

Date: Monday April 26

Time: 6pm-8pm (call time: 5:30pm)

Link: ZOOM (ATAJ should've sent us host links, check email)

Tech Needs: Screen share (slides), Screen share (video+ audio), Audio share

Intro:

Hello everyone, if you are able, please drop in the chat your name, your pronouns, whose land you're on, and why you're here today.

We are going to share some rules of engagement or culture codes that we use as activists, organizers, and facilitators. These codes are going to be practiced during our time together, as well as tools that you can take with you after this session is over. We encourage you to take notes of points that are resonating with you. Some of this may feel like "preaching to the choir", some of these codes are things you already use, some of this may be completely new, or feel difficult. If any questions arise during the course of the session please enter

We will begin by explaining some rules of engagement or culture codes that we use as organizers, facilitators, and activists in this work

Then we will be dividing you into smaller groups to participate in an activity that allows us to put these codes into practice through group discussion

Then we will return as a full group to process further, and be resources to each other with a question and answer/ reflection portion .

## Culture Codes/ Rules of Engagement: (30 MINS)

- **BE PRESENT-**
  - What do you need to be present and engaged and be able to access this conversation? What do you need from us as your facilitators to assist in that process? Is there anything that you need the group to know/ or agree to do for this space to be safe for you?
    - White supremacy culture is rooted in individualism vs. collectivism-"every person for themselves". Equity/ Justice culture is understanding that our experiences are deeply tied together, we are stronger together, we are interdependent on each other. How can we center the experience of the collective versus ourselves? What do I need from my collective to be stronger in this moment? What can I offer to my collective to enhance our experience?

- Take care of yourself to remain physically, emotionally, and mentally present (even if that means turning your camera off for a minute, or stretching, or being a caregiver, or having your pet on screen with you. Do whatever helps you be present with us.)
- Engagement on zoom: using chat feature to communicate with group, relay messages in confidence to the facilitator, using reaction feature to agree with or amplify something someone else has said, or snapping in the screen if you agree
- Don't retreat from the conversation when your opinions conflict with others. or with what you previously held to be true.

### Experience Discomfort-

- Discomfort is necessary and inevitable. These are growing pains.
  - Acknowledge the feeling when it arises and use it to motivate you to dig deeper into the conversation
  - I think back to the playground days, this is like the monkey bars: I have to let go of what held me up if I want to move forward
  - Conflicting truths aren't inherently negative - what if it's "yes, and.." instead of "either/or" -
    - Holding the tension of conflicting truths is uncomfortable, but rather than dismissing the truth we don't agree with, what happens if we sit and think and analyze it
  - There is a difference between discomfort and danger!
    - We aren't asking you to sit and be silent, or analyze truths that cause harm or are dangerous to your wellbeing!
    - Some truths are hard to hear, and challenge us in a way that is uncomfortable, but they aren't an attack.
    - Some truths and the ideologies are DANGEROUS - and that danger is backed by historical, scientific, generational, and or physiological pain and trauma. **This is not a space for that!**
    - Keep in mind that if it's dangerous to you, then it's dangerous to the wellbeing of the collective, in this space and beyond it.
- **BE HONEST-**
  - Speak your truth. Be honest about **your** thoughts, **your** beliefs, and **your** opinions as opposed to wanting to sound right, or staying silent in the fear of sounding wrong.
  - Use "I" statements- "i think.." "i believe..." or "in my experience"
  - Personalize and speak from **your own** experience, instead of speaking hypothetically or generalizing about others.

- We will not be asking anyone to be the representative for all people of a shared identity or community. (ex: on behalf of all...)
  - You are the experts of your own lived experience. We believe you. We will not question or debate you on the truth of your experience- that is gaslighting
    - *“are you sure it really happened that way”*
    - *Or “I know them personally, that doesn’t sound like something they would say”*
    - *or “that’s probably not what they meant by that, you might’ve interpreted it wrong”.*
  - We as your facilitators won’t gaslight you. Extend that principle to the truths you hear others share.
- **Safe Space/ Brave Space-**
    - This space is safe in that **The lessons learned here should leave here, but the stories shared here, stay here-** these are not your stories to share and repeat outside of this space.
      - Not only is it an issue of privacy but it also becomes like a game of Telephone. Context, details, and accuracy are lost when we try to regurgitate someone else’s experience or story.
      - If hearing their story made an impact on you, simply return your gratitude toward them, and take the impact (not their content) with you!
    - This space is safe in that we are going to **Give the grace of assuming best intent**—This is not a place for guilt, shame, blame, or attack- either on others or ourselves.
      - Although those are natural responses, Please be mindful and responsible for those emotions. They can impede on the learning process, and cause defensiveness.
      - If you are feeling guilt, shame, blamed, or attacked- bring mindfulness to the emotion, and ask yourself “ why am I feeling this way? What was said/or done?” Allow it to dig you deeper into the conversation, rather than going into defensive mode.
      - This is essential especially if you are apart of multiple dominant groups and consider yourself an ally-- because of your identities, the reactions you make out of defensiveness have an immense power to staunch out powerful and necessary conversation. The tension of conflict is necessary for us to grow, stretch and expand.

Your defensiveness can derail the conversation to center and cater to your feelings, rather than the content of the conversation.

- This space is **Brave** in that we are challenging you to **Own the impact beyond the intent**- If someone says something harmful or dangerous, have the agency to name it or say “ouch”/ vice versa- if you catch yourself saying something dangerous or harmful say “oops”.
  - On zoom, you can say this in the chat or out loud in any moment and we can pause to address that harm.
- **Give grace for mistakes and gratitude for correction**
  - Like we stated, this is a safe space for mistakes, we are all going to make them. And we also agreed that this is NOT a place for attack, so we aren’t going to attack each other for making a mistake.
  - But I do want to specify: being held accountable isn't the same as attacking. If someone says something that is harmful, and I say “ouch that hurt me”, I'm holding them to account of the hurt they caused, rather than me swallowing that pain and working through it on my own.
  - If someone makes us aware of the pain that we caused we get to take account of that, enter it into our databank, and do the work of making a choice to not do that same thing (that we now know causes harm) again in the future.
  - We receive feedback as a gift to do better rather than an offense.
  - If someone points out a stain on your shirt, why be mad at the person for pointing out the stain, rather than thanking them so that you can now get the stain out?
- **Check your privilege**
  - Acknowledge your privilege and/or ignorance on a subject or topic
  - For example: when broaching a topic where your identity aligns with the dominant culture, state the privileged/limited perspective that you are coming from (aware that this creates an opportunity for those that experience this topic on a deeper, consistent, and oppressive level to correct you if you misspeak or enlighten you to something you aren't aware of)
    - For example, If we’re having a discussion on gender, I would offer “As a cisgender person, im thinking...but please correct me if i’m wrong” or “As a person that experiences cisgender privilege, i recognize my blindspots in this conversation.”
  - Acknowledgement cultivates transparency and authenticity, and contributes to a foundation of trust and safety.
- **Expect and accept a lack of closure-**
  - Quick solutions or neat conclusions to injustice aren’t real. This is a part of an ongoing conversation. The work never ends.
- *“Do not let what you can't do, tear from your hands what you can” -Ashanti Proverb [Ghana, West African Tribe]*

- Set realistic expectations: We're not able to undo centuries worth of programming, pedagogy, education, and systems of oppression in 1 conversation.
- We don't arrive at a perfect answer by the end of the conversation. There may be more questions than there are answers. Sometimes the response to a question is another question. Don't feel pressured to conjure an answer in the moment.
- These conversations aren't linear. There isn't always a clear beginning, middle, end. Don't be afraid to revisit, revise, or rethink a past point that was made.
- Moments of silence or awkwardness are also components of communication. Allow thoughts to process, to download, to metabolize.
- **This is Rehearsal**, make mistakes, have fun, make bold choices-
  - no one has all the answers, we're all imperfectly human together, and collectively we'll grow and learn from each other- we as your facilitators included. We aren't here to give you all the answers or to judge who is wrong or right, we're here to facilitate our process of learning and expanding
  - We are learning and unlearning together. Nothing that you say is the final version of who you are
  - **Listen to listen, not just listening to reply**
    - **and think before you speak**
    - If you have a sentence that states "I'm not fatphobic but..." or "I'm not Islamophobic but..." "I probably shouldn't be saying this but..." STOP YOURSELF and think! those sentences usually result in harm.
      - What point are you trying to make? Or question are you needing an answer to? Is it worth the harm it could cause?
      - Is it requiring emotional labor from someone else? Could you find the answer on google? Have you done any research on it first?
      - These statements often reinforce the oppressive ideology that they disclaim at the top of the sentence
    - If this sounds like hard work, it's not, because people of a marginalized or historically excluded group are having to think/ rethink, adjust/ readjust, and swallow the punches constantly. Our curiosity is our responsibility, it can either be a tool for connection, or a weapon; intention, effort, context, tact help us decide where we go with it.
  - We can have fun if everyone does their part and puts the work in.
    - It's the same process in rehearsal when everyone is off book, then the ensemble can really play and make bold choices

## Beyond the Line: (45 MINS)

(SET UP- MAYA)

## TECH- MAKE 5 BREAKOUT ROOMS FOR EACH OF US

### Instructions:

- I will read a series of prompts, that you will respond to with your body (or in the chat)
- Move down stage (close to the camera) if you agree or connect to that statement (or write “agree” in the chat).
- Move upstage (away from the camera) if you disagree or disconnect to the statement (or write “disagree” in the chat).
- Every phrase is intentionally ambiguous and open so interpret as you wish
- You're allowed to change your position based on others' responses
- In between each statement we will pause for discussion for you to share where you sided and why. You may be called on by the facilitator to share your perspective.

Remember our culture codes, - experience discomfort, speak your truth, own the impact with ouch or oops, stay engaged, agree to disagree.

As your facilitators we're here to moderate the conversation, not say who is wrong or right.

This is our collective space so if someone shares a view that you're curious about or want to challenge, please feel free to do so.

Please select the

(BREAKOUT ROOMS BEGIN\_ SET TIMER FOR 45 MINS) *Can we go over this section before we start at 6? I just want to make sure I've got it right once we're in breakout rooms. - Amber*

Let's begin...

Facilitator language: Read prompt... Once people have settled into their positions" You can release/ relax"... "Would anyone like to share what position they chose and why"

### Prompts:

1. Institutional change naturally follows representation. (*Amber*)
2. All theaters should be diverse, equitable and inclusive. (*Jessenia*)
3. Age isn't important when deciding who to hire. (*Michelle*)
4. Ableism is a big deal in theater.

## Mindful Language- (Video presentation by Hershey) (20 MINS)

## **Reflection (25 MINS)**

Group reflection - Audience is able to share any

- Reflections from the video
- “notes from the field” are there any rules of engagement that you use that you’d like to offer to the group
- Questions to the group, or the facilitators

SEND OFF: Anti-racist resources & SOUL TRAIN LINE

- REMINDER THIS A JOYFUL PRACTICE

## **ANTI-RACIST RESOURCES 2021**

Courageous conversations

White supremacy culture