

Meeting #2, 9-17-18

Fair Play Initiative Intro & Visioning Session

Attendance at beginning: About 30

Welcome: Wayne Smith, Louisa Koeppel, Emily Marks

Reading of the letter.

We are a group of local artists who have organized this project with the intent of **collaboration, inclusiveness, knowledge sharing, and moving the Memphis Performing Arts Community forward**. We love our city and the artists who live and create here. We are one of Memphis's most valuable assets.

Recently, there have been some challenging conversations within the performing arts community in reference to the **#metoo** movement and **racial equity**. The common thread between these conversations is a belief that we could do better if we had the proper tools.

Our purposes of organizing this coalition are:

- **Harness this energy** into a space of solidarity, healing, and action.
- **Change the mindset** of “I just thought this is how things go” and “I didn't say anything because I didn't want to lose future work”.
- Provide the community with the tools to help **address challenges and foster safe creative spaces** where artists feel supported and empowered..
- Most importantly, **lead by example** for the thousands of young people in our city who participate in performing arts training every year. This next generation of Memphis artists deserve to create in an environment free from harassment, oppression, bullying, and gatekeeping.

We begin addressing these issues and more with the Memphis Performing Arts Coalition. Our first project is the **FairPlay Initiative**.

Goal of the evening: Not VENTING, but creating a space to solicit positive responses, harnessing our energy into healing and action.

Safe spaces for young people

Fair Play Initiative - community-wide code of ethics

- How many people identify as artists? Most.
- Arts admin? Some reps from Black Arts Alliance, Play Back, Opera Memphis, University of Memphis
- Participating in more than one org as an artist? Some artists in the room that identify as teaching artists, actors and directors.
- Had equity training before? Some. Playback Memphis, Corporate Diversity and Harassment Training, New Memphis Institute, Centers for Spiritual Living, Urban Arts Commission, Opera America Civic Action, Aorta?
- Some have had equity training specifically related to Performing Arts.

Introductions around the circle.

Meet someone you don't know. Say name and preferred gender pronoun and let's talk about the following

What brought you here today

Not sure yet!
To see what happens
Empower students, as teachers
New to the community and want to meet people
Get information about what this project really is.

What are your Fears:

A bunch of nothing happening.
All talk no action.
People are conspicuously missing.
Sadness and pain resulting from shedding light
Reticence to share
This won't continue, no follow through.

Hopes:

Dispelling myths
Starting conversation
Opening eyes and ears
Just the start
Actionable work

Before we start we need to go over the guidelines

Practice self-care. This topic can get intense. Go outside if needed.

Practice consent. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do

Step forward/step back: Let others speak if you usually dominate, Step forward if you usually don't share.

Practice forgiveness and patience

We are all volunteering to put this evening and initiative together. We ask for your patience as we do this. We also ask that some people in the room are further along than others in terms of equity (knowing terms/trainings etc) and to be patient for others to catch up

- Acknowledge that there are multiple truths in the room.
- Try to listen for understanding, not in order to debate.
- Ask clarifying questions if something is not clear.
- Agree to disagree, but not to disengage.
- Maintain confidentiality- discuss and share broader themes when appropriate, but do not discuss specific stories or attributes to specific individuals.
- When in doubt about what can be shared:
 - Allow everyone to speak for themselves, not on behalf of an entire group
 - Acknowledge that communication differences may be cultural (or may not be) so your discomfort with a communication style is not an excuse to disengage
 - Challenge yourself-step out of your comfort zone
 - Address conflict directly if it arises – see it as a learning opportunity
 - Recognize natural or imposed power dynamics and imbalances
 - Acknowledge if you may have said something that was hurtful or insensitive to someone else
- Please limit side conversations and time on electronic devices
- Please speak up if a guideline is not being honored.

Additions to guidelines:

None offered.

Emily Marks introduction

Gaining interest in grassroots organizing because of personal events

Connected with Louisa about developing a code of ethics

Recap of first meeting

18 people were there

Educators and performers

Emily facilitated a workshop like tonight's

Explored info from other cities

MPAC wants to be a neutral voice

Document for schools

Document for adult orgs

Community Day of Action with Kaisha Johnson from Women of Color in The Arts- who is interested? What other concerns are there?

Community wide survey: Who, where, how often, what roles, what practices are in place, what is working and not, what new actions, what is an equitable arts comm, what tools are needed?

OPERNING: Shared a list of performing arts orgs worldwide that have had major leadership shakeups

Lincoln Center, American Ballet Theatre Gloucesters Stage, Austin Opera, New York City Ballet

Etc/

National response to assault and racism are:

ARTISTS ARE UPSET!

Themes happening nationally are : Gender/race based harassment - From Peter Martins at New York City Ballet to Playwright Israel Horovitz

Systemic Racial Bias - artists nationwide are questioning the lack of hiring/ lack of pipelines to create

Arts leadership opportunities (Both creative and admin) for women and artists of color as well as trans/ queer

Sexism and racism in programming: International trend of theatre's screwing up and not thinking about curatorial context. - communities are challenging back (Black women bay area coalition recently challenged the programming of Marin Theatre's Jefferson/ Hemmings play when they billed it as a "love story" Montreal Jazz fest recently received a protest and cancelled a show where they cast white women as slaves singing slave songs.

STRATEGIES

Artists and others in the field are building coalitions.

ACTION--They are creating tools beginning with the ethics to operate hold themselves accountable and inviting institutions to get on board. Some coalitions are forming to address racial bias in casting and programming (Chicago Inclusion Project- Theatre coalitions of color in Minneapolis)

ACTION --It's becoming apparent in the national field that When everyone comes to the table it creates non hierarchical systems and decolonizes the process. Coalitions have been successful

by bringing everyone from the community in every role to be a part of the process. Each city is different. Has a different arts ecosystem as well as different history with trauma--so different things should be addressed.

COMMON THEMES IS TO CALL IN NOT CALL OUT. When call out culture happens it's usually a last resort and because people did not have tools.

Sticky Note Activities with group

Brainstorm: 1 or 2 sentences about what the most equitable performing arts community would look like

Highlights:

- Commitment to diversify leadership/ staff/ season ***** Comes up multiple times
- DIVERSE AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT/ Strategies for partnerships and collaborations
- Equitable performing arts community would appear as a community to outsiders before appearing as anything else
- Leadership would reflect city and demographics and the funding support would similarly align
- An intentional effort would be made to put people of color and women in positions of leadership
- No one is too uncomfortable to participate in an org because of race or gender
- Opportunities to participate available in locations all Memphians can easily travel to
- Equal access to venues.
- Living Wage for Artists--***** multiple people

Brainstorm: In a community you are a part of, think of a time when you were uncomfortable. What is a practice or system that causes disrespect, and what is an alternative practice?

Highlights:

- **THEMES!! URGENT NEED FOR ANTI OPPRESSION/EQUITY TRAINING*****
- *****I see micro-aggressions in my troupe. We need education and anti oppression training
- *****Equal access to venue (Don't steal other peoples shows. Some companies and leaders in the community leverage power over venue to not rent to smaller companies and orgs of color (came up multiple times)
- **Inclusive Casting Practices**

- Casting all body types to prevent body shaming
- Overworked artists in this town- create self care initiatives- pay artist a fair wage for their work-don't burn them out
- Continued conversations about gender and pronouns -sensitivity training
- **NEED FOR CONSENT TRAINING/ INTIMACY**
- **CHOREOGRAPHY/ADDRESSING BOUNDARIES**
- There is a Lack of clarity / choreography in sex scenes/ or scenes of sexual violence (Choreography needed)
- Practice ongoing consent (even non sexual touching) Consent to be pushed in emotionally tough situations
- Lots of notes about people not laying out expectations and intentions--
- Talk about consent boundaries before physical contact--
- Allow for options and modifications when working with people in respect for boundaries
- Ask for consent first before touching
- MInors drinking at cast parties (Boundaries are not observed out when young people are in a production) How can we assign adults to look after kids in these situation?
- Complaints about Tech workers being biased to artists of color

Brainstorm: 1 or 2 sentences about what you would like to see in a code of ethics for Memphis.

Highlights:

- **Inclusiveness, respect**
- Administration structures that would facilitate all memphians to speak out without repercussions
- Commitment to a third party that allows artist a place/person to go to if they don't feel safe
- Commitment to diversify leadership/ staff/ season
- All institutions to sign on.
- Unified process to Effectively communicate when each situation arises and don't assume it is done in 1 sweep
- I would like to see transparency in communications and artists.
- Processes/tools and collaborations with multiple institutions to work commit to recruiting diverse perspectives and backgrounds for casting/ programming season/marketing to new audiences together
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- Lack of respect from directors and producers (usually it's the same people directing and producing)
- Commitment to create a pipeline for new directors train them in power dynamics to create a safe rehearsal room
- Board members with no accountability system with checks and balances for board behavior..Board members
- Training for staff board vendors/ producers- all must be involved in this process
- Commitment Diverse audience engagement.
- For smaller org- more funding to support operational budget
- Open casting / diversity in season.
- A safe space to express needs and wants
- Institutions start valuing their artists through equitable pay benefits. Discuss pay in the code.
- Financial support for artists of color

Reviewing Other Codes of Ethics

Chicago Not in Our House

Royal Court Theatre

We have Voice

Austin Artists Bill of Rights

We broke into 3 groups of 8-10 each to review

Austin Feedback:

There is a council to hear grievances

How are the members chosen?

Are they Trained?

What is their skill set?

Without training they could still harbor bias.

Fight and dance choreo: the ability to say no to some things

Royal Court Feedback:

Logging behavior is important even if no further action is desired, to document patterns

Call it out straight away:

- “That is not appropriate”
- “Makes me feel uncomfortable”

Freelancers should be considered as valuable as staff, respected

Many Memphis artists are gig workers/freelancers

Take responsibility for the power you have

We have voice collective (wehavevoice.org):

What is consent: clear definition

One page is good: bulletin board

Needs to specify that it applies to anyone using the venue- union staff, artists, venue staff.

Included in all riders and contracts for all people who work here.

Potential issues in implementing a code of ethics

How to get producing, presenting, etc. orgs to participate?

How to get technicians to participate (2 artists of color commented about racism from tech crew when renting GPAC and playhouse)

How to get unions to participate/buy in?

In Chicago, it took a year to write the document with monthly meetings. It was not necessarily enforceable but it was implemented in about 100 theatres. Emily will find out about existing issues with unions.

Goal:

Day of Action participation (Shared Kaisha Johnson Proposal)

- Raising funds to organize this

Dance, theatre, tech, admin...

Please send feedback or questions

Survey

- What is the plan for the survey? Survey will go out next week.
- We need feedback on the survey. Tell Louisa/Emily if you are willing to look the survey over.

Contact chairs from Rhodes/UofM departments