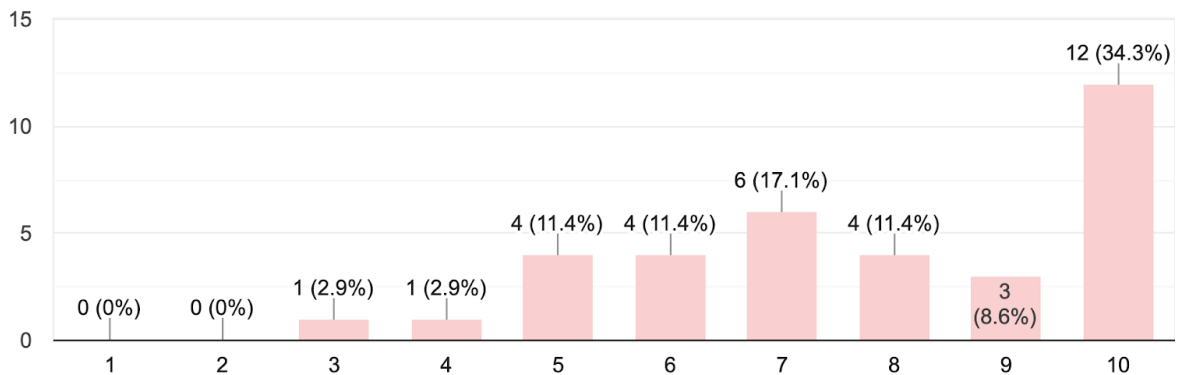
Appendix A: Post-performance survey

Following the performances, I sent out a survey to all who attended to see if the show had made an impact on people’s experiences and relationship to racial justice issues. Of the just over 100 show attendees, 35 individuals responded to the survey, a bit more than a third.

Below are screenshots of some of the results. Questions were rated on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree). After answering whether they were interested in future shows or not, people were asked what they were interested in for future shows and any further thoughts on the shows.

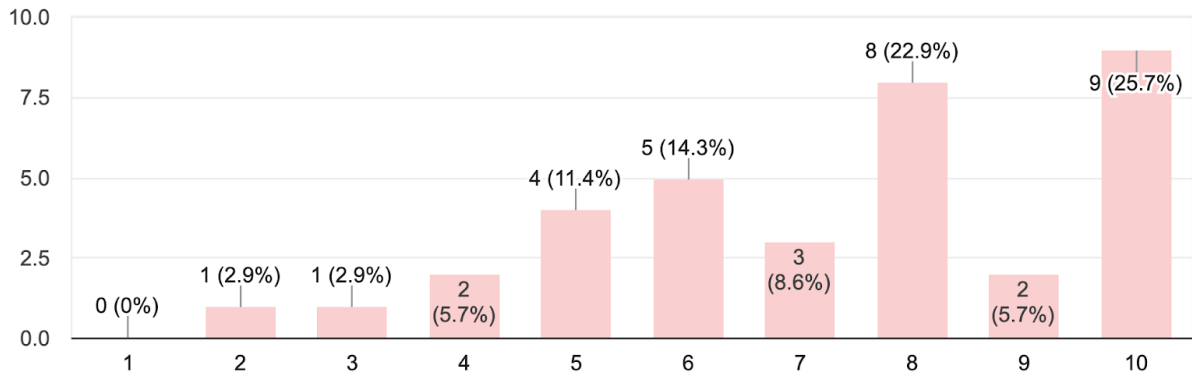
The show led me to question how I show up as a white person in the work of racial justice.

35 responses



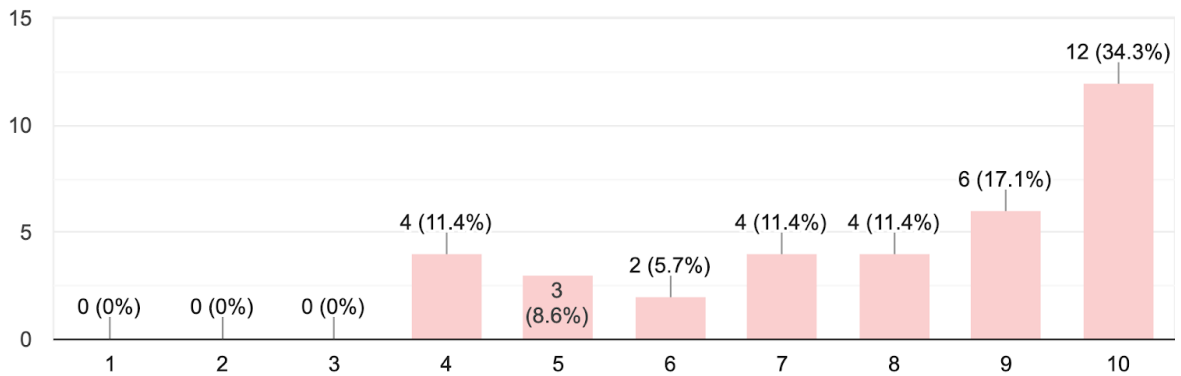
The show helped me to identify places where I get stuck, and offered some ideas of how I might get unstuck in those moments.

35 responses



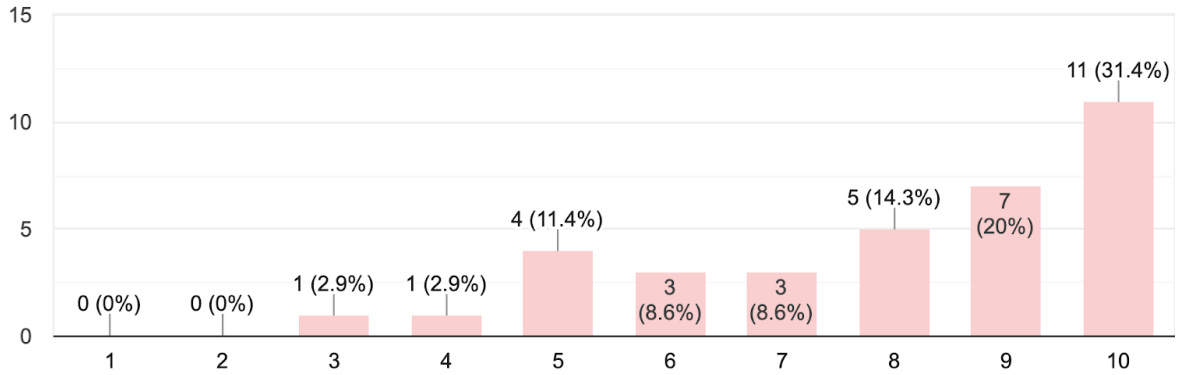
I left the show considering ways that I might show up better when addressing racial justice issues with other white people.

35 responses



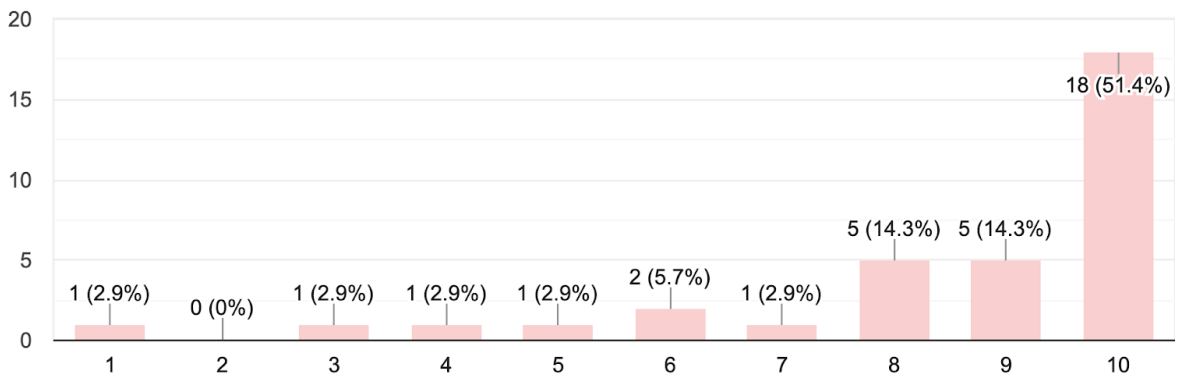
I feel more open to my limitations / imperfection in racial justice work.

35 responses



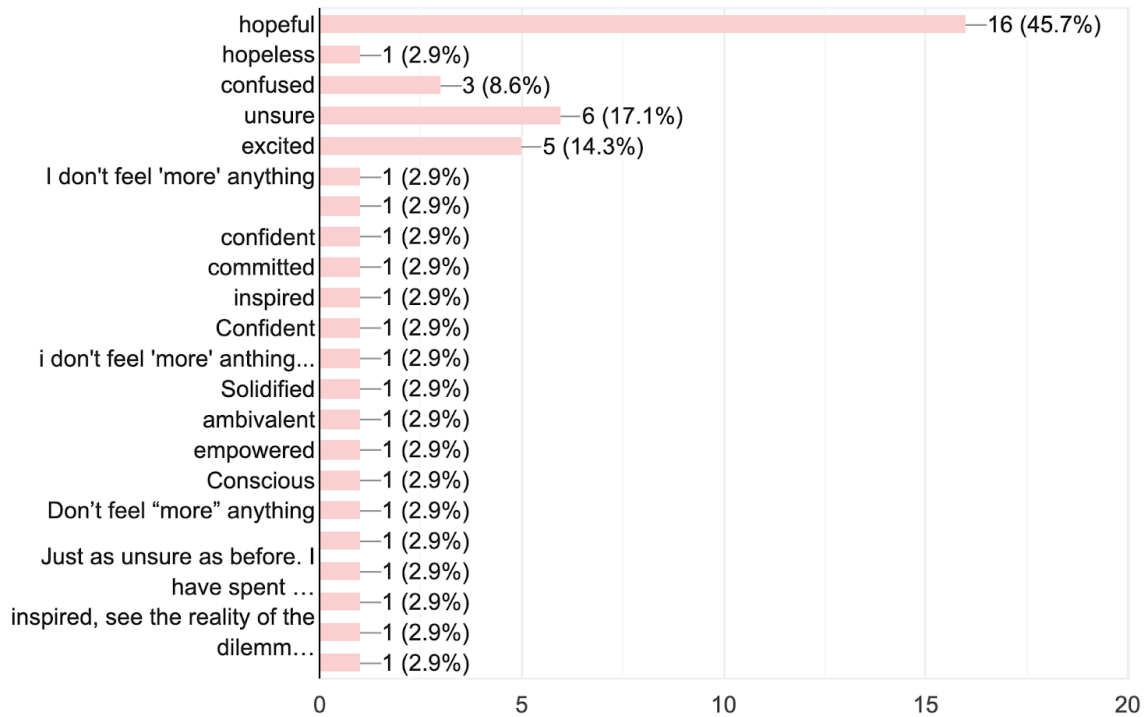
I thought about the piece and moments from it for several days following the performance.

35 responses



Now, I feel more _____ about next steps for me in racial justice work.

35 responses



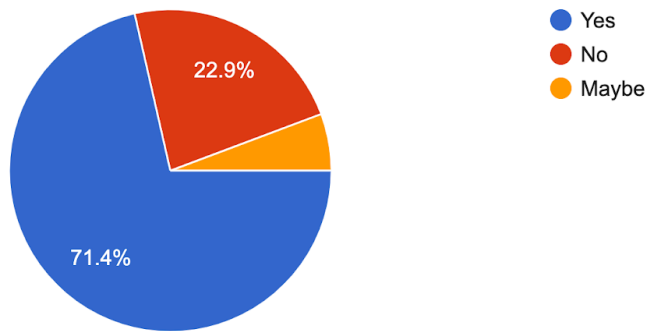
Unseen answers:

“slow”; “Wanting an analysis of the hidden microaggressions implicit and implicit bias in the actual scenes or reenactments so that we can progress from 101 to even more impactful anti-racism”; “Jaded/annoyed at being so severely judged/misunderstood”; “Just as unsure as before. I have spent a lot of time on this topic and appreciated the show”; “I feel so many things. Not necessary 'more' something. It definitely broadened some of my thoughts around the subject but it also made me realize how much this work seems to be such a case to case

and complicated situation always”; “inspired, see the reality of the dilemmas and know I’ll mess up but more willing to try”

Would you like to attend / be involved in future shows and events of this nature?

35 responses



Appendix B: Workshop series curriculum

This section contains the curriculum I developed for each workshop day. While not every day went exactly as these curricula are written, we largely stuck to the agenda, dropping a game or two here and there.

Workshop 1: March 31, 2019

Images from spreadsheet begin on next page

<u>Phase/Exercise</u>	<u>Description / Goal</u>	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Starts at</u>
Opening	Set expectations, get to know one another a little	55	10:05
Circle	Welcome everyone, we all introduce ourselves, housekeeping <i>Something that called me to this workshop series was...</i> <i>As I'm arriving today, I'm feeling most excited about...</i> <i>As I'm arriving today, I'm feeling most worried about...</i> <i>I hope that we...</i> <i>I fear that we...</i>	15	10:05
Mad Tea: Hopes and fears	<i>Something that might show up for me as we do this process is...</i> <i>A way that I can make sure that get what I want out of this process is...</i> <i>The issue closest to my heart about being a white person working on race is...</i> <i>What I need from you and others to feel at my best is...</i> Large-group sharing	20	10:20
Brief history of TO	I share a bit about TO, the history, what we're doing here together	5	10:40
Circle imitation name game	Step into circle, say name and make gesture, everyone repeats and it goes faster and faster til non-existent	15	10:45
Warm-ups	Warm up, get comfortable in the space, start to build container	55	11:00
Walks / Cover the Space	Walk fast/slow motion, backwards/sideways, straight/curved lines, opposites (walk/stop, fast/slow, jump/say your name, etc.)	15	11:00
2 by 3 by Bradford	Alternating counting, replace '1' with sound/gesture, continue replacing til all are replaced. Each group shows theirs to rest of group. Discussion in groups.	20	11:15
Hypnosis	One group of three has people using both hands	20	11:35

<u>Phase/Exercise</u>	<u>Description / Goal</u>	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Starts at</u>
Closed-eye / Trust-building	Start to build trust in group, work with different senses	75	11:55
Rules/framing of closed-eye games	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hands are either by your side, in your pockets, or across your chest. Not stretched out in front of you (can get in eyes and touch where people may not want to be touched by hands). 2. Heads are up — if two heads meet, it hurts a lot. 3. Speed is determined by the person doing the walking. 4. Don't forget to breathe. 	5	11:55
Gravity Play	Stand w/ eyes closed, hands by sides. Find center of gravity by shifting weight slightly forward, sideways, and back. Play with it, leaning over almost to that point of falling, then back to center.	5	12:00
Find the spot	Stand in a spot anywhere in the room. Pick an eye-level spot across room, somewhere you can get to in a straight line. Close eyes, and without speaking, go there. If you encounter someone, don't open eyes, just make your way around them.	5	12:05
Eyes closed (No Contact)		20	12:10
Effective Hand	(folks should remove finger and wrist jewelry for this) People walk around the room, eyes closed. Without talking, when encountering someone, feel that person's hands for a moment, then move on. Do for a while, then when find a hand, keep it. Everyone should have one hand being held, no more than two hands though. Keeping eyes closed, get to know the hand(s) you're holding — is it a dry/moist hand? a bony/fleshy hand? warm/cold? if adventurous, use other senses. really get to know hand, without talking, open eyes and look to see whose hand you're holding, close eyes again, without talking, say goodbye and keeping eyes closed, start to walk, keeping eyes closed and without talking, find same hand(s) again.	20	12:30
Closed-eye magnets		20	12:50
LUNCH		60	13:10

<u>Phase/Exercise</u>	<u>Description / Goal</u>	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Starts at</u>
Post-lunch warmups	Get energy moving again after lunch		14:10
Fox in the hole	Variations: enemy just annoys you, you owe enemy money, enemy is ex-friend or ex-romantic partner, enemy is trying to kill them, enemy is person that really likes them but they don't like back, etc.	10	14:10
Defender		10	14:20
Image work	Begin to enter images and engage content	140	14:30
Complete the Image	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large circle, make shape, ask ppl what they see, explain all are correct, show how would be if I just said what it was — I would be the one with imagination, would shut down your creativity. Explain that we won't name images, just will offer them. 2. Invite someone to come into circle and offer shape. Then invite another to offer a frozen shape in relation to it so it tells a story — start to do in middle, asking folks to share what they see when first person leaves. Repeat. 3. Eventually becomes 3 people. 4. Watch for when it starts to seem related to topic. Then frame that all images are now related to topic. 5. Once big dramatic moment/image, get everyone to enter image, then do internal monologues for 30 seconds or more all together, then one by one. Then ask what each person wants (if it feels right). 	40	14:30
Sculpting partners / Build an image	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pick one to be sculptor, one is intelligent clay "who will fill the shape with thought and emotion indicated by the body position in which they are placed" 2. Once made one image, erase it and make a second. Clay, remember second shape. 3. Sculptors bring second 'sculpture' into center of room 1 at a time, then place sculptures in relation to each other to try to build a larger sculpture that tells a story. 4. All reflect on what they see — are there stories? 5. Repeat and partners switch. 6. Second image gallery is invited to be about the topic we're investigating. 7. Do some animation of the image. 	40	15:10

<u>Phase/Exercise</u>	<u>Description / Goal</u>	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Starts at</u>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create groups of 4 or 5 2. "In these small groups, each of you is going to make an image, using yourself and other people in the group, of a moment from your own life, when you were struggling with being a white person within the work of racial justice. Your own moment, not someone else's or Hollywood. Each image <i>must</i> contain at least two characters — you, and the person with whom you were struggling. Images can have more characters, but only as many as there are in your group. If the image is only two people, the others in the group are not in that image. A group of 4 will create 4 images, etc." 3. "You must make the image without speaking. Sculpt your partners with as much detail as possible. Part of your job in this exercise is also to remember what you are doing in each other's images, because we are going to see all of them" 4. Determine how many images we have time to activate. 5. Have one group show all their images, we vote on one (or two depending on time) 6. Let folks know not to take this personally, remind that we don't actually know the story, we're just responding to a moment that many others in the group resonate with in some way from just seeing the image. 7. Animate images 	60	15:50
Groups of 4 (or 5...)			
Closing	Talking piece, finish up	30	16:50
End			17:20

Workshop 2: April 14, 2019

goal: by the end of the workshop, we will have

- identified a set of topics within our umbrella topic of white people working toward racial justice that are places we'd like to give specific attention to
- had a dialogue about accountability to POC through this process
- made a new set of images to activate both related to issues from accountability dialogue as well as from magnetic image

opening (25 mins) (10:05-10:30)

welcome circle, frame what we'll be doing, etc. (5 mins) (10:05-10:10)

weather system check-in (10 minutes) (10:10-10:20)

circle name game (10 mins) (10:20-10:30)

games / energizers (35 mins) (10:30-11:05)

cover the space (5 mins) (10:30-10:35)

falling (15 mins) (10:35-10:50)

mirrors (15 mins) (10:50-11:05)

generating topics for work (50 mins) (11:05-11:55)

impromptu pixies (20 mins)

1-2-4-all (2 rounds) (30 mins) (11:05-11:35)

break (11:55-12:05)

dialogue work (30 mins) (12:05-12:35)

dialogue on accountability (30 mins) (11:45-12:15)

image-making (60 mins) (12:35-1:35)

groups of 4 (or 5) for accountability to POC (60 mins)

energy clap?

lunch (60 mins) (1:15-2:15)

energizers (55 mins) (2:15-3:10)

gravity play (5 mins) (2:15-2:20)

find the spot with new framing (10 mins) (2:20-2:30)

closed-eye cars/busses (20 mins) (2:30-2:50)

animals (20 mins) (2:50-3:10)

improv game: speed gestures (30 mins) (3:10-3:40)

image work (60 mins) (3:40-4:40)

magnetic image & image activation

closing: talking piece go-around (20 mins) (4:40-5:00)

Workshop 3: April 28, 2019

* this group Melissa is out of town, Caitlin had to cancel last-minute, and Hank has to leave at noon

Opening (10 mins) (10:10-10:20)

- Opening circle
- Check in:
 - Walk through the room, notice body, notice self, make shape, gesture, and sound that shows where you're at in this moment.
 - Each person shares their gesture and sound with the group, we all repeat

Warm-ups/improv games (50 mins) (10:20-11:10)

- Mirrors
- Speed gestures

Bio break (5 mins)

Animating Images from *Magnetic Image* (75 mins) (11:15-12:30)

- Break into groups and review images from last time
 - Emphasize that people should be making sure that it's an image where we know the relationship between everyone, ensuring that each is an actual person, and not an idea/concept/system
- Bring up each image and animate it

Bio break (5 mins)

Cops-in-the-head (25 mins) (12:35-1)

Notes from chat w/ David about how this works:

Choosing a story and creating the 'Cops'

- Invite three people to "share a story about a time where you had to make a decision around [issue] and the voices inside your head were giving you unhealthy advice."
- All three individuals share their story, the group selects one to work with (again emphasizing this doesn't mean that one story is better than another, but that the one chosen has more resonance at the moment).

- Invite storyteller (s.t.) to make the shape of the loudest internal voice of bad advice at that moment of struggle. Joker/facilitator becomes s.t. in regular form, s.t. becomes loudest voice in shape form, then gradually expands into sound, then phrase.
- Invite an audience member who can identify with/feel into this shape and invite them to replace the s.t. with the shape of this first voice.
- Repeat 3-4 this for a second shape/voice of bad advice.
- Invite the audience to share what they think a third shape/voice might be – s.t. must approve before it becomes part of it all. Someone from the audience becomes this shape (can be one who offered it).

Animating the ‘Cops’

- Internal monologues, then sentences from each cop starting with “[storyteller], I want you to...”, then “[storyteller], I’m afraid...” make sure to write these sentences down
- Now making the ‘cops’ into real characters: ask the audience, for each ‘cop’, “what relationship in our lives gives us this kind of advice?”
 - NB: hold really strongly here to make a ‘who’ that we could actually play (not ‘capitalism’, not ‘whiteness’, etc.). He also really emphasizes that while we may be against the message of this voice that most of the time the voices even we’re most against have a reason they think that what they’re saying/advising is the right thing to do. As the person playing this role, you must be able to feel what in this person/character is the belief that allows them to see what they’re doing as the right thing to do.
- Now the cops can move around the space and speak more from their position – they can’t move / take on a different form, but they can move in the space and say whatever they want – they are now meant to go after s.t. and do anything they can to get them to do what they want.
- After a few minutes of this, ask all to freeze. Ask shapes what they would have done if s.t. left the room and walked out into the rain (they would follow them), and emphasize that’s right, because they’re voices in s.t.’s head. For example, a mother that really believes it’s right for her child to not smoke weed, etc.
- Invite s.t. to pick a voice to ‘deal with first’, or interact with first. They will improvise in dialogue/interaction with this voice. The s.t.’s job is not to solve the problem, but to just be in the shit and the challenge of it all
 - Explain that this is because the way that we do participatory processes around these topics is by offering the problem and asking for interventions to address the issue, not to present the solution to the audience
- After they improvise for a minute, invite audience members to replace the s.t. if they have an idea for an intervention that could help to change the relationship with this voice, not to defeat it.
 - NB: Clarify that interventions are to change the relationship with the voice, not to defeat it. Two reasons for this: 1. These voices may never go away; 2. Sometimes voices that are offering unhealthy advice can give healthy advice at different moments. For example, fear stopping one from taking too big a risk can be healthy, and can be unhealthy.

- As audience members replace s.t. and try different interventions, facilitate these interactions, using all image animation techniques. Can use different interactions to connect to more systemic issues, i.e. father can be also like the government, etc. Seek to build understanding, have conversations as each one is worked with.
- After completing this process for each 'cop', ask the s.t.: "You've been watching this whole time. Have you had any insights that have offered a way you may change your relationship to some of these voices?" Invite s.t. to move the frozen shapes in the room in terms of new relationship of proximity with the voices/cops.
- Invite the voices to say one sentence from their shape after being moved.
- Ask voices to relax, come to middle, ask if they have anything they want to say.
- Ask s.t if they have anything more they want to say.
- Appreciate s.t. and the gift they've given the group by sharing their story. Appreciate all s.t.s.
- Request that group not approach s.t. to ask questions/talk about their story with them unless they approach you. The story is closed unless they want to re-open it.

LUNCH (1-2)

Cops-in-the-head (2-4:30)

Closing (4:30-5)

Possible energizers/exercises if time:

- Animals (Diamond 298)
- Crossing the room
- 2 by 3 by Bradford
- West Side Story (Diamond 313)

Workshop 4: May 5, 2019

Michael Rohd's reflection questions following an improv:

1. Did you stay in it?
2. Did you make it important to you?
3. Did you make strong choices and build the story together?
4. What could we have done differently to make the stakes higher?

Opening (10 minutes) (10:10-10:20)

Circle

Some kind of opening check-in sort of thing what?

Warm-ups/Improv games (75 mins) (10:20-11:35)

(all in pairs — people take turns sitting out and watching)

Mirrors (20 mins)

Activity/Urgency (Rohd 76) (25 mins)

- Partners, one is A one is B. A comes up with a physical activity that would be difficult to accomplish alone in 4 minutes (fixing a flat tire, cooking dinner for 10, painting a house). B watches A attempt to complete for first two minutes. Then shout “B, go!” and B dives in and tries to help A finish the task in the last two minutes but without either of them talking. So B has tried to figure out what’s going on while watching during those first two minutes.
- One more note for A: they must have a *reason* why the activity has to be done in four minutes. It’s not good enough to rush because “it’s important.” Why is it important? A must have a specific reason for needing to finish and specific consequences that will occur if the activity is not finished.
- After 4 minutes, yell “freeze” and make sure they don’t talk right away. Ask each B to share what they think they were doing and then each A say what they were actually doing and the reason for needing to complete it. Push A to be specific and to make up details right then if they need to. Then switch and do again.

Relationship wheel (Rohd 79) (30 mins)

- Pairs in big circle round me in middle. Decide in pairs who is A and who is B.
- Call out a relationship and an activity (i.e. doctor/patient: examination). Each silently begins to engage in that activity as characters in that relationship. They can’t determine who is which, they just start.
- After a minute or two of silent activity, shout “speech,” and they continue from the point of the improv they were in, now adding speech
- After a couple of minutes in speech mode, shout “freeze, switch.” All A partners shift one person to the right so that everyone has a partner
- Possible relationships and activities:
 - doctor/patient: examination; siblings: cooking; teacher/student: after school help; teammates: warming up; housemates: grocery shopping; good friends: spying
- Reminders
 - Try to not get distracted by the other pairs
 - No mouthing words — keep focus on activity and quality of the relationship
 - Quality of the relationship means the tone of the interaction between you: How do you relate? Is it comfortable, loving, based on power or authority, nervous, nasty?
- Possible reflection questions:
 - What were challenges? What did you find easy?
 - How many got stuck or ran out of ideas? Why do you think that happened?
 - Did you play yourself or did you find a character?
 - Were all of your scenes arguments or were you able to be there without conflict? Which of those two is easier for you, and why?

Bio break (10 mins) (11:35-11:45)

Improv games

Russell's Soup (Rohd 83) (A/B) (30 mins)

- Pairs. Decide who is A and who is B. A starts a physical activity (cooking, fishing, cleaning, performing surgery) and B watches. While B watches, they come up with the relationship that A and B will have to each other. B decides without telling A. B also comes up with a strong intention, something important that they want from A in the context of the relationship they've chosen. When B has quickly figured out these two things, they enter the space. Bs all enter at own pace as pairs are going simultaneously. B should not walk in and say "Hi, Mom." The idea is for the relationship to become clear from the way (behavior, dialogue, and tone) B interacts with A. A tries to figure out the relationship while continuing to focus on the activity and playing the scene, slightly in the dark. Key is listening and adapting to what each person brings to the scene. As A is trying to figure out the relationship, B is beginning to try to get their intention. As A begins to realize what B wants, it is their responsibility to make choices that allow them, as a character, to not give in. A needs to come up with the details as the two create a story together, and to want something from B in opposition to what B wants. The conflict builds, the story grows, and the relationship deepens. The scene does not resolve — it goes on as the energy in the room rises until you should "freeze." Then, each pair spends a minute or two on the feedback questions. After that, with the same partner, they go again. Switch and do a brand new scene.
- Ask for a volunteer and do a demo
- Reminders
 - Pick a relationship that can have high stakes. In other words, losing the relationship would matter. Strangers can just walk away. People in each other's lives have to deal with repercussions. The stakes are higher.
 - Pick strong intentions. "I want you to feed my goldfish" is not strong or high stakes. "I want you to take care of my large, drooling dog for two months while I travel" is strong and could be high stakes.
 - Remember: "I want to tell you something" is *not* an intention. "I want you to keep a secret" *is*. "I want to apologize" is *not* an intention. "I want you to accept my apology" *is*. It must be something you want from the other person, something specific, clear, active, and strong.
 - Keep scenes standing or moving.
 - If get stuck, remember that silence is fine. Go back to the activity. Let it ground you in the world you've created and the next moment will surprise you by simply happening

Line Improvs (Rohd 86) (20 mins)

- Everyone breaks into two even-numbered single-file lines facing each other. The lines back about 10 paces back from each other, and each person should know who's directly across from them: their partner. Explain that in Russell's Soup they had to make all the initial

decisions and build from there. In this game I will provide them with the relationship, the circumstance, and the intentions. Their responsibility will be to build the conflict and the story together; make strong, detailed choices; and allow the stakes to be high.

- First scenario is with the relationship of parent/child. This line parent, that line child. The child has to be 14-19. The child wants to go to a rally, demonstration, or protest going on in the community tonight. The cause behind the gathering is important to them, and they are coming to ask permission to attend. The parent does not want them to go at all. Not at all.
- The details, the kind of rally, the reasons for not letting them go are choices you'll make. When I say "go" the 'Child' line crosses the space at once and walks up to their 'Parent'. The scene takes place face-to-face — no moving around, no sitting — standing there, confrontation style.
- After 5-15 minutes, I'll say "freeze" and you'll answer the four questions in your pairs. Then we'll start over by having one line rotate so that everyone is looking across at a new person.
- Reminders
 - They should, at this point, be challenging themselves to take on points of view that are different from their own. So, the rally should not be a cause they are personally passionate about but rather something they have to work at to be passionate about. They should be playing characters that are uncomfortable for them and not just another version of their own worldview.
 - Not looking for resolution; practicing for our final piece
- Examples of other line improv setups
 - Good friends. The one who will remain in place has been dating someone for six months and they haven't gotten much support from anyone regarding the relationship. Today, for the first time, the friend crossing the space says they want their friend to break up with the person they're seeing because of the group the person they're dating is a part of (this could be about race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender)
 - Siblings. Both go to the same school. The one crossing is approaching their sibling because they believe they have a substance abuse problem. They want them to get help today from the school counselor or they'll tell their parents. The accused doesn't think they have a problem
 - Lovers. The one approaching has heard that a former partner of their current partner (here) is rumored to be HIV+. They want the two of them to go get tested together. The approached feels there is no way that they could be positive and doesn't want to go.

Dialogue

- Discuss plan from here, answer questions concerns, etc.

LUNCH by 1

After lunch, Song of the Mermaid and into making pieces and activating a bit

Michael Rohd's checklist for an activating scene:

- ❑ A believable and realistic situation
- ❑ A previously structured but not scripted scene (it was re-improvised to feel spontaneous and real, and strong improv skills allowed this to happen successfully)
- ❑ The scene revolved around a moment of decision — i.e. would the protagonist stay or go? — and their decision left us *wanting something different*
- ❑ It has a clear relationship, intentions, circumstance, location, activity, high stakes, and two people listening to each other and connecting in the pretend moment
- ❑ A conflict that is clear
- ❑ A protagonist that the audience cared about and with whom they could identify
- ❑ An antagonist(s) or “villain(s)” that wasn’t evil and cartoony but was credible, strong, and had certain ambiguities around their actions that made them human
- ❑ A clear idea of what the protagonist wanted and didn’t want
- ❑ The protagonist’s failure to get what they wanted
- ❑ The reason for failure clearly being the strong actions, attitudes, and choices of the antagonist(s)
- ❑ A clear sense that the protagonist had inner voices, or desires, that reinforced their inability to succeed

Workshop 5: May 12, 2019

For workshop 5 there was no agenda, just plans to work the pieces and get them into shape.

Appendix C: Emails and outreach materials

Invitation to first 4-hour race workshop

Hey there dear one!

You’re invited to take part in an experimental workshop for white people who are engaged in, or deeply care about, racial justice work.

Why/purpose

For my final project at the Process Work Institute, I will be creating a performance piece exploring the experience of those who care deeply about or are activists around social issues for which they are identified with the dominant/oppressor position (i.e., white people engaged in racial justice work, men engaged in gender justice work, upper class people

engaged in economic justice work, etc.). Over the next several months, I will be convening separate workshops for each of these areas with the hopes of uncovering key shared challenges and learnings for social change. From these groups, I plan to develop a performance piece to support people engaged in this kind of work to both move past barriers and discover new opportunities for being more effective change agents in the world.

What this group will be

This will be a 4-hour workshop where I'll facilitate a series of playful and experiential activities that will explore our collective experiences as white people who care about/are engaged in racial justice work. This will include a mix of embodied and movement-based exercises, group games, theatrical explorations, and various facilitated discussion formats.

Details

Date: February 10, 2019

Time: 10am-2pm (light lunch offered)

Location: Waterline Studio, 55 N Farragut Street

Cost: Free

Please review the attached informed consent form for additional information around risks and benefits of participation in the group, who to be in touch with with questions/concerns, etc. Your signature on this form is required for taking part in the group. Don't worry about printing it yourself, though; I'll bring physical copies of the form on the day of the group.

Please RSVP by replying to this email!

Warmly,
Lolo

Invitation to performance-oriented workshop series

Dear [NAME],

I am writing to invite you to participate in an experimental process for white people who care deeply about racial justice work. This process will use a mix of methods, pulling largely from Process Work and Theater of the Oppressed, to 1) uncover deeper truths around the

challenges and opportunities present for you as a white person engaged in racial justice work and to 2) use what we uncover to collaboratively develop an interactive theater piece for white people that will be shown in a small, invite-only, work-in-progress showing in early June.

What will the process look like?

The process will be made up of five full-day workshops where we will explore your challenges, questions, and personal stories as a white person who cares about/is engaged in racial justice work. This will include a mix of embodied and movement-based exercises, group games, theatrical explorations, and various facilitated discussion formats.

While each workshop will be somewhat flexible based on the needs/desires of the group, each day will be oriented toward a mix of discussion around whatever topics are alive for the group, then working with what comes up by turning it into images that we will develop into short scenes. We'll then work with the short scenes, unfolding various aspects of each and working with them to pull as much learning and depth from them as possible. No previous acting or theater experience is necessary to take part, and you will not be required to perform in the final piece if you do not wish to.

Following the workshops we will finalize and rehearse the piece, which will be an interactive theater format based on the work of Augusto Boal/Theater of the Oppressed where our piece will be the means by which people dialogue/problem solve about the issues presented.

Schedule

Workshopping/group devising phase

3/31, 10a-5p: all-day workshop (at the Process Work Institute, 2049 NW Hoyt Street)

4/14, 10a-5p: all-day workshop (at the Waterline Studio, 55 NE Farragut Street)

4/28, 10a-5p: all-day workshop (at the Process Work Institute, 2049 NW Hoyt Street)

Piece refinement phase

5/5, 10a-5p: all-day workshop (at the Waterline Studio, 55 NE Farragut Street)

?, 10a-5p: all-day workshop (date and location to be confirmed with cast)

Rehearsal phase

?, 1-5pm: afternoon rehearsal (date and location to be confirmed with cast)

6/9, 6-10pm: evening rehearsal (at the Waterline Studio, 55 NE Farragut Street)

Performance phase

6/10, 6-9pm: work-in-progress performance (location TBD)

6/12, 6-9pm: work-in-progress performance (location TBD)

What will you gain from taking part?

Through engaging in this workshop series, you will have the opportunity to:

- identify and work on your biggest challenges and places for growth as a white person who cares deeply about racial justice
- build community with other white people who are actively investigating their role in racial justice work
- offer your voice and experience to a performance piece aimed at helping other white people show up for racial justice work / to deepen our collective racial justice work
- learn tools for exploring issues of race and other social issues
- gain a stronger sense of your role as a white person / ally in racial justice work

If this sounds up your alley, please email me back expressing your interest and we'll set up a time to do a brief voice/video/in person chat to answer any questions and to make sure it's a good fit!

Warmly,

Lolo

Invitation to Forum Theatre events

Hello!

This is a special invitation to a private showing of an interactive theater piece investigating some of the internal dynamics of white people who care deeply about racial justice. See more info below, and please RSVP to this email to attend!

Background

For my final project in my studies at the Process Work Institute, I've been experimenting with a variety of methods (Theater of the Oppressed and Process Work) to create artful representations of some of the internal dynamics of white people who care deeply about racial justice. Over the last three months, I've facilitated a small group through a series of workshops that have led to the development of scenes that look more deeply at some of these inner conflicts.

What to expect

This show will be in the form of "Forum Theater". After the performance of each scene, you as an audience member will be asked to consider what you might do in the scenario presented that you believe would help move it toward a more just world. To share your idea, you will be invited to come onto the stage, replace one of the characters, and try out your idea in the scene. Together we'll witness how the other characters respond to each audience member's intervention, and consider how their intervention and its impact might be relevant/applicable to our everyday lives. While not all audience members will have the opportunity to participate on-stage, we encourage you to try out your idea!

Details

When: Sunday & Monday, June 9th and 10th, 7-9:30pm (includes 15-minute intermission)

Where: The Headwaters Theatre, 55 NE Farragut St #9, Portland, OR

Cost: \$10-\$20 sliding scale (proceeds support the work of the Q Center)

How to attend

This show is a private, invitation-only event. Reserve your seat by replying to this email. After letting me know you plan to come, please send the \$10-\$20 ticket fee to Lolo Halman on PayPal, Venmo, or Cash app. A very limited number of tickets will be available at the door, so we encourage securing a ticket in advance. You have been specially invited to this event – it will not be open to the public. Please let me know if there are others you think would like to come.

Note

This process was designed to explore the voices and experiences of white people who care deeply about racial justice in order to more consciously and actively engage with them. No people of color are represented in the scenes.

Access and Technical Details

The Headwaters Theatre is a single-level space with steps to most seating. There is space in front of the risers for wheelchairs or any other special seating arrangements. For this version of the show, there will unfortunately be no ASL interpretation.