

BROADWAY FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER AGAIN

The Miseducation: A First Step Guide for Educational Institutions Committed to Beginning the Process of Becoming Antiracist

BAC is committed to holding public conversations that unearth the racist structures, behaviors and practices that inhibits equity within the theater industry. We acknowledge that conversations are only the first step in the process of dismantling white supremacy and have shared a list of resources below for you to continue the necessary work ahead.

THE LOGISTICS

WHO: *It's vital that you invite artists from all departments of your program (actors, stage managers, technical designers, costumes, etc), administrators, faculty and staff. You may decide to have this conversation within your specific department first so that intimacy and trust does not become a challenge if the program is significantly large. This conversation is to offer Black students the opportunity to meet with faculty to discuss their experience with racism, identify inequities, and needs for a safe, more just learning environment. If your program has a particularly small population of Black students, you need to bring a non-white professional well versed in this work, we've offered suggestions further down this document.*

NOTE: *If a Black student is unwilling to participate in the conversation, it is the duty of faculty and administration to honor the request to not participate and follow up personally when it feels appropriate. Everyone may not feel safe enough to dive into this difficult conversation. If an administrator is unwilling to participate, it is important to note and needs to be addressed immediately as to why their disinterest in engaging exists.*

WHEN: *We recommend committing to hosting this initial conversation within the first two weeks of the forum.*

WHERE: *For virtual gathering, use a meeting platform, such as Zoom.*

IDENTIFY A NOTETAKER: *This person should not be a Black student. The note taker should be responsible for writing out agreements in the chat function for everyone to see, noting down action steps, suggestions, concerns.*

BLACK STUDENT LED COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Before experiences are shared, community agreements should be made by the Black students to set expectations of listening and honoring the work. The administration cannot set the terms of discussion. As an educational institution, here lies an opportunity to move away from inherently racist power dynamics and instead prioritize the voices of Black students'. Allow them to identify needs of their community and expectations for a safe and honest discussion.

To Black Students: Creating agreements as a community helps to set boundaries that give the full group something to refer to when they're disregarded & overstepped. If in a virtual space, they can be written in the chat box. Those closest to the problem must be closest to the solution; Black students must be at the center of the conversation and be key contributors to organizing the flow, agenda, guidelines, and expectations.

NOTE: Beware of guidelines that privilege the privileged, and silence the silenced.

For example: "Be Nice." Because conversations about race can be very uncomfortable for some white folks, any suggestion of racism is often perceived as rude or as an attack. Though the intention of a "BE NICE" is understandable, within difficult conversations this can be an insidious guideline, keeping white folks unchallenged and comfortable. "BE NICE" can also be utilized as a way to monitor and control the valid emotions and expressions of marginalized individuals, also known as tone policing.

Examples: Be emotionally present; Good willed - assume folks are doing their best. Take care of yourself. To our Black students, step out if you need to. To our institutions: confidentiality- keep what's shared within the room.

CENTER THE BLACK STUDENTS EXPERIENCES, SUGGESTIONS, QUESTIONS.

Race is a vast topic, Black students are dealing with it in every facet of their life right now. Give them the floor to name what they observed in the forum, what resonated personally and why, what they've experienced/are experiencing in their departments that mirror the experiences voiced in the forum.

- Allow the discussion to flow organically.
- Do not speak over, invalidate, discredit any experience Black students share.
- If you have a thought that is not directly on topic, create a "Parking Lot" of thoughts to revisit at another point in conversation or schedule another discussion to work through these parking lot questions/thoughts.
- Make space after sharing experiences for Black students to offer suggestions or needs that haven't been heard/met.

Begin to identify:

- Is the curriculum disproportionately built to harm BIPOC?
- Are BIPOC students authentically represented in the material they study/perform/create?
- Has there been a space in the department to talk about racial issues within the industry, or the department itself?
- How can we create a space if there has not been one before? What does it look like?
- Is there a need for an Advisory Board or Accountability Committee?
- Are there Alumni willing to collaborate in advisory positions to protect current students?
- Create this space with the people on the call. This is a space to hear student demands, needs and expectations for an equitable educational landscape, they deserve to be involved in the decision making process.

NOTE: These spaces for discussion should be safe venues for Black students (& Black faculty) to speak freely, transparently, and authentically without fear of retaliation and the willingness to share their experience is both a gift and personal sacrifice.

SCHEDULE ONGOING GATHERINGS

Commit to meeting on a regular basis. Once a month? Twice a month? Every Sunday? Throughout the school year.

In other words, keep this going, remain accountable and committed to change. Below listed are necessary resources that can aid active restructuring.

- Remember it is hard for Black students, frankly, any marginalized students, to not be overpowered by their administration when there's only a handful. To balance the already tilted scale of power, it is vital you are willing to invest in paying for a facilitator to join these spaces.
- Remember to keep the Black students centered and part of this entire process.
- Remember that racist structures tend to "fix" the problem in silos and alienate those directly affected.
- Remember Black students must be allowed to lead these conversations, those with power to make changes should remain amenable and flexible.

Hiring a professional to handle this work is recommended, yes, we are asking that you invest your funds. When asking for workshops, seminars, consultancies and facilitation, expect to compensate people for their time. Black students aren't on campus to do free social justice work.

Folks to Consider Bringing In:

1. **Rebecca Kelly G-** arts and equity consultant, facilitator, interdisciplinary artist, and former civil rights attorney working with communities to heal internalized oppression, decolonize the imagination, engage restorative justice, and move practices toward equity. Additionally, BIPOC Actor's Advocate. <https://www.rebeccakellyg.com/>
2. **Milta Vega-Cardona-** an organizer and core trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, providing Undoing Racism workshops and technical assistance in antiracist organizing, leadership development, and transformational change. <https://movementresearch.org/people/milta-vega-cardona>
3. **Vickie Washington-** a theatre maker, cultural worker, teacher, social justice advocate-activist-organizer; moving through the world as an African-centered, anti-racist Black Woman. Prepared to train and empower educators to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in our schools and communities. <https://centerracialjustice.org/trainers/vickie-washington-2/>
4. **Dr. Tawyna Pettiford-Wates-** educator/organizer of engagements and workshops geared toward businesses, organizations, schools and communities to help in the process of eliminating racial and cultural stereotypes and the movement toward a more just and equal world. <https://www.theconciliationproject.org/>

MAKE A TRANSPARENT ACTION PLAN

Commit to laying out the steps you'll be taking individually and as an institution to deal with inequities and ensure that the directly impacted students remain a part of the conversations and decisions being made. (i.e. redrafting the code of conduct, editing the student handbook, revising the curriculum department wide, including students in choosing the mainstage seasons, hiring an arts and equity consultant, hiring BIPOC faculty, developing recourse for inequitable treatment on campus)

Not all of this will be covered in one Zoom meeting, or two. Plan to keep this at the top of your departmental focus for a long time.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

This is a day for listening, understanding, healing and mobilizing. An opportunity to take responsibility and accountability for any and all behaviors, individual and institutional, that perpetuate racism within educational theatre institutions. A move to divest from any notions that conflict with the idea that Black Lives Matters and commit ourselves to creating more equitable, inclusive, and safe spaces. We ask that you enter with open minds, open hearts, and open ears. Please leave your egos, titles, and any spirits of offense at the door, and lean in.

We acknowledge that the heinous murders of innocent and unarmed Black men, women and gender non-confirming at the hands of police, and the subsequent protests, marches, and riots have awakened our nation to what most of us have known, seen, and lived for far too long. We are grateful for our brothers and sisters organizing in our communities on our behalf. Their labor has made it possible for us to be here today.

We believe that those who are directly most affected by the varied levels of system oppression should be allowed to speak and be heard first, when cultivating policies and actions of reform. Tonight we are gathered in the name of confronting white supremacy as it stands in educational theatre programs across the globe.

We are asking many to re-open wounds and relive trauma in an effort to help members of our industry understand their role in creating work environments that have been abusive, hostile, stifling, unsafe, and racist. You are seen, heard, and affirmed. We welcome and encourage all constructive ideas, thoughts, and experiences to be shared without judgements or fear of retaliatory actions.

There are hundreds, thousands of different voices, opinions, and experiences in this room that all want and deserve to be heard. We've provided opportunities for some to speak and share, but unfortunately there is not enough time to address everyone. At the end of this forum, should you need, there will be an Outer Space room for you to speak and decompress anything that comes up for you and needs unpacking at this time.

The bulk of our work must be done outside of this forum to begin making necessary changes within our industry. The racist, elitist structures in our theatre training institutions have maintained a homogenous preference in our fields for far too long. With that in mind, we ask that you remain present and patient with us as we take careful steps to ensure accountability. We also acknowledge that much of the work done in this space may be challenging and uncomfortable, and 120 minutes is only enough time to begin to unpack years of pain, silence, and suffering. Once again, we have created a post forum breakout room dedicated to our Black community viewing this evening to offer additional mental and emotional support.

We welcome both humility and discomfort, for it is at the crest of those two that an opportunity for growth and change lies.