



EDI + ANTIRACISM: WHAT'S YOUR ROLE?

NAMT FALL CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

11.18.2020

SESSION NOTES

TERMINOLOGY

What is Diversity?

The presence of difference.

What is Equity?

Ensuring that every person has exactly what they need in order to participate fully in a given circumstance.

What is Inclusion?

A circumstance or environment where everyone feels brave, respected, included and valued.

What is Antiracist?

Participating in active efforts to work against racism's multidimensional aspects. This practice involves taking stock of and eradicating policies and circumstances that are racist, that have racist outcomes and making sure that ultimately, you are working towards a more equitable and just society.

CONSIDER:

What has your organization done to become the organization that you aspire to be?

BREAKOUT GROUP QUESTIONS:

What type of organization do you aspire to be?

What opportunities exist for your organization as you engage in that work?

GOLDEN NUGGETS (FROM THE CHAT)

- *People don't have to live in your town to participate in your organization in leadership roles, creating more opportunities for those that might not otherwise need to live where they work full-time.*
- *"Commit to Produce"(whatever that means for you).*
- *You don't know what an individual needs until you ask them and you have to get them into the room. We want to be organizations that embrace and implement DEIA and the opportunity exists in embracing the "farm team" which so often includes interns, apprentices and minimum wage staff. The further opportunity is to continue to invest in those positions through active recruitment, communication with those who have not been regularly recruited, greater pay and educational opportunities.*
- *Define what this work means for your organization.*
- *Golden Nuggets: Intentionality, Executive Accountability, Follow The Money — Hire a Full Time EDI person, Executive Championship critical.*
- *Coalition of relationships within the community.*
- *Be intentional — don't over promise and under deliver.*
- *Investing in the development of a more diverse community, starting in youth programs and education departments.*
- *Take it slow to do it right and make it sustainable.*
- *Our group members first discussed what we're doing including monthly staff meetings, performances with ASL interpreters & close-captioning, and continuing to investigate ways to do better. We've discussed how small consistent changes can be just as impactful as large radical changes. Focusing on these changes not only allow us to improve, but to make sure we're doing it right. And finally we discussed how we shouldn't worry about getting our current audiences on board with us, but rather focus on cultivating and expanding our audiences.*
- *We spoke extensively about board makeup, reaching barriers to entry, and give/get vs in-kind involvement.*
- *We find more success on this journey when all staff members at various levels of leadership are encouraged to lead with bravery, embrace their agency and use their knowledge of DEIA to influence and guide the company's overall vision, purpose within the community and process as a whole org as well as within each individual department.*
- *Where we allocate finances is reflective of our priorities, so our challenge right now is acknowledging both the reality of the impact of the pandemic AND the absolutely vital work of creating more equitable, inclusive organizations.*
- *We must all together be ACTIVE in this work—good intentions are not enough, passive activity is not enough, group ACTIVITY needs to happen we can't lose this sense of momentum and urgency as we return to "normal."*
- *Our golden nugget: Diversify your approach to seeking equity and diversity in your organization. Put your money where your mouth is, start committees, diversify marketing materials — everything!*
- *We discussed how we can make people realize all of the opportunities in the arts. It is more than acting, performing, directing, etc. How do we create the inroads in our communities to this?*
- *How do you empower people to report issues that come up?*
- *Where's my power to influence change?*
- *Ensuring prioritization of EDI and Anti-Racist work — opportunities for workshops and continued education.*
- *The Action is stronger if there's high stakes behind the intention.*

- *The reason for starting with anti-racism is because we need to raise the stakes for ourselves in a similar way to the way we do onstage.*
- *“Power is the problem. I have it. That’s the problem. How I share power to give up power is the question — what does it look like, practically? — what does it feel like, collectively?”*
- *We agreed we are all in the process of determining where we are, what we need to do and how we are going to get there.*
- *For our group: comparison between corporate experience and small theatre, discussing the buy-in from employees...can an organization be “aspirational” or is in on the individual?*
- *Breaking down barriers of gatekeeping — finding more ways for inclusion.*
- *Investing in a diverse patron base, specifically young theatre goers.*
- *Our organizations aspire to encourage empathy for all and to help others learn to empathize through telling stories that speak to the human experience and to see things through a different lens.*
- *How do we tear down the gate keepers and provide more opportunities for accessibility?*
- *Listen to your BIPOC staff — ask them what’s work and what’s not working — they’re the ones on the ground and know what’s underneath the surface.*
- *Steering the ship into a new direction. The use of Cultural consultants and intimacy directors to help do that.*
- *Audience behavior expectations are rooted in white supremacy.*
- *The obvious nugget is that, to do this work well, it needs to be forever work. It will never be finished. Our group all shared experience with the need to create broader pipelines to leadership on boards, on staffs, and in agency. We’ve taken steps to be intentional about reaching out of our comfort zones into areas where we haven’t reached before.*
- **Think about GROWING into a diverse theater, rather than turning into one. *Think about this growth from the bottom up (pit musicians, education, backstage) and not only from the Top down. *How do we encourage audiences to see diverse stories as a GIFT?*
- *Golden nuggets: engaging with Board and Staff routinely on EDI and Anti-Racism training, shifting internal culture and processes (casting, staff hiring, rehearsal), more open dialogue with the audience.*
- *Golden Nugget — The work of DEIA (all aspects) is important for all organizations to focus on, though it is understandable that each organization will be at a different part of the journey currently. What is important is that we all work to gain the knowledge and ability to have the (difficult at times) conversations.*
- *Put our money where our mouth is— do the work to increase our inclusion and diversity and also pay respects to existing work that doesn’t perpetuate negative stereotypes.*
- *As you conduct your listening phase make sure to reach out to actors and designers (non full time) as you take stock of harm you may have caused.*
- *We had two main take-aways: 1) We need to acknowledge our past (the successes and failures) but not get mired in it so we can move forward and make progress. 2) We need to engage and educate our audiences so they can experience things in new ways.*
- *Empower your staff to lead the charge — this is all hands on deck organizational work — this can’t just be a small handful of people.*

- *Golden Nugget: The pandemic has actually provided the opportunity for organizations to dedicate the time and planning to make organizations anti-racist. This way we are ready to implement a plan when we can finally open doors again and bring the audience and staff (current/new) back to our spaces.*
- *That this is our opportunity to work from the top down (Board Members) and bottom up (Youth Programming) and meet in the middle for an entirely diverse, equitable and inclusive space for all.*
- *Transparency is a must-have.*
- *Your organization can and should expect more of its audiences and could/should create an audience code of conduct.*
- *Come up with a plan. Release it. Hold yourselves accountable.*
- *Listening and sharing power with your community; they will tell you what they want to do, be open to doing it. Develop local talent.*
- *How we need to strive to be antiracist individuals first, to make that internal personal growth in order to then become an antiracist organization as a whole. That work will then move to the stage and programming and how you interact with your surrounding community, setting a model or example and steadily changing the culture as a whole through individual growth and change.*
- *The golden nugget was providing safe opportunities for artists to provide open and honest feedback about their experiences at your organization. Reducing barriers and fear of work in the future.*
- *Our nugget that we kept circling back to is removing the "gates" to opportunities in professional theater — we can make our internships paid to remove a big barrier to entry into the industry. Pay ALL artists. But the biggest opportunity is in education — our organizations can provide arts education to communities that do not have theater arts available in their schools to grow the future playwrights, designers, & theater leaders in our areas.*
- *As a writer: Make the theatre accountable for their diversity in creative teams/casting instead of just feeling "grateful" for them to produce your show.*
- *We spoke about focusing on the quality of the process (rather than the outcome) in order to allow the space for equality and inclusivity.*
- *Wanting change is not creating it.*
- *This is not a moment to take offense but to be humble, listen and commit to be different.*
- *Make a commitment statement with a plan for ways in which your organization will include work to become a more inclusive, diverse, and anti-racist organization in all facets of the organization with regular updates. It holds everyone accountable.*
- *One thing came up in our group that I thought was a freeing perspective. There's fear of losing our audiences with new work. But if we can gain two new audience members for every one we lose, then it's not a problem! (Credit to Megan Larche Dominick).*

THE WOKE WORK

Identify the type of organization that you desire to become and commit to the work that it requires.

Determine your why and make sure that it is reflected in your organization's values.

Become familiar with the demands of **We See You White American Theatre**.

Continue to do your own personal work by developing your analysis (*books, podcasts, documentaries, conversations, etc.*).

Don't put the work of creating an antiracist environment solely on BIPOC employees.

Interrogate everything!

OTHER THOUGHTS AND IDEAS FROM THE CHAT

- *You can't wait for your theatre to fund your education. We all need to do independent work so that we're more prepared to do the work with paid consultants. There is a personal accountability that must happen before you can help your organization be accountable.*
- *We cannot continue expecting those who have been systematically oppressed to keep doing the work for us and then call it progress on our end*
- *How can we re-examine our producing models to better support risk and seeking new audiences?*
- *And can we get major donors to help underwrite the human capital. If we invest in the people then we can get to the destination, right?*
- *This work includes and often starts with colleges and universities who need to alter their curriculum and pedagogies to remove racial bias in what texts and productions are taught and referenced. The racist culture we participate in now is actively taught every day. How are educational institutions gate keepers and how can they become antiracist?*

FOR REFERENCE

weseeyouwat.com

artequity.org/resources

howlround.com



The Woke
Coach[®]