

ANTI-RACIST & ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FUTURES for THEATRE for YOUNG AUDIENCES

an digital guide

BIPOC
in TYA

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PREFACE

TIP: The highlighted words are defined in the glossary on page 35!

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT & HOW TO INTERACT WITH THE GUIDE

This project is intended primarily for professionals in the Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) industry. TYA is defined as the field that creates and presents live performances for young audiences, utilizing theatre to engage young people as audience members, performers, and students. The ecosystem of TYA includes but is not limited to professional theatres, performing arts centers, community theatres, youth theatres, academy programs, and in-school arts engagement initiatives.

The following pages showcase a preface and four major sections that together intend to create space for reflection, present a container inside which Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) voices can be heard, and extend an invitation to field-wide transformation.

Inside you'll discover a collection of non-negotiable demands for change, "thought questions" covering an array of topics, anonymous anecdotes from BIPOC TYA practitioners, external links to supplemental resources, an interactive glossary, and exercises that require your active engagement in community with others. If you come across a word or concept you do not understand, research on your own to activate your personal responsibility in this learning journey.

Anti-Racist & Anti-Oppressive Futures for Theatre for Young Audiences is not an exhaustive **anti-racism** checklist, an all-encompassing step-by-step guide to **anti-oppression**, or a substitute for external consultation. The intention is to provide steps on the journey toward individual and organizational anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and **equitable** practices and values.

This guide aims to center the experiences, perspectives, and needs of BIPOC people on an **intersectional** basis. There are many individuals who hold multiple identities that intersect and compound with race including, but not limited to **gender**, **ability**, and **sexual orientation**.

Black, Indigenous, and people of color are not a monolith. Regardless of our identifiers, we are all susceptible to white supremacy.

Non-Black people of color: this is also an opportunity to investigate the ways in which we each harbor and benefit from **anti-Blackness** both professionally and otherwise. No one is exempt from engaging in this work and everyone can benefit from investigating the ways we have absorbed and perpetuated white supremacy.

Last, it is easy to become overwhelmed by a host of theories, ideas, and practices that may be unfamiliar to you. This interactive guide is not intended to be worked through in a single, unpaid, one hour meeting. We strongly encourage you, and the people you team up with, to work through it in pieces and sections. Plan to dedicate appropriate time to address its contents with focus and intention.



Snow White
Seattle Children's Theatre
Photo by Angela Sterling

MINDSET CHECK-IN

Anti-racism and anti-oppression work, deep self-examination, and drafting a process of accountability can be fraught with resistance, discomfort, and even tension for many individuals. It is no small feat to reckon with how you may harbor unchecked **racism** and **implicit bias**, how it has impacted your work in TYA, and how you yourself may be complicit in oppression, discrimination, and othering.

This internal friction is indicative of growth. Lean into these moments and investigate their origins. The process of evolution can only begin when people are able to acknowledge the ways in which they as individuals, and the **predominantly white institutions** they may work for, have perpetuated and upheld **white supremacy** through the art and/or the **organizational cultures** they create.

It's true that artists, writers, administrators, arts educators, board members, and more are

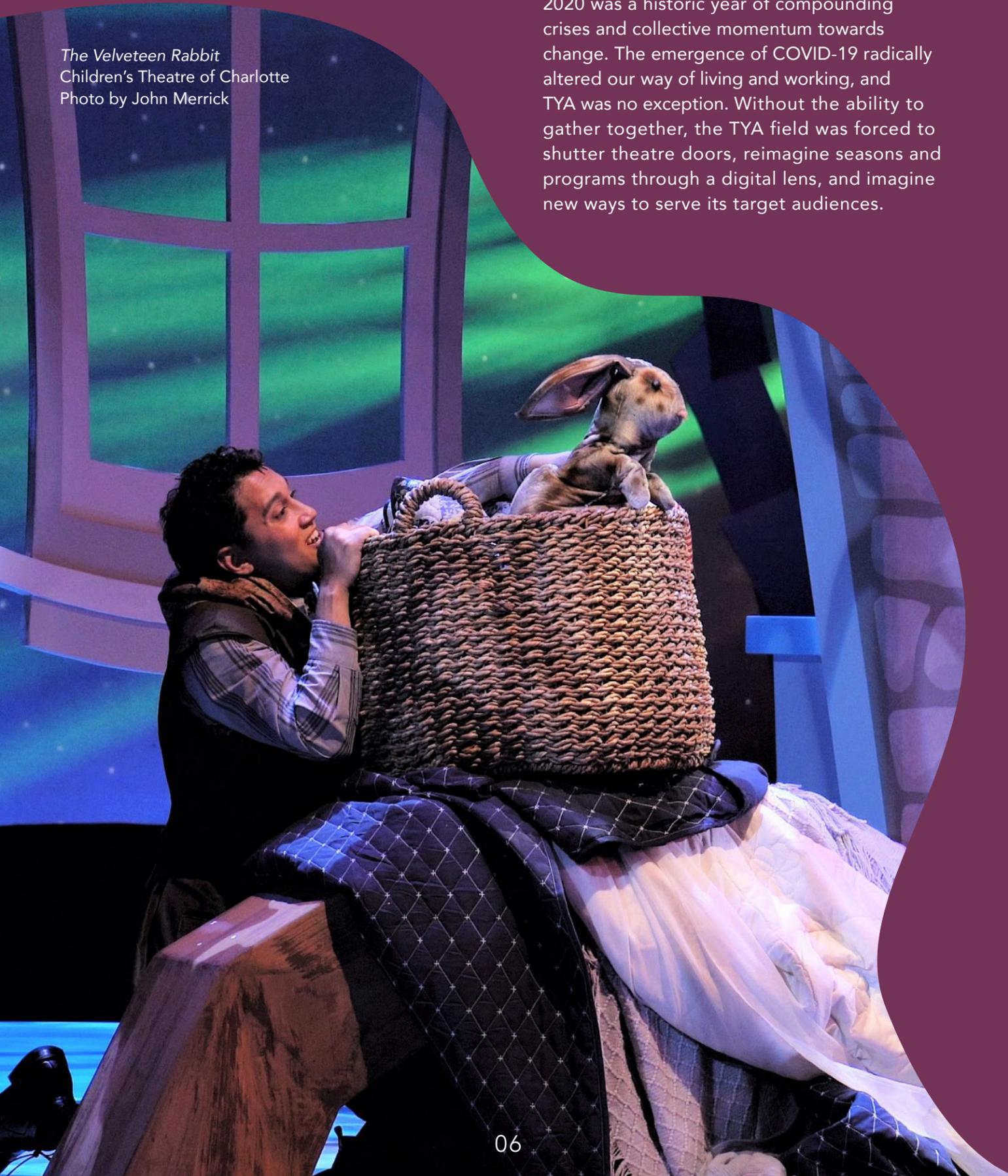
the pillars that hold up the field of TYA itself. However, young people, families, and their communities are ultimately the focus, target, and benefactors.

Individual and organizational transformation around anti-racism and anti-oppression are a conduit for enriching and shaping the minds and lives of young people, and by extension the futures we will co-author together.

HISTORY OF BIPOC IN THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES ADVISORY BOARD

2020 was a historic year of compounding crises and collective momentum towards change. The emergence of COVID-19 radically altered our way of living and working, and TYA was no exception. Without the ability to gather together, the TYA field was forced to shutter theatre doors, reimagine seasons and programs through a digital lens, and imagine new ways to serve its target audiences.

The Velveteen Rabbit
Children's Theatre of Charlotte
Photo by John Merrick



In response, TYA/USA began conducting weekly emergency **affinity group** meetings for TYA practitioners to convene, share experiences, pose questions to peers, and build community. While these groups proved invaluable to organizations, leaders, and artists across the country and world, it became clear that what was missing from this initial rollout — and later from the spaces created for the TYA/USA National Festival & Conference — was a dedicated place for BIPOC individuals to also share space, collectively process these events, and celebrate our successes.

Further galvanized by the widespread protests and calls for racial justice reignited by the killing of George Floyd and numerous other black people at the hands of police, a team of six leaders came together to form the first BIPOC in TYA Advisory Board:

Shavonne Coleman (*she/they*),
Khalia Davis (*she/her*),
Min Kahng (*he/him*),
Tiffany Maltos (*she/her*),
Rudy Ramirez (*they/them*), and
Marisol Rosa-Shapiro (*she/her*)

Around the same time, TYA/USA and Shavanna Calder (*she/her*) of Arts in Color co-produced *Listen, Learn, Lead: Antiracism in TYA*, an 11-session webinar series addressing the racism and oppression that impacts the entire TYA industry in personal, professional, and systemic ways. To access these recordings and additional resources, register free of charge at the **TYA/USA website**.

In partnership with TYA/USA, this cohort worked together to narrow its scope of work to two major projects: the inception of a national BIPOC in TYA Affinity Group and the facilitation of the communal drafting of this document.

HOW THIS PROJECT WAS CREATED

One of the core principles which has been central to the creation of *Anti-Racist & Anti-Oppressive Futures for Theatre for Young Audiences* is:

INDIVIDUALLY WE KNOW LITTLE, BUT COLLECTIVELY WE KNOW A LOT.

When collective knowledge, lived experiences, and wisdom are woven together, they compose a beautifully rich and expansive tapestry. The pages of this document are evidence of this truth.

In that spirit, the advisory board and BIPOC in TYA community drew inspiration from similar movements and projects including, but not limited to, ***We See You White American Theatre***, ***The Living Document***, and ***The Magik Theatre, Black Lives Matter, and Accountability***.

The vision and shape of this project have been generously contributed to by BIPOC TYA practitioners from across the country including board members, artistic directors, teaching artists, arts administrators, independent artists, and the many who occupy multiple roles within the field.



section i

INDIVIDUAL & ORGANIZATIONAL REFLECTION

This guide is intended to be worked through in community with others to promote collective education and expansion. Building learning communities is an integral part of this process as it allows us the opportunity to hear varying perspectives, viewpoints, and lived experiences.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS: Include as many company stakeholders into this process as possible. This includes, but is not limited to executive leaders, department leaders, part-time staff, full-time staff, board members, and independent contractors.

INDEPENDENT ARTISTS: Consider reaching out to colleagues, peers, and/or friends in the field to form a working group dedicated to communal learning and growth.

BRAVE SPACE STANDARDS

You are entering a Brave Space, which is to say that there is no such thing as a “Safe Space” for everyone. Some voices are amplified, while others are traditionally silenced, dismissed, unheard, and/or erased.

Allow time and space for different group members to offer experiences with and/or definitions of each standard. Shared understanding of these standards is not only to avoid misinterpretations, but also to ensure their efficacy.

Confirm that all participants agree to uphold these standards as you approach this work together, and beyond.

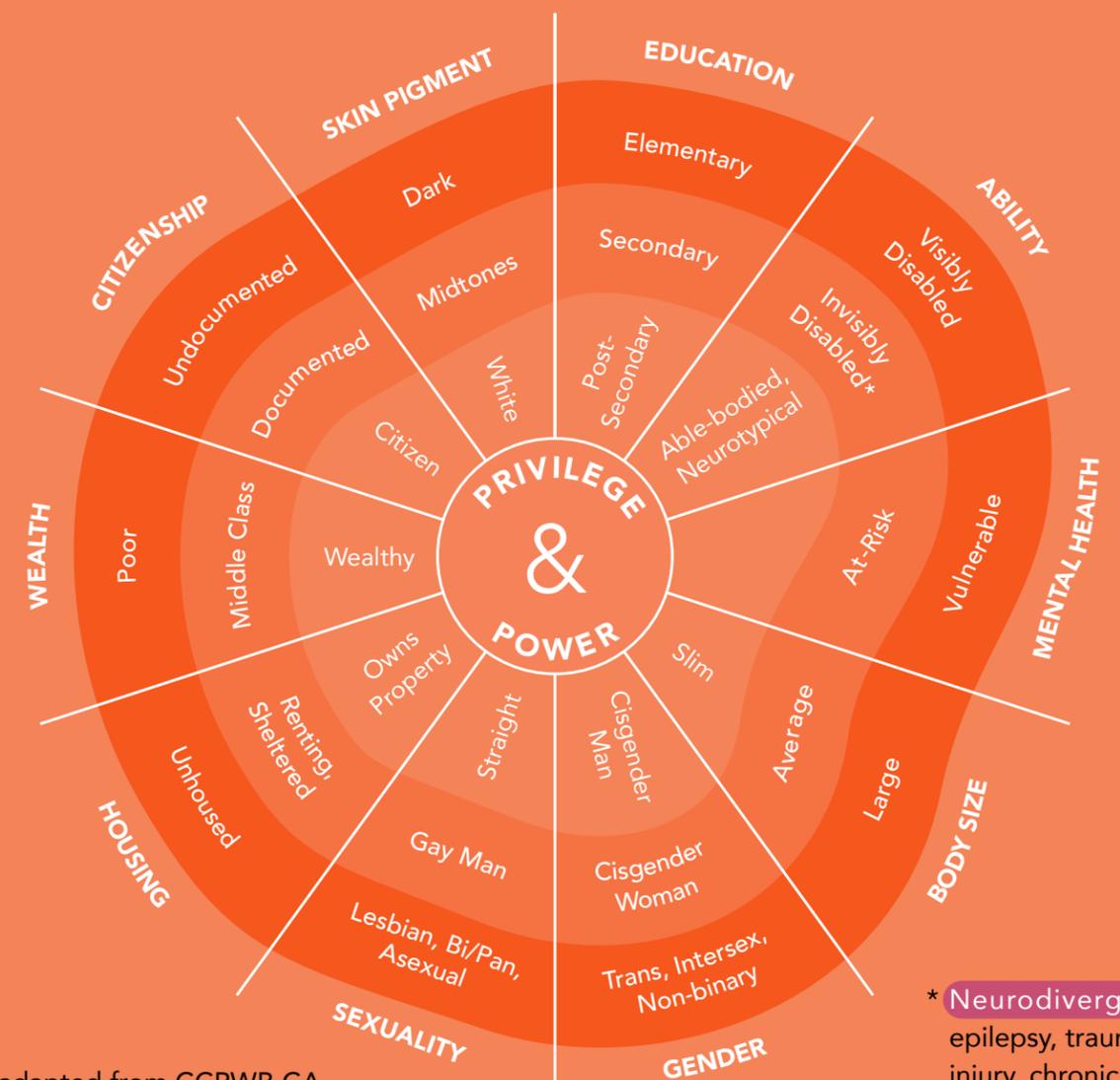
1. I acknowledge when we challenge ourselves to be in a space where our beliefs and identities are discussed, it can cause fear and require vulnerability.
2. I acknowledge I will challenge myself to “hear differently,” or to listen with curiosity.
3. I acknowledge as I work through this document with my peers, I will challenge myself to stay present in the conversations we are having together.
4. I acknowledge I will challenge myself to be a learner, not a knower.
5. I acknowledge I will move through this exploration with civility, and will respect everyone’s basic personhood.
 - a. I will **NOT** engage in the **tone policing** of **historically excluded** and erased voices.
6. I understand my intentions may not match my impact on others. I will prioritize the impact of my words over my intentions.
7. No attacks. I agree not to intentionally inflict harm on another.
8. I will listen not to be right and to respond, but to seek understanding.
9. I will expect and accept that learning is non-linear.

Keiki Kalo
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Photo by Benjamin Le

GUIDED REFLECTION

Reflect on the following questions individually, and then collectively. This section, and the rest of the guide, should be engaged with over many different gatherings and not in one sitting. Take your time and make space for generous conversations, but move forward with intention.

- What motivates you to work in the field of Theatre for Young Audiences?
- Identify a time you experienced how TYA can transform the minds and lives of young people and their families. Consider what impact that had on you and your work.
- How will your own individual education and transformation in anti-racism and anti-oppression benefit you personally, as well as the people in your life? Specifically, people you don’t work alongside.
- Use the graphic below to do a self-inventory of **privilege** and access to **power** you **possess**.



* Neurodivergence, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, etc.

Graphic adapted from CCRWB.CA

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES: IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND IMPACT

- Draw a circle at the center of a piece of paper, and in it write your name. Then, add your identifiers from the privilege/power wheel.
- Next, draw a bigger circle around "you." In it write in a few names of people that you'd consider your best friends and/or chosen family. For each write down a few identifiers from the wheel.
 - These should be people in your life you are not making assumptions about. Doing so can be linked to unintentional bias, which is a harmful practice.
- Then, draw a final circle around the first two and include the communities you serve and would like to serve as an artist and/or an organization.
 - Research demographic data (racial, socioeconomic, gender etc) in your region and history of the populations that make up these communities. Next, write down identifiers from the wheel based off of the demographic data you've found.
- Take some time to notice the similarities and differences between these circles. Reflect on how they may affect your work and write down two examples.

Communities You Serve and
Would Like to Serve

Close Friends and/or
Chosen Family + Identifiers

Your Name + Identifiers

ADDITIONAL GUIDED REFLECTION

- Brainstorm and list at least three ways anti-racism and anti-oppression work will impact your particular scope of work.
- What brought you to this project?
- What do you hope to learn or gain by the time you have finished working through this document?
- In the realm of anti-racism and anti-oppression, what do you find gives you pause, or challenges you the most?
- "We need less ____ , and we need more ____ ."
Fill in the blanks as it pertains to:
 - The world
 - The TYA field as a whole
 - The organizations of which you are a part
 - Your own personal scope of work
(I need less ____ , and I need more ____)
- Take a moment to reflect on the implications that your own internal transformation around anti-racism and anti-oppression will affect and influence the lives of those in both spheres, and beyond.

The Jungle Book
Northwest Children's Theater & School
Photo by David Kinder





section ii

PATHWAYS TO ANTI-RACIST & ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FUTURES

This section includes non-negotiable demands, thought questions, and anonymous anecdotes as contributed by BIPOC in TYA professionals. They are grouped by theme, but as this work is inextricably linked, there is occasional overlap.

A reminder that this section — and the rest of the document — is not exhaustive or all-encompassing. Rather, it provides a foundation through the primary lens of anti-racism which can be built upon. In addition, there are multiple containers for larger conversations and exploration in regards to anti-racism and anti-oppression in TYA.

TYA organizations, both producing and presenting, do not all function, operate, or look the same. This section will not suit every organization's specific needs. As such, incorporate and explore the provided pathways as they fit.

ORGANIZATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Integrate the presence of BIPOC and historically excluded employees in every department, and in decision making conversations at every level of the organization. Ensure that their voices and suggestions are heard and implemented.
- What would it look and feel like if 50% or more of your **organizational stakeholders**, both internal and external, were BIPOC?
 - How can you ensure that among those BIPOC individuals brought in, there is a heterogeneous array of perspectives, lived experiences, and identities represented?
- Ensure not only BIPOC representation in all departments, but also that BIPOC and historically excluded staff receive support, mentorship that is genuinely beneficial, resources, and tools to succeed.
- Draft and adhere to a plan of action to provide tangible support for historically excluded independent artists including, but not limited to:
 - **Monetary support**, professional development, and/or intentional inclusion and implementation of input in decision making on all levels, but particularly their respective scopes of work.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Executive Leaders:** As the stakeholder with the most access to power, why is anti-racist and anti-oppression work important to you?
 - How will you transparently communicate and demonstrate this with your staff and public?
- **Executive Leaders:** How can you decenter yourself as the “leader” and defer to others’ ideas, input, and suggestions?
- Draft an anti-racist action plan, including **time tables and actions items**, to hold your organization accountable.
 - Maintain accountability and accessibility to audiences and external constituents by **publishing** your action plan and time tables publicly and update consistently. *e.g. Social media, websites, email blasts, press releases, etc.*
- If you are a leader of an initiative that centers a specific community (E.g. Latinx, Black, disabled, trans people, etc.) and you do not identify as such, ask yourself...
 - Why am I the figurehead of this initiative?
 - Will I commit to finding someone else who identifies as such who can lead this work?
- How are you actively honoring the Indigenous lands you are occupying?
- How can your organization make space for Native communities at every level of operations? *e.g. Community Advisory Committees, Commissioned Works, Board Members, Artists/Artisans, Designers, Directors for any show, not just Native-specific stories.*
- How can organizations provide a way for people from historically excluded communities to report transgressions outside of a Human Resources context?

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

- All executive leadership, board, and staff (salaried and contract employees) must be trained in anti-racism and anti-bias on an on-going basis.
 - How can you ensure that the practices and cultures created as a result will be incorporated into a variety of spaces including, but not limited to rehearsal rooms, drama classrooms, and community engagement events?
- Establish and practice **bystander intervention protocols** with all salaried and contract employees, which aim to disrupt and name moments of harm, ranging from microaggressions to macroaggressions. (See graphic on right for reference.)
- All executive leadership, board, and staff (salaried and contract employees) must receive **education** on trans/non-binary/gender expansive identities and expressions and address other employees, board members, community members, and anyone else who interacts with the organization by their personal pronouns.
 - Do not make a gender expansive person educate others on the intricacies of gender identity, gender expression, or pronouns. That education process is not their labor to take on.
 - It is important to acknowledge that this requirement opens up the opportunity to further marginalize and other people who have been historically excluded. Incorporate this process with thoughtfulness and intentionality.
- All executive leadership, board, and staff (salaried and contract employees) must receive education on visible and invisible disabilities.
 - Do not make a disabled person educate others on the intricacies of disability justice. That education process is not their labor to take on.

MICROAGGRESSION

Subtle, commonplace, or “harder to identify” acts of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, or transphobia.

- Often brushed off as “just a joke”
- Often ambiguous as “did they mean that?”
- Often made with little awareness of impact or interpretation

MACROAGGRESSION

Overt, explicit, or blatant acts of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, or transphobia.

- Can include actions such as physical assault, sexual assault, and harrasment

Adapted from a diagram by Chapman University



FINANCES

- Create a budget line item for anti-racism and anti-oppression work.
- Commit to adopting budget and pay transparency policies organization-wide.
 - Commit to public and organizational transparency regarding how funds received from grants are spent.
- Draft “Indicators of Success” that do not only include revenue. Potential models include, but are not limited to:
 - Number of target community members reached
 - Number of historically excluded artists supported
 - Amount of money donated to local BIPOC-led and BIPOC centered organizations
- How can your budget reflect your values and demonstrate your commitment to prioritizing *people*?
e.g. Employees, audiences, community members, etc.
- How can you reevaluate paid time off (PTO) and how it is allocated?
 - How will anti-racism and anti-oppressive values and standards influence these institutional defaults?
e.g. Holidays, familial leave, mental wellness, health insurance, short/long term disability leave, etc.
- Commit to allocating funds and labor to ensure all spaces used by an organization are physically accessible.
e.g. Office spaces, rehearsal rooms, drama classrooms, theatres, dressing rooms, etc.

CULTURE SHIFT & BEST PRACTICES

- Address internal and external harm done within/by an organization through a **transformative justice** lens.
- Research, honor, and acknowledge the lands on which theatres and employees reside and collaborate with its Native peoples at every juncture.
e.g. Meetings, training programs, professional development, auditions, rehearsals, performances, touring production, classes, galas, fundraisers, grant reports, community programming, etc.
- Prioritize receiving input from traditionally excluded communities and community members at every level of governance and phase of operations, from inception to execution.
- Source an externally facilitated cultural audit on “unintentional” racial and oppressive biases and how it impacts ALL decisions.
- Introduction and utilization of **Community Agreements** in each organizational sphere.
- Invest time and energy into cultivating a culture of **belonging** within the organization.
- Reevaluate and calibrate the company’s values so they include a dedication to social justice, anti-racism, and equity.
 - Normalize the practice of evaluating whether decisions made within and/or actions made by an organization align with these values.
- How can you create a space of boundaries and protection for whoever is providing consultation around anti-racism, especially if that person is a BIPOC employee?
 - This is a way to protect any employee put in this position, which should be a last resort, as

it creates a space of unequal, compromised power dynamics. External consultation is the best and preferred approach.

- How will you permanently incorporate anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices and values into all facets of your institution?
e.g. Stage management, drama classrooms, board meetings, professional development, etc.
- How can our leaders shift the paradigm from being “directors” (giving orders) to “facilitators” (creating containers and space for others to work and grow)?
- How can your organization encourage and integrate **cross-departmental collaboration**?
 - How can your organization value and prioritize generous collaboration on all levels as a best practice?
- How can your organization create radical systems of support and care for BIPOC and other historically excluded organizational stakeholders?
- How can your organization normalize the practice of acknowledging unequal power dynamics in spheres ranging from one-on-one meetings to public-facing events?
- How can your organization recognize the value part-time and contract employees bring to your institution?
 - How do you ensure their voices, ideas, and input are incorporated and their work is paid for equitably?
- How can you create a sustainable system of internal and external **checks and balances** to ensure this work continues?



ANONYMOUS ANECDOTES

This section contains the stories, lived experiences, and insights of anonymous BIPOC TYA practitioners from across the field. They represent a fraction of similar harmful interactions and situations many others have experienced.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

- How do you find and foster authentic relationships with local artists from BIPOC and historically excluded communities and ensure that their work is a priority in every department?
- How can your organization connect with and support the existing efforts and programs of Native peoples in your area?
- How can your organization shift from an entity within the community to an inextricable and infused part of the broader community?
 - How can you make intentional space to hear the input, ideas, and voices of the young people in your geographic community while you make this shift?
- How can your organization shift to a more community-modeled decision making entity as opposed to a strictly hierarchical power structure?

“ White supremacy is when you’re not seen, nor heard and when you contribute to the conversation it’s ignored until a white person repeats exactly what you said and it’s deemed brilliant. When it’s assumed you don’t know what you’re doing. I have always used this to my advantage. It’s exhausting to operate this way, but you have to adapt to survive until there is another way. Hopefully, a new way is being created and it’s not another passing trend!”

“ I have an incident where a micro-aggression occurred towards one of my staff members, in a space I was not present. When I brought this up to my supervisor I was told that they would have a conversation with the individual that perpetuated this act and to this day I have not heard any resolution or apology from the individual toward my staff member.

I would assume that the supervisor and the individual who used their privilege to impact the BIPOC staff member is not ready for a behavioral change and therefore the apology would not be coming from an honest place. In order to repair and apologize, one must be ready for self-reflection and behavioral change. There is still an opportunity to apologize and repair no matter how long time has passed. This can go a long way in healing the pain. I am still not giving up on bringing this to the attention of those who were involved, but I am laying the groundwork to be able to bring this to light again.”

“ I was doing a show about brown immigrant children with direction and dramaturgy by two white women. It made for many uncomfortable instances that required me and other brown cast members to educate and offer insight about language, cultural specificity, and traditions among others. It was a challenging experience that left me feeling unsupported, and frankly taken advantage of. I couldn’t fully devote myself to crafting a performance (which I was hired to do) because my attention was being spent educating about authentic representation of cultures and peoples (which I was not hired to do).”

“ At the theatre where I currently work as a teaching artist, I pitched and was given the okay to create an Anime inspired story drama class I am very excited about. When the marketing team designed two posters for me to choose from as advertising for the class, I was hurt to see that every character on the poster was white. I created the class and then wasn't represented in its artwork.

Later, I asked for one of the characters to be made into a BIPOC individual, and against my gut I did not specifically require that they not make the one character with animal-like ears into the BIPOC individual. I was hopeful that they could at least see the racism in an act like that, and not make me do the work of pointing it out to them.

Unfortunately, but not shockingly, my organization let me down again. I received a second email with a message saying that the board specifically asked for the part animal character to be made into a BIPOC person (ouch), and then saw that in the poster the only feature changed was the character's skin color. I was driving when this occurred. I pulled into the gym parking lot, where I go to clear my head and where I used to feel safest, and cried. I then sent another email asking for specifics. I asked for a character with a hairstyle other than just straight and plain, and I made it clear that the only BIPOC character could not also be the character with an animalistic quality.

I wrote and rewrote the email five times as I was frustrated, angry, and sad, but didn't want any of that to show in my writing. I was and am always aware of how quickly my job can be taken from me when I speak up in this way. I sent the email, received a gracious response from the board, and two days later received a beautiful and inclusive third attempt at the poster. What I want now is for my organization to never again require three attempts (and a TA's breaking down in a parking lot) to get to a point of inclusion.”

“ As a woman of color (WOC) working in an entry level Education position at my organization, I had a sustained negative experience with a white male manager who was hired about a year into my tenure working there. On the surface, this individual proclaimed “wokeness” and repeatedly claimed to be an obvious “ally to all marginalized groups” as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. Though my interactions with him as a colleague demonstrated he was just starting his anti-racism journey in a way that made me unsafe as a WOC under his management.

One of the first major red flags came in a group discussion facilitated by our department director following an interview with a candidate for a new position we were hiring. When asked for our thoughts/first impressions, my white manager shared that while he liked the candidate, he was “worried” that they would “accuse him of racism” in the event that they did not agree with him about a work matter. For context, this candidate identified as Latina and had been vocal about her passion for anti-racism work in the arts during the interview. I was made immediately uncomfortable by this comment, especially since we had interviewed a white-identifying candidate a few days earlier who had also spoken about an interest in anti-racism, yet he did not raise any concerns about the possibility of this white candidate accusing him of racism following that interview.

After this conversation, I immediately went to my department director (also a WOC) expressing the concern I had around this comment. I believed that by the logic that my manager just expressed, as a BIPOC staff member I was not safe to voice differing opinions about work matters with him. My department head agreed this comment was worth discussing with him and set-up a mediated discussion between us. This discussion turned into him being aggressive and defensive towards me — leaning as much as possible into the imbalance of power with me confronting him as my manager — and me being put on the spot and asked to explain to him what “white fragility” means and how his comment about the candidate was an example of that, as he did not know what it meant when the department head mentioned the term.

My organization's People of Color (POC) affinity group became the only safe space for me at the organization, and therefore I made a point of prioritizing this hour on my calendar. My manager, while not vocally unsupportive, did not take steps to make it easier for me to attend this group either. I ALWAYS had to reach out to him in advance to make arrangements to cover class supervision duties in

the weeks where the group met — despite it being the same time, every time — and it always felt like I was asking a huge favor of him whenever I did.

Microaggressions continued over the months and I consistently brought them to my department head (my organization did not have an HR manager/department) as soon as they occurred. The only action visible to me despite the accumulation of these incidents, was more mediated conversations between us that consistently ended up much like the one I mentioned above: me being asked to explain anti-racist concepts and my experiences as a WOC and in turn, him being defensive/aggressive if anything I said so much as suggested he had acted in a way that upheld white supremacy culture.

It was only after a WOC colleague in my department situated hierarchically above my manager observed one of these incidents, called him out for it, and then discussed it with our department head that I felt my concerns were seriously heard by the organization and small interventions from the top started occurring. This occurred months after I first began voicing concerns. I am sad to say it was too little too late.

After six months of working with this manager and going to leadership with my concerns only to have the burden of the anti-racist education of my white colleague put back on me, I ended up resigning from the organization. I was mentally burnt out from the cognitive dissonance of working in an organization that proclaimed an EDI-focused mission publicly, while my experience as a woman of color, entry level staff member was that I was a guinea pig for the anti-racist work of my white colleague.

Ultimately, my wellbeing and safety as a BIPOC employee of this organization was less of a priority than my white colleague “becoming” anti-racist.”

“...I was a guinea pig for the anti-racist work of my white colleague.”

The Little Prince
Seattle Children's Theatre
Photo by Elise Bakketun

A Band of Angels
New York City Children's Theater
Photo by Carol Rosegg



— section iii —

LOOKING BACK & LOOKING AHEAD

This section contains opportunities to reflect on the past on an individual and organizational level. Following, you will be asked to consider how to take responsibility for instances of harm through the lens of TYA. This section ends with exercises to help create systems of accountability and to cast vision for more equitable futures.

SELF CHECK-IN

Take a moment to reflect on what feelings or knee-jerk reactions you experienced while working through the guide thus far.

- Did you experience a moment of clarity or breakthrough?
- Did you find yourself challenged?
- Did you learn something about yourself or others that surprised you?

Next, notice how this may have affected your body. Do a quick check in. Start at the top of your head and slowly scan your way down through the body. Notice where you might be holding tension, and release it. Take a few intentional deep breaths.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST

Before delving into the process of converting these pathways into actionable steps, take some time to reflect even further back. While it might sound appealing to start with a fresh slate and look forward to equitable futures, it is imperative that you first investigate how you may have perpetuated harm in the past, both directly and indirectly.

To revisit, harm exists on a spectrum ranging from microaggressions to macroaggressions. This occurs on an interpersonal, organizational, programmatic, and systemic level and is often firmly rooted in white supremacy. Review the following graphic for further context and insight.



Adapted from Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, Ellen Tuzzolo, Mary Julia Cooksey Cordero, and The Conscious Kid

While the previous graphic specifically outlines an array of examples of racial harm, white supremacy not only affects those who are BIPOC, but also those who are marginalized for other reasons such as gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

- "I never would have guessed you were disabled. You're such a great teaching artist!"
 - Two ways this is problematic are that it erases invisible disabilities like traumatic brain injuries or mental illness, and it also implies that having a disability inherently makes one less skilled in their field.
- "We cast Alex in the upcoming show. SHE goes by THEY now."
 - One way this is problematic is the speaker misgenders the person referenced, which for many is triggering, invalidating, and inherently violent, whether well-intentioned or not.
- "We really want diversity on our Board, but we can't find qualified BIPOC members that meet the financial requirements."
 - One way this is problematic is it assumes and assigns socioeconomic status to all BIPOC people.

Take some time to individually reflect on instances of harm you have witnessed as a bystander in your scope of work. Did you intervene or try to disrupt what was happening? If not, what stopped you from doing so?

Next, bravely think about instances of harm you may have perpetuated yourself, or through an organization. **Remember that Intention does NOT equal impact.**

A few examples of field-specific harm could include:

- Casting practices rooted in racism
- Misgendering people verbally or in print
- Inauthentic or transactional community engagement with marginalized communities
- Tokenizing brown and black bodies in marketing materials and programming
- Unchecked bias and discrimination in hiring practices
- Producing shows with problematic and stereotypical characters/elements
- Tone policing BIPOC employees and/or contract labor when they voice concern or speak their truth
- Hiring BIPOC actors, but not having anyone on costume or hair/wig design with experience to facilitate their needs
- Building a set that isn't accessible to all physical abilities
- Hiring able bodied actors to play disabled characters

Once you've identified individual and/or organizational moments of harm, consider the following:

- How can you acknowledge this harm and the impact it had on the individuals and/or communities involved?
- How can you **apologize** in an authentic way?
- How can you make intentional space for the people and/or communities who have experienced the harm to share how it has impacted them? This should center and benefit these specific people/groups, and not center or explicitly benefit your organization.
- How can you ensure you and/or the organization turn this event into a teachable moment and modify your practices and behavior going forward?

GUIDED REFLECTION

Now that you've broached the topic of past harm, take some time to glance back through Section 2: Pathways to Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Futures.

Note a few from each category that particularly resonate with you, and unpack them with your working group. Explore how these ideas and questions, and the action steps they lead to, can be tangibly implemented in your personal scope of work.

VISION CASTING FREE WRITE

Take 5-10 minutes to free write in response to the following prompt.

Describe your idea of a perfectly equitable, diverse, inclusive, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive theatre organization.

What does it look like? What does it feel like? How does it function? What might it sound like? Who is there that may have been absent before?

Free Writing Guidelines:

- Set a timer and write for 5–10 minutes.
- Write continuously, without stopping.
- Write without worrying about correctness in spelling, content, form, or subject.
- Write for only your eyes (don't think about an audience)
- When you're done, share some highlights with your working group.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Before you and your working groups delve into action items and next steps, consider that no one can be forced into a system of accountability. All parties must be willing participants in the accountability process to ensure that any actions that might be taken will not be out of a social or contractual obligation, but as a direct byproduct of personal and organizational investment and transformation.

In the context of this document and its themes, accountability should and must occur on a variety of levels:

- Individually
- With the people you work the closest
- Organization-wide
- In conjunction with local communities, schools, audiences, and families
- The greater field of TYA



PERSONAL VALUES ROOTED IN ANTI-RACISM & ANTI-OPPRESSION

Personal values are the fundamental beliefs that are important to us, and the characteristics and behaviors that motivate us and guide our decisions. One way to set up a system of individual accountability is to draft a set of personal values.

Use the following word bank directly or as inspiration to create at least three personal value statements. This is individual and private work that does not need to be shared.

"I believe that _____ is of fundamental importance."

"I believe in the power of _____."

"My work in TYA must be firmly rooted in _____."

As a way to ensure these values inform and shape your behavior inside and outside the workplace, fill in the following blank for yourself.

"As a result, I will dedicate myself to _____."

As a framework to approach repairing harm when you eventually operate outside of your established values, fill in the blank for yourself. Remember that harm is inevitable and will happen.

"When I cause harm in these efforts, I will _____."

As a way to investigate the root causes of this harmful behavior, fill in the blank for yourself.

"After I have brought responsible repair, I will take time to deeply reflect and ask myself _____."

Last, as a way to plan to modify your behavior to prevent this specific harm from happening again, fill in the blanks for yourself.

"In light of what I have learned and reflected on, I dedicate myself to not _____, and instead will _____."

BELONGING	HONOR
JUSTICE	TRANSPARENCY
COMMUNITY	CONNECTION
MINDFULNESS	SERVICE
LEARNING	AUTHENTICITY
RESTORATION	TRANSFORMATION
COLLABORATION	LEADERSHIP
CURIOSITY	INTENTIONALITY
HUMILITY	RESPECT
RESPONSIBILITY	OPENNESS
HONESTY	EQUITY
COMMITMENT	IMAGINATION



section iv

FINAL THOUGHTS

Drafting a personal set of values and building frameworks of individual accountability is a first step to directly impact and shape your scope of work. But it doesn't end there. White supremacy is both overt and insidious. It has needled its way into every facet of our society, way of living, and operations. Theatre for Young Audiences is no exception.

As Michael J. Bobbit reminded us, "Anti-racism work is an act of love." It is an active, ongoing, and communally engaged undertaking. To some, the absence of a definitive indicator of completion is daunting. However, if the field as a whole dedicates itself to the long journey ahead to transform the practices, content, and art created in TYA, then the labor is shouldered by many instead of a few.

How can we learn from each other? How can we create systems to gain inspiration from our colleagues and hold each other to account?

A final reminder: **Individually we know little, but collectively we know a lot.**

It is imperative that the field as a whole and the organizations that make up TYA take on this task because of the intrinsic nature and focus of our work: inspiring, shaping, and growing the minds and lives of young people. This rings especially true reflecting on the fact that **50% of U.S. youth** under 18 years of age are BIPOC, and this number is expected to grow over the next decade.

What a powerful gift and weighty responsibility.

A responsibility to remember that we are accountable to the young people we serve and the worlds we help them imagine. A responsibility to investigate our pasts and bravely address our collective history of upholding white supremacy. A responsibility to do so with generosity, grit, and intentionality. A responsibility to build more equitable and just futures.

What kind of futures would you like to co-author?

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Chato's Kitchen
Childsplay Theatre
Photo by Tim Trumble Photography

INTERACTIVE GLOSSARY

ABILITY: This identity is about the diverse array of differences in physical, mental, cognitive, developmental, learning, and/or emotional make-up. It also includes mental health and the impact of social experiences such as trauma and surviving abuse.
Source: Center for Academic Excellence

AFFINITY GROUP: A designated "safe space" where everyone in that group shares a particular identity. This identity can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, physical/mental ability, socio-economic class, family structure, religion, etc.
Source: Princeton Day School

ANTI-BLACKNESS: A two-part formation that both strips Blackness of value (dehumanizes), and systematically marginalizes Black people. This form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. Society also associates politically incorrect comments with the overt nature of anti-Black racism. Beneath this anti-Black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which predetermines the socioeconomic status of Blacks in this country and is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.
Source: Council for the Democratizing Education

ANTI-OPPRESSION: An active way to recognize the oppression that exists in our society and to mitigate its effects and eventually equalize the power imbalance in our communities.
Source: Simmons University

ANTI-RACISM: An active way of seeing and being in the world, in order to transform it. It does not happen exclusively in the workplace, in the classroom, or in selected aspects of our lives.

Source: *Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre*

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION: A philosophy and strategy for prevention of various types of violence, including but not limited to bullying, sexual harassment, sexual assault, racism, micro and macroaggressions.

Source: *Drexel University*

EQUITY: Promotes justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.

Source: *NYC Cultural Affairs*

GENDER: A person's deep felt sense of who they are. Gender is different from sex in that sex is generally identified with one's anatomy. Examples of gender include, but are not limited to, cisgender (people whose gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth), transgender (people who identify differently than designated at birth), nonbinary gender identity (those who do not identify as the binary of man or woman in relation to society's definitions and instead view gender as less fixed), and many more.

Source: *Center for Academic Excellence*

HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED: Groups and communities that experience discrimination and marginalization (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

Social exclusion as a concept has three distinguishable features: 1) It involves culturally-defined social categories, with associated cultural perceptions, values and norms that shape social interaction. 2) It is embedded in social relations. 3) It affects people's rights and entitlements, denying them the opportunities they need to attain and maintain a universally acceptable standard of living and to fulfil their potential.

Source: *National Collabor Centre for Determinants of Health, PACS India*

IMPLICIT BIAS: Refers to unconscious feelings, attitudes and decisions about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These biases develop over the course of a lifetime via exposure to direct and indirect messages (i.e. media and news) and encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments. It is activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.

Source: *Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity*

INTERSECTIONALITY: A framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different levels of discrimination and privilege. Examples of these aspects are gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, and height. To watch a video exploring intersectionality, follow this [LINK](#).

Source: *YW Boston*

NEURODIVERGENCE: Refers to variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions. As a term, it can include a multitude of neuro-variations such as autism, traumatic brain injuries, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and mental illness.

Source: *INCLUDES Network*

ORGANIZATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS: An individual or group who has any interest, claim, or stake in the organization's activity or decisions. A few TYA examples include the board of directors, executive leadership, department heads, part-time and contract labor, actors, teaching artists, designers, directors, playwrights, schools districts, schools, teachers, parents, guardians, and most importantly: young people.

PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIs): Those institutions whose histories, policies, practices, and ideologies center whiteness or the white majority. PWIs, by design, tend to marginalize the identities, perspectives, and practices of people of color. A term used to describe institutions in which Caucasians account for 50% or greater of the institution.

Source: *IGI Global*

POWER: The ability to act or produce an effect; legal or official authority, capacity, or right; possession of control, authority, or influence over others; a controlling group or establishment (a group of social, economic, and political leaders who form a ruling class or a controlling group)—often used in the phrase the powers that be; mental or moral efficacy; political control or influence.

Source: *Merriam Webster Dictionary*

PRIVILEGE: Operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of marginalized groups.

Source: *Vanderbilt University*

RACISM: The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.

Source: *ADL*

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A person's sexual, emotional, romantic, and/or affectional attractions, not necessarily dependent on behavior. Examples of identities include heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual (people who are attracted to people of two or more genders), pansexual (a term referring to the potential for attractions or love toward people of all gender identities and sexes), asexual (people who either do not feel sexual attraction or do not feel desire for a sexual partner or partners. Some asexual individuals may still have romantic attractions), queer (a self-identification for a person whose gender identity/ expression and/or sexual orientation does not conform to societal categories), and many more.

Source: Center for Academic Excellence

TONE POLICING: A conversational tactic that dismisses the ideas being communicated when they are perceived to be delivered in an angry, frustrated, sad, fearful, or otherwise emotionally charged manner.

Source: Choose Change

WHITE SUPREMACY: A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege. To watch a video exploring the history of white supremacy, follow this [LINK](#).

Source: Pittsburgh Arts Council

Korean Cinderella
Honolulu Theatre for Youth
Photo by Alvin Chan

