

IF A REHEARSAL ROOM WAS A MICROCOSM OF THE WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN, WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE?

These anonymously sourced lists were pulled directly from interviews I conducted with 52 different theatre artists, after prompting them to consider what would and would not be present in a rehearsal room if it were designed to enact justice and equity amongst collaborators, functioning as a microcosm of a just world. I have not altered these responses, except for clarity's sake.

Interview #1

YES

- to** making sure everyone feels comfortable and addressing discomfort when it arises
- to** unconditional support for everyone in the room, even when love is not possible
- to** taking care of people and seeing their full humanity
- to** loving through hurt when in times of conflict
- to** concern for the room and everyone's ability to be in it > self-interest
- to** correcting it and moving on when you misgender someone, not giving into the ego of excessive apology
- to** everyone having a sense of purpose that motivates them to be in the room
- to** making the space to fuck up and make mistakes

NO

- to** totalitarian directing style and status, where one person is making all of the calls
- to** not being able to ask for help– resulting in stagnation and lack of personal growth
- to** conditional love/support
- to** entitlement and self-involvement
- to** jealousy
- to** comparison

Interview #2

YES

- to** equal recognition of personhood regardless of role (intern, actor, janitor, director, etc.)
- to** everyone having an ability to offer themselves fully without feeling less than
- to** director as facilitator > dictator
- to** transcending boundaries of class, education, etc.
- to** everyone speaking and being heard while also making space for others
- to** grace is given when mistakes are made, pathways for correction and reconciliation are offered
- to** ensuring consent

NO

- to anyone feeling stupid
- to tokenization of marginalized people– the sense of “you’re only here so we can say we had someone like you in the room”
- to leverage of age, education, experience to gain power
- to a culture of silence
- to not giving respect to people’s time and energy

Interview #3

YES

- to using circle methods as a way to have conversations in a non-hierarchical manner
- to people who organize events not necessarily being the primary leaders in the room
- to making a list of community agreements and having the accountability to follow them
- to creating structures that are able to be containers for disagreement and conflict
- to asking how people are being harmed and crafting creative solutions
- to directors who take charge but are deeply interested in collaboration and others’ ideas, working outside of ego and admitting when a mistake is made
- to living out equality and standing by ethics
- to being willing to burn bridges to stand by values– if the old way is morally compromised, build a new way
- to setting up first rehearsal with genuine invitation to discuss everything candidly
- to Free Street Theater
- to making sure people of color feel especially heard and cared for in the room, because their lived experience outside of the room does not set them up for equal success
- to acknowledging privilege and thinking critically about how to best use it
- to diversity on both sides of the table and in the audience
- to telling a multitude of stories that gives humanity to all people, instead of perpetuating a single story about identity– telling stories about black people that aren’t about police brutality, etc.
- to carefully acknowledging the difference made when text is delivered by people of color vs by white people: how do the message or implications of a play change based on casting? → deep work and collaboration with actors to craft a message that is best
- to actors feeling prepared and understanding what story is being told
- to welcoming people of color to speak on their experiences, without pressure, dependency, or coercion

NO

- to directors being dictators with final say, needing their ideas to “win”
- to waiting until “it comes up” to talk about race

- to creating the sense that starting a conversation is “causing a problem”
- to all white staff, creative team, administration, etc. (everyone with power is white)– rehearsal room won’t be just if the institution is not prepared for diverse collaborations
- to tokenization of stories of color in the season– having a “black play” is not enough if there are not people of color inside the institution holding it accountable every single day
- to colorblind casting
- to talking about social justice but not applying it in tactile ways
- to the current Chicago theatre landscape
- to diversity that benefits white people while harming/disempowering people of color– we need to be asking “who is diversity benefitting here?”
- to diversity that serves the optics and comfortability of white people
- to people of color having to be representatives of their entire race
- to competition/comparison of experiences with oppression
- to crafting a single story about what oppression is

Interview #4

YES

- to acknowledging that art making is worldmaking, not just in content but in process and distribution
- to nonhierarchical collaboration
- to rewriting and embodying, in relationship and in rehearsal, alternate ways of being
- to developing our own codes, rules, and rituals based on the needs of the group– for example, if keeping up with fashion trends and name brand labels is a stressor for the group, perhaps a rule to have no sneakers in the room is necessary
- to letting people be people while ensuring there is accountability to be better
- to acknowledging the ways in which we are all complicit with racism, sexism, classism, etc and believing we all have somewhere to go

NO

- to working in ways that reinforce dominant society

Interview #5

YES

- to collaboration > individual leadership
- to honoring everyone’s unique perspective and expertise
- to telling stories about time, instead of just using it as the structure in which stories happen– allowing audience to experience the movement of time
- to process > product
- to long, 6-month+ processes

- to everyone being paid a living wage
- to clear separation between personal and professional
- to having Barry Brunetti in every room
- to addressing conflict by asking “how can we help who is hurting?”
- to making theatre concise, using only what is necessary
- to making theatre have an intermission if it is over 1.5 hours

NO

- to the pressure for the audience to “understand” every choice
- to line readings
- to Aristotelian structure
- to director holding a standard that everyone is trying to live up to
- to “the show must go on”

Interview #6

YES

- to director as facilitator instead of primary authority
- to people functioning in the room as informed by their experience and positionality– those who have traditionally held power are called to make space, support, and empower others
- to dialogue
- to following others’ leads
- to asking questions
- to accepting others’ experiences as fact
- to focusing on relationships in plays, connecting channels between people– asking “how can our individual experiences and lived context inform how we can be together and move forward?”
- to elevating the status of people with the most experience with subject matter, giving them the opportunity to lead the room instead of relying on abstract research

NO

- to everyone having an equal say, when not everyone has the same life experience or expertise with subject matter– asking “who’s story is being told? how can we honor them as leader?”

Interview #7

YES

- to deep community
- to listening
- to leadership, without hierarchy
- to equitable weight of opinion

- to focusing on ensuring that everyone truly feels comfortable, and is not just being pressured into saying that they do
- to longer process that begins with long-term ensemble building
- to building community between ensemble outside of the room

NO

- to harassment
- to judgement
- to making statements of behalf of others

Interview #8

YES

- to accessibility
- to moving beyond conversations about diversity, into conversations about justice, anti-racism, and action
- to a truly open door where everyone can come and go as is comfortable
- to everyone having a voice, as well as being accountable for knowing when and when not to use it
- to telling stories about justice
- to having a paper shredder in the room and engaging in the ritual of destroying things that need to be destroyed
- to renegotiating relationship with power, cognizant of positionality
- to invoking goodness into the space
- to hard conversations about privilege
- to modeling theatre process like coalition-building, working across difference while acknowledging difference
- to checking in at the beginning of every day
- to land acknowledgments, whether spoken or physical
- to awareness that theatre-making is colonization
- to basing facilitation off of leaderless political movements
- to cushions and zafus

NO

- to believing diversity is a synonym for justice
- to favoritism
- to hierarchy
- to tables and chairs (unless you like tables and chairs)
- to violent, dominant, and capitalistic language about objective, tactic, wanting x from y

Interview #9

YES

- to** establishing the comfort and safety of everyone involved as the top priority
- to** allowing space for people to express themselves freely and openly
- to** prioritizing open dialogue so that no voice goes unheard and every member is able to fully give themselves to the process
- to** understanding that making a space that is safe allows for true creativity

NO

- to** people feeling that their success or position in the production would be compromised by them speaking their mind
- to** anyone being put in a situation that makes them feel unsafe
- to** people feeling like they are in a role solely because of their identity or having that identity be capitalized on/taken advantage of
- to** anyone holding total power over another person

Interview #10

YES

- to** prioritizing fun and silliness
- to** advocating for yourself
- to** enthusiastic consent from everyone in the room to be there
- to** honesty without fear
- to** feeling empowered
- to** theatre being sexy for whoever is watching and whoever is in it
- to** theatre being a little bit ugly
- to** all genders of actors being given equal amounts of challenge & grace
- to** theatre being free for the audience
- to** making love a requirement
- to** every audience member laughing, crying, and falling in love every single time
- to** human decency
- to** crushes
- to** allowing everyone the time to speak
- to** applauding failure
- to** critics highlighting the good in people, giving grace to mistakes
- to** making space for disagreement and division

NO

- to** labeling people who advocate for themselves as “difficult to work with”

- to heirarchy
- to meanness
- to line readings
- to passive aggression
- to predators.
- to danger (while allowing room for terror)
- to “reading” people or making assumptions
- to hiding– everyone should be transparent about knowledge, feelings, process
- to excessive preciousness (while allowing a little room for preciousness)

Interview #11

YES

- to an equal platform that deconstructs heirarchy
- to bringing in cultural consultants when internal knowledge/understanding is lacking
- to acknowledging director’s blind spots and finding ways to supplement their ability to support people’s identities
- to engaging communities in theatre making processes, including non-theatremakers
- to audiences being engaged with process before coming to see the show, especially with season selection– asking “what do you want to see?”
- to a continuing sense of education and constant communication
- to an unconditional offering of space to speak and ask questions

NO

- to singling people out or asking marginalized people to speak on their experiences in a harmful way
- to sidetracking/derailing conversations that should be central to the process
- to feeding into monoliths and treating companies like they are monoliths
- to post-it notes

Interview #12

YES

- to real awareness of our physical bodies– not ignoring aches, pains, feelings as they arise, change, and heal inside and outside the room
- to diversity of life experience, beyond just racial identity
- to having energetic experiences that allow us to tap into truth
- to candid discussions about energy (ours, the room’s, the play’s, etc.)– whose land are we standing on? who came before us?
- to fluid leadership that expects everyone to use their gifts generously, asking “who feels called to lead, moment by moment?”

- to making theatre outside, even in the rain
- to making theatre in a warm cave with fire if it's too cold to be in the rain
- to okay if we have to be in a room, at least make sure it has windows
- to intergenerational ensembles, including the elderly and young children
- to music
- to empowering everyone to sing
- to unraveling the reasons why someone may believe they cannot sing
- to asking difficult questions to create deep understanding
- to love and understanding
- to knowing it's not all about you
- to working to tap into the collective, instead of just yourself

NO

- to buerocracy
- to making theatre in a room of all white people
- to capitalism
- to allowing money to be a part of the conversation in how work should be made
- to believing we don't have enough/scarcity model
- to speaking on others' behalf
- to letting things get too personal

Interview #13

YES

- to starting with a check-in every single day
- to decentralizing power away from the director, creating a more organic and fluid heirarchy/leadership instead of a fixed one (power shifts and changes)
- to allowing everyone with opportunities to lead
- to allowing everyone to speak up and interject at any time
- to granting everyone the authority to stop rehearsal or change directions at any time
- to clear policies and procedures around intimacy, mandating that there be a certified intimacy director in the room
- to providing everyone in the room with therapists and mental health resources, especially when doing traumatic work

NO

- to bigotry
- to invalidation of people's feelings and experiences
- to coercion of how actors should move, touch, sound, feel, etc.
- to retaliation against people who speak out

Interview #14

YES

- to** clarity about what people need to function and thrive
- to** generosity & going out of one's way to consider and accommodate for limitations, even if it proves unnecessary
- to** abundant possibility found within people's limitations
- to** reworking the original conceptualization of a show/project if the concept doesn't account for who is actually cast/actually in the room
- to** processes that account for everyone, so no one has to elbow their way in
- to** acknowledging the identities of people in the room when working on period shows– asking “how were people of every identity living during this time?” instead of erasing the reality of people's differences
- to** sensitively ensuring that everyone in the room is fed, sheltered, and has what they need to be successful

NO

- to** limiting or boiling down someone else's experiences just because it doesn't match or line up with one's own experience
- to** erasure
- to** avoiding the topic of actors' racial identities and their implications within the show
- to** the inability to take accountability or apologize
- to** microaggressions
- to** the inability to admit one's ability to microaggress

Interview #15

YES

- to** Socratic dialogue that values the spirit of the circle, where everyone is on the same plane
- to** a collective, foundational understanding of diversity, inclusion, and equity that engages not just actors and directors, but designers, administration, front of house, audiences, etc.
- to** having fun
- to** protection and care surrounding intimacy work
- to** humility
- to** actors having clear understanding + support around the difference between their characters and themselves
- to** clear boundaries
- to** ensemble-based theatre, where everyone is equal and equally committed & everyone shares the burden and weight of the work
- to** non-hierarchical working processes
- to** mental health and wellness advocacy being built into the structures of theatre-making

- to equilibrium established by equal generosity from all involved
- to fearlessness in having awkward, uncomfortable conversations about silenced topics
- to allowing the actor's personhood to influence character

NO

- to telling traumatic stories in traumatizing ways
- to minorities feeling pressured to speak because of their identities
- to actors feeling that they are there to "serve" director/director's vision
- to ego
- to work that is painful and strenuous more than it is fun
- to the notion of "leave it at the door" and feeling like a room doesn't want you for all that you are

Interview #16

YES

- to accessible audition processes where directors encourage actors to bring material that reflects their authentic selves instead of enforcing rigid monologue requirements that may be illegible to someone trying to navigate a theatrical institution for the first time
- to activist theatre pieces functioning in way that honors the spirit of activism, community, diversity, equity, and inclusion
- to willingness to have difficult and critical conversations even when they are unpopular
- to unapologetic honesty about whose story is being told and the ways in which white people need to serve and contribute to that mission
- to honoring the nuances (between generations, between classes, between individuals, etc.) of every marginalized group instead of believing in a false sameness or singular story
- to learning how to have more sophisticated conversations about race and gender... not sophisticated as in fancy or hyperintellectual, but as interested in nuance, specificity, and the whole picture
- to moving beyond theoretical conversations about social justice and putting thought into action
- to comprehensive, mandatory EDI training to provide similar footing and vocabulary for people to work from
- to hiring younger teachers
- to hiring teachers with more intersections of identity and oppression because they allow students to understand the wholeness and complexity of people, and come more fully into their depth
- to slowing down
- to community guidelines decided on at the top of every process

- to devised work, which lends itself more to justice because of the structure and communication methods
- to listening to younger generations and allowing them to lead

NO

- to non-Latinx people being in cast in Latinx role
- to the struggle just to “get the story out there”– our struggle must be to tell the story properly and justly
- to viewing racial and cultural groups as monoliths
- to perpetuating the status quo set by older generations
- to working from a diluted white perspective
- to having the optics of diversity from the outside without a real investment in inclusion behind closed doors
- to using the umbrella term of “women of color” when you are only including women of color with more access to whiteness, not acknowledging that people of color with access to whiteness can potentially steal resources and opportunities from folks with indigenous features
- to relying on people who are more educated or more established to lead conversations– we have everything we need

Interview #17

YES

- to every person being identified as they desire to be and yes, that involves pronouns– there will be mistakes, but not without the real effort of trying
- to an abundance of questions being asked
- to the director being keenly aware of the constellation of artists in the room, particularly the gender & racial dynamics
- to the director being a steward of communication
- to the director ensuring that each person feels seen, respected & heard equitably, even if it seems to be an impossible task
- to turning what were once regarded as impossible tasks into the new neutral
- to collaborators developing their skills in listening, observing and witnessing one another as a means to create work that is informed by respect and the goodwill of its creators
- to people feeling empowered to bring their artistry to the table

NO

- to making assumptions
- to proclamations being made

Interview #18

This interview was conducted via email exchange. While the spirit of anonymity serves this project generally, I would be remiss not to credit the brilliant **Warren Adams with writing these powerful words. I am deeply grateful for his labor, research, and generosity.*

YES

to listening to, understanding, and paving a different path than this history:

“In order to answer this question, one must fully understand the ecosystem first.

The first Broadway show opened in 1866, one year after the end of the civil war. That was 153 years ago. The influence of Black American culture in our theatre industry is undeniable. However, that is not reflective of the creative teams that have built these stories.

Below is an example of three of the major design departments.

There have been approximately 3000 Broadway shows (final number to be verified by IBDB).

Black Directors on Broadway / Musicals:

1. Gilbert Moses
2. Vinette Carroll
3. Donald McKayle
4. Geoffrey Holder
5. George Faison
6. George C. Wolfe
7. Maurice Hines
8. Bill T. Jones
9. Charles Randolph Wright
10. Kenny Leon

0.3% have been black

- Note, some of these directors have done more than one show, but even then, it hardly makes a dent in the overall scheme of things.

Black Directors on Broadway/ Plays:

1. Lloyd Richards
2. Mbongeni Ngema
3. George C Wolfe
4. Oz Scott

5. Kenny Leon
6. Marion McClinton
7. Debbie Allen
8. Ruben Santiago Hudson
9. Liesl Tommy
10. Robert O'Hara

0.3% have been black

- Note, some of these directors have done more than one show, but even then, it hardly makes a dent in the overall scheme of things.

Black Choreographers on Broadway

1. Donald McKayle
2. Geoffrey Holder
3. George Faison
4. Diane McIntyre
5. Hope Clark
6. Debbie Allen
7. Marlies Yearby
8. Paula Moss
9. Garth Fagan
10. Keith Young
11. Savion Glover
12. Maurice Hines
13. Bill T. Jones
14. Donald Byrd
15. Warren Adams
16. Jeffrey Page
17. Camille Brown

0.57% have been black

- Note, some of these choreographers have done more than one show, but even then, it hardly makes a dent in the overall scheme of things.

As you can see, the percentages on first view are staggering.

Not to mention other designers: writers, composers, set, costume, lighting, hair & makeup etc.

The numbers dwindle even further when it comes to Latino, Asian and Native American artists.

And finally, when you add gender to this, it is pretty deplorable when it comes to the female gender.

So, it is my unfortunate job to tell young black students graduating college who have aspirations of creating work on Broadway as a director of a play or musical that they have a 0.3% of getting employed and as a choreographer that they have a 0.57 chance of getting employed. These are the facts.

That being said, black culture and narrative has been ubiquitous in our theatrical ecosystem. So the rhetorical question of who is getting all the jobs, well, like I said, it is rhetorical.”
to black artists finally feeling free to speak their truth without retribution

NO

to any of what we're seeing today

to white creatives telling black actors and creatives how to be black, or interpreting black issues while sugarcoating it so that white audiences or other cast members can feel included

to bullshit in cinema like *The Green Book*, *The Help* or *Driving Miss Daisy*— where actors go on to win Oscars with movies told from a white protagonist's perspective

to white people in the driver's seat, which makes it impossible for them to understand race— they are a part of the dialogue, but cannot control the narrative

Interview #19

YES

to everyone being paid a living wage because the elimination of barriers allows for a new level of focus, wholeness, and dedication— this is impossible to achieve with competing schedules

to a room that functions democratically, as a space to practice democracy by taking other people's ideas into consideration and accounting for the needs of others

to theatre that responds to the community

to one or two directors serving as gentle guiding hands that can step up in moments of division, people who are trusted by the group to make decisions

to a room that is diverse in occupation— trusting non-credentialized people to come in and make theatre, because theatre tends to isolate itself from the world and forget just how much knowledge there is outside of us

to trying to create something that taps into the double consciousness of humanity by blending day-to-day consciousness with the depth of what theatre allows

to a process that essentializes rigor and hard work, while making space for love, mistakes, play

NO

- to always depending on narrative as the primary tool
- to white men in positions of leadership because they do not often seem to have the tools to care for people
- to 4-6 week rehearsal processes– that's not enough time!
- to wasting people's time

Interview #20

YES

- to a room of listening
- to giving ideas equal footing from all parties
- to everyone having an opportunity to speak or withhold their voices
- to a room where people are heard– if it is clear that one voice is dominating or is disrespectful to another, there is space for that to be voiced and the offender would listen and respect
- to oops/ouch policy
- to both loudness and silence
- to rooms that feel full of joy and excitement because of the freedom to create
- to the only moments of quiet occurring when the room demands it– silence is never despotic
- to those who break trust being asked to leave the room
- to the creative energies of those who respect the space being protected from suffering at the hand of someone who does not respect it

NO

- to people being disrespectful
- to people thieving contributions, without receiving recompense
- to people who try to speak up in collaborative disagreement being silenced

Interview #21

YES

- to someone who is educated and apart of the specific community coming in to speak to the team and be an advisor if the text is about a specific group of people and none of the actors identity as a part of the community
- to the rehearsal room getting uncomfortable when people need to be checked– people have to be okay with being checked and corrected
- to willingness among the artists to walk out if justice is not being served

NO

- to not addressing the reality when none of the actors identify with the group of people the play is about
- to staying ignorant by not asking questions
- to the room remaining comfortable at all times because no one is being called out or corrected
- to complacency and “going along with it” when injustice is occurring

Interview #22

YES

- to a good leader– the person or people in control of the process must be invested in the change they want to see
- to open communication– assuming everyone is on the same page as you is naïve
- to having tough conversations and keeping the room open to having them
- to honoring that each person you work with will have their own experiences that they will bring to the table
- to learning-- growing and adjusting expectations as you go into the room each day, in order to do yourself justice
- to obliterating the gender parity gap– statistically, women are paid much less, have much less opportunity, and are overshadowed by their male counterparts
- to projects that put women forward, whether it is the playwright, actors, designers, technicians, etc
- to plays that have women in all of their glory, gore, and everything in between, instead of just as idols or victims
- to making sure that the right people are in the room (which is the responsibility of the leader and hopefully, the organization)
- to the people in the room being ready to work and learn
- to everyone involved, including the audience, learning something and being able to take that with them

Interview #23

YES

- to everyone being allowed to be the expert of their own experience– no one trying to be expert in another’s
- to black folks being consulted about what’s possible and realistic for their hair/makeup rather than being told by white people and not considered
- to supporting people’s right to take a break (sit down, lie down, step out or even take a day)
- to supporting people’s right to eat and hydrate
- to having an intimacy coordinator in all first rehearsals to address any triggering moments and make a plan for how that will be worked through if possible because everyone is different

NO

- to** all white spaces
- to** all male spaces
- to** all cishet spaces
- to** praising over-exertion

Interview #24

YES

- to** a completely shared artistic vision being worked through together
- to** a room where everyone's voice matters equally and everyone shares the power (stripping the process of status)
- to** prioritizing safety and fun– games are played often and laughs are shared abundantly
- to** a process that functions like a circle, where everyone is equidistant from the center point (the production/piece/art) and everyone has equal “ownership” of it!
- to** compensating artists

NO

- to** having a “director” or “playwright” or any of the labels that inherently place collaborators on a hierarchy
- to** no cis white men, at least until they can learn to take up space without taking the space
- to** sick-shaming– the room trusts that all collaborators have valid reasons for their absence without extensive excuse... because everyone is treated equally, it is not a problem for someone to voice illness of any sort, and no judgement is felt
- to** abuse of power
- to** abuse of status
- to** abuse of intimacy
- to** abuse of resources

Interview #25

YES

- to** a room where traditional power dynamics are subverted
- to** putting the driving force and leadership opportunities in the hands of those who have been erased, but also those who will do the best
- to** being open to the leadership of those who do not hold oppressed identities but are still actively fighting for real justice and will do so with skill and thoughtful execution
- to** actively addressing when harm is caused rather than brushing over it

NO

- to** treating every opinion as equal and valid in a way that allows white supremacy to leak in

to all ideas being treated as equal when some ideas being shared are rooted in forms of oppression

Interview #26

YES

- to every voice being listened to
- to exercising patience and compassion
- to open and honest discussions rather than passive aggressive remarks and negative energy floating throughout the room

NO

- to women being interrupted or spoken over
- to women being forced to turn ideas over to men who take credit for them
- to women not being respected as directors
- to women questioning their ability to lead
- to compassion showing up in stories onstage but not in rehearsal processes
- to looking at specific stories as a quota to be filled or tokens in a season

Interview #27

YES

- to paying everyone equally, including interns– allowing interns to earn a living wage would open up the door for people of all races, ethnicities, classes, and etc. to enter into institutions
- to theatre based in parks, community centers, and places open & accessible to people, instead of just being housed away in a theatre
- to a wide variety of people of color that leaves no room for tokenization

NO

- to theatres built as and operating as power houses for unequal opportunity
- to social justice theatre happening in pre-existing white spaces, like Goodman or Steppenwolf– there are so many barriers in place and such a lack of people of color in the institutions, it would be difficult for this work to be done well unless they wiped away their entire way of doing things
- to tokenization

Interview #28

YES

- to a room that functions with professional care
- to the prioritization of justice from day 1
- to respect

to communicating the rights that everyone is entitled to

NO

to chaos

to making crude jokes about people's appearances

to starting arguments and drama for one's own pleasure

to racist remarks, comments, and jokes

to racism

to xenophobia

to transphobia

Interview #29

YES

to decision-making and creative choices being made by the whole room

to all voices being heard equally, unless someone is more of an introverted thinker– that sort of style would be accommodated, no questions asked

to leading with the energy of what is being brought into the room, with the consent of the affected person

NO

to having a director or any form of hierarchy

to "leaving your baggage at the door"

to rooms made up of majority cis-white people, especially men

Interview #30

YES

to actors having more liberty in the way notes are dispersed among ensemble– having a dialogue/response when an ensemble member receives a certain note, either in support or opposition

to casting decisions being made in a way that is supported by the story

to open communication

NO

to color-blind and gender-bending casting being employed arbitrarily or done simply for the sake of being edgy

to directors and fellow actors attributing merit to actors based on their gender, race, or ability

to concerns being unspoken in the rehearsal room, then being ruminated on and becoming stronger outside of the room in a way that creates fear, tension, and other-ing of the person
grievances are held against

Interview #31

YES

- to** structure and rigidity, as well as comfort and ease
- to** closure
- to** acceptance
- to** equality
- to** a room where people feel safe and can escape the harsh reality of life
- to** guidance
- to** overcoming adversity

NO

- to** favoritism
- to** judgement
- to** feeling limited in one's own capabilities
- to** safety being in question
- to** hatred
- to** unnecessary negativity

Interview #32

YES

- to** holding space for expectation, as well as forgiveness
- to** openness to voices and ideas, where each person is considered as important to the project as the last
- to** a room where people can have fun but also get real with each other
- to** starting processes by getting to know each other and each person's specific needs– valuing this as a critical part of the process
- to** radical kindness
- to** empathy
- to** hospitality
- to** paying everyone a fair wage for the work they're doing

Interview #33

YES

- to** check-ins at the beginning of each day, for every person regardless of role, even if they are brief check-ins
- to** allowing every person to hold space, which makes the room more collaborative
- to** director has the agency to say at the beginning of a rehearsal process that they are willing to be challenged if boundaries feel overstepped

to having an actor deputy that makes it safe for people to voice concerns if there are inter-cast or director/cast issues

NO

to director assuming a position of all knowingness, which creates tension around tough conversations (race, gender, ability, age, etc.)

to avoidance of conversations, which makes justice become stagnant and allows issues to continue to negatively manifest

Interview #34

YES

to eliminating the breakdown of power dynamics, such as actors, crew, directors, etc.

to justice being accomplished outside of the room to ensure everybody gets paid enough to be able to participate in theater, or they have enough time to do it without sacrificing food security, clean home, fit body, etc.

to acknowledging that the rehearsal room itself cannot fix the class issues that are pervasive in theater or the pervasive sexism, transphobia, racism, ableism, etc. because shitty people exist before they come in AND making an exerted effort to listen to the stories of people who have come before

to rehearsing in an accessible space

to directors serving as a fellow explorer of the content, helping actors make the choices to enhance the script

to directors who are focused, show up on time with actions and intentions, accommodate people's schedules while making the rehearsal schedule very clear, and let actors feel their way through the script without much pre-conceived ideas of what something "should" look like

to team players

to actors feeling empowered by the team and each other to advocate for themselves when they're uncomfortable or to express joy when they're happy

NO

to directors who yell at actors

to directors who are sole deciders of how the show will look

Interview #35

YES

to robust communication across all levels of people in the room

to leadership leading by example and enforcing the rules that the room has set

to a panel of "judges" that represent various departments in the room to help address solutions when justice needs to occur

NO

- to** microaggressions
- to** macroaggressions
- to** absent producers/executive team
- to** poor communication
- to** power hungry leaders (stage managers, directors, lead actors)

Interview #36

YES

- to** a room where all people involved, including design/creative team along with actors and directors, can share their thoughts and ideas in the room freely and without being talked over
- to** everyone being heard, regardless of identity
- to** a room where people are welcomed by everyone in the room
- to** celebrating the diversity within the rehearsal room and allowing for discussion about diversity and inclusion to take place

NO

- to** minorities, especially women of color, being talked over
- to** director dictators– directors can be the “leader”, but should be able to collaborate with fellow artists, whether that be design or performance related
- to** erasing identities or creating hegemony
- to** microaggressions from a primarily white design team
- to** minorities feeling singled out
- to** anti-blackness masked in the form of religious oppression
- to** actors being uncomfortable to the point of having to drop the role
- to** directors not allowing space for fight or intimacy calls
- to** directors making jokes about people in the room
- to** anything that would make someone uncomfortable because of racial, gender, sexuality, color, religious, ability, etc based discrimination

Interview #37

YES

- to** check-ins at the beginning of rehearsal– these create a collaborative and communicative environment, level the playing ground, allow people to share (or not share) how they’re doing, and put everyone on the same page from the get-go

NO

- to** shutting down ideas

Interview #38

YES

to people who are willing to change, learn, and grow– this makes conversations about justice possible

NO

to an unwillingness to change and learn

to almost every rehearsal process [I've experienced] so far

to people who want to show their art instead of growing it– this is a fucked mentality, and there is no point to this kind of work

Interview #39

YES

to one-on-one private discussions with the director and every single person that is involved with the project about boundaries before rehearsal begins

to actively checking in with people

to directors who can really read a room for emotional body language

to holding people accountable for not speaking over others

to ADA compliance

to directors making some time at the end for private discussion if any problems arose during the day

to providing food and energizing snacks– spaces that value workers make that kind of stuff accessible

to a system or space to air grievances without feeling like it will be held against them because especially for women and people of color, it can feel scary to speak up/report stuff

NO

to people talking over each other

to making people feel small

to a culture of silence

Interview #40

YES

to everyone being equal

to everyone having an equal opportunity to participate (both verbally and physically)

to everyone being given the tools they need to succeed, from something such as glasses to something such as allowing an emotional support dog in the room if an actor needs it

to a room that sounds like an eclectic cacophony filled with different people all equally participating (or being given the room to equally participate and then each person can choose to take that opportunity or not)

NO

to hearing and seeing the same people and voices over and over again
to shutting down specific people or ideas
to not allowing space for everyone

Interview #41

YES

to a design team and cast that is racially diverse
to a room based on safety
to a room that encouraged failure and exploring

NO

to having a single minority in a room full of cisgendered, white people
to toxic masculinity
to toxic behavior, period

Interview #42

YES

to a process that has terms and policies set far, far in advance, before the agreement to join the process, as well as multiple points of check-in to allow for additional policies or changing of existing policies– AKA you know what you're getting into, and have the power to change what you've gotten into if it's not actually what you signed up for
to transparency
to strong communication with multiple pathways
to having the freedom to share when you have been emotionally activated (a term I learned some TTS folks are using instead of triggered when it's really not a full trigger, but a full response is activated)
to knowing when sharing something needs to happen outside the rehearsal room for the sake of the process and the benefit of the whole room
to FAIR COMPENSATION FOR TIME AND LABOR!!

NO

to gaslighting
to emotional manipulation to garner a “stronger”/“realer” performance (see: Shelley Duvall, bless the woman)

- to a director or SM playing favorites with the cast
- to demeaning of performers
- to shit talking about director without anyone talking TO the director
- to coups for the sake of individual gain or agenda
- to blind belief of all allegations or complaints

Interview #43

YES

- to being a respectful person to those you are collaborating with and around

NO

- to disrespect in all of its forms

Interview #44

YES

- to training on microaggressions (ideal for someone from artEquity or any kind of anti-racist arts training to come in and provide the tools to recognize and combat any racist practices)
- to sexual harassment training (one could use the 'Not In Our House' Model of having everyone sign anti-harassment statements)
- to a room that plainly makes a stand to say that racism and sexism (and any other -ism) is not welcome in the space
- to providing empowerment to folks in the room to report anything, and tools to combat these negative forces
- to providing reading materials standards to everyone at the beginning of the process
- to a space of work and collaboration
- to discussions being handled with care
- to people always feeling empowered to speak
- to a group (not an individual) making sure that there is room for everyone to share their opinion, and to be heard, so it's not policing each other, but properly sharing a space

NO

- to folks not feeling empowered to bring forth any issues or microaggressions
- to people not being given the tools of how to recognize and speak up about anything that makes them feel unsafe
- to 'color blindness' or 'gender blindness' – disregarding differences instead of accepting and uplifting them

Interview #45

YES

- to** a rehearsal room that allows for thoughts and opinions to be voiced
- to** ensuring that people's individual concerns are attended to, especially because making theatre requires so much of someone's person-hood and there's no way to enjoy a process or feel creatively liberated (the way you should feel) or even safe enough to bring all that you might if you feel in anyway silenced or disregarded
- to** conducting a check-in about content with everyone when the text has sensitive material
- to** speaking to race even when it isn't the subject of the play instead of ignoring it/saying it isn't "integral to the play's plot"
- to** allowing for space for people to speak on their experiences of doing the thing
- to** working with everyone's best interests at heart– because that's why theatre is done: for the sense of community and betterment of self

NO

- to** assuming people's comfortability regardless of what one might assume they know about a person or group of people
- to** witnessing people being silenced and allowing it to happen
- to** letting any kind of status play happen between maybe a director and actor or artistic director and designer or WHOMEVER
- to** deciding that what isn't your problem, isn't a problem

Interview #46

YES

- to** each individual coming in with their own experiences, instead of being pressured to leave them at the door
- to** consensus of what group would like to be performed and allowance of people to leave without guilt if they do not agree
- to** organic emergence of leaders, instead of fixed ones

NO

- to** heirarchical conceptualizations of a director, actor, or anything else
- to** classic format of a first rehearsal/read through, where everyone is placed at a table in order of importance, and people feel the need to perform even though it is just a first rehearsal
- to** racist or sexist stereotypes put on actors and actresses just because of the character they're playing

Interview #47

YES

to person leading the rehearsal room being called something else, like a facilitator or a designer of actors– title designates the person’s job, but does not attach their identity to the project as this person acts like the head of a board, listening to input from everyone else
to actors having a huge say, as they are the ones performing vulnerable acts in front of people– they have the final word on how they appear onstage

NO

to having a director– stripping away the idea of the “director” leading creates more opportunities for people to voice their concerns and feelings
to director dictators who do not listen to discomfort, or push it aside for the sake of “art”, and put themselves in front of others

Interview #48

YES

to land acknowledgements– this doesn’t rectify the mass genocide and stripping of land from indigenous peoples, but it at least puts it on the periphery of every collaborators’ mind
to recognizing that ~generally~ theatre is a space that is still saturated with whiteness/able-bodiedness (and even if the space itself isn’t, we live in a society that frames whiteness as a virtue)
to equity
to ensuring that there are diversity riders in the contracts and gender parity (across the gender spectrum) in the creative teams
to collaboration– creative team/cast/design team/etc. shouldn’t feel as though they can’t communicate with each other
to check-ins
to dramaturgy as a focus of productions to ensure the topics in the play (and those alluded to in the play) are dealt with in as healthy and productive a manner
to before the rehearsal room has started, investigating the play and what conversation you are attempting to start– are you planning on doing so productively? Is your primary motive to shock? To educate? To entertain? Isolating and answering these questions is obviously an aspect of choosing a play, but it’s easy to go for the shocking choice, so considering how the material affects the actors and eventually the audience is paramount

NO

to a one-size-fits-all rehearsal room of justice practice, because each production needs different things
to directors that vaunt their status in the room and lord it over actors

- to whiteness and able-bodiedness that pervades the room
- to rooms without inclusivity or gender parity
- to work that unfairly affects the POC that would be in the room– producing a work that solely features black/brown people being harmed to showcase how wrong slavery was, is unjust and portraying black/brown people solely as casualties of a corrupt system is unethical and strips them of their humanity, ESPECIALLY when the work is directed/produced by white people
- to a room that has rules/guidelines created by white people
- to not listening
- to not putting oneself in a position to listen to different views/concerns

Interview #49

YES

- to navigating how we give and take space– when discussing race and racial injustice people of color should always be allowed to speak from their perspective openly without being interrupted, censored, or debated
- to taking things with a grain of salt, but being willing to listen without judgement
- to willingness to stop and listen when someone feels hurt or wronged
- to giving and taking space to heal
- to constantly looking at the plays and art we choose to create with the ability to look at the art through multiple lenses: How does this appear to survivors of sexual violence? How would this affect people with disabilities? How will this be taken in a community that differs from ours?

NO

- to talking over each other
- to sharing what is said in the space outside of the space
- to valuing your opinions over others experiences
- to not acknowledging the way the art can be harmful or interpreted by groups not represented in the room

Interview #50

YES

- to a huge collaboration, where stage managers have as much say in the production as directors
- to creating examples of what our world should look like instead of repeating traumas on stage
- to gender swapping all we want
- to being able to kick someone out of the production if they are prejudiced or mean
- to a space only filled with possibilities

NO

- to hierarchy

- to not addressing it when someone is mean during the process
- to repeating trauma onstage
- to not engaging with the problems we represent onstage in the real world

Interview #51

YES

- to people being encouraged to share their ideas and feelings about the work being done openly and willing
- to holding space for growth for everyone involved
- to leaving prejudices and biases at the door, making space for understanding
- to gaining a better understanding of other people's ideas
- to educating them on different points of view
- to using these ideas to create inspiring and informative art

NO

- to "cancelling"

Interview #52

YES

- to opening and closing the space (every person in the room should participate including SMs)
- to real options to opt out or in when it comes to certain games or exercises or touch
- to specifically making community guidelines for the space that everyone creates
- to encouraging everyone to have a voice
- to everyone trying to engage in authentic relationships with all the other people in the room
- to BELIEVING people when they say something was offensive or hurtful or oppressive

NO

- to directors treating people as a pawn for 'their' show
- to treating rehearsal and breaks through a capitalist mindset i.e. time is NOT money
- to actively trying to harm people
- to ignoring impact when your intent was 'good'
- to having the mindset that the entire show is the directors idea and everyone else are pawns in the process
- to not being allies to the other people in the room when it comes to micro or macro aggressions