



ANTI-RACISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY

OVERVIEW

Brave Spirits Theatre is committed to proactive anti-racism and intersectionality. One of Brave Spirits Theatre's six core values is Representation. We believe that being a feminist company not only means advancing economic and creative opportunities for women, but also engaging fully with intersectionality and anti-racism. Furthermore, to live up to the ideals of a feminist company, we must not only consider our creative output, but also our rehearsal processes and institutional hierarchy, which may have further excluded and/or oppressed marginalized groups in the past. Upholding diversity means doing so not only in appearance, but also in thought, experience, and interpretation.

Shakespeare was a white European man who is now part of dominant, "high" culture. While loving his plays and respecting his genius, BST also recognizes that Shakespeare has been used for the process of colonization and often perpetuates a white patriarchal society. Therefore BST believes that we—and all theatre companies dedicated to Shakespeare—have a responsibility to analyze, deconstruct, and work against this legacy. BST acknowledges that since we are dedicated to the English early modern stage—plays written primarily by white men—we must cast them in a way that reflects the diverse world we live in.

Not only is colonialism part of the history of the plays we produce, but we also perform and rehearse in a location with a legacy of colonialism. We could not live where we live or have access to the spaces we have access to without the theft of land. Brave Spirits Theatre acknowledges that Convergence is located on the traditional land of the Pamunkey Indian Tribe. Historically, the Pamunkey Tribe inhabited the coastal tidewater of Virginia on the north side of the James River near Chesapeake Bay. Scholars estimate that various distinct cultures of Native Americans occupied this part of the mid-Atlantic coast for more than 10,000 years before European contact.

IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM

Theatre engages the full spectrum of humanity. Telling the stories of complex human experience often includes representations of violence, racism, homophobia, abuse, and other challenging content. We seek an ethical atmosphere when engaging in this content, working with diverse groups of participants, and particularly when producing culturally sensitive work. During the rehearsal process, participants are invited to voice concern if they feel uncomfortable with the use of their cultural personhood.



For this atmosphere to be achieved, throughout the rehearsal and performance process, all discussions should be undertaken in good faith, with an understanding that cultural and societal pressures have been ingrained in all of us, predominantly white supremacy and patriarchal attitudes resulting in a habit of centering the voices of straight, white, cisgender men. BST asks all participants, especially when engaging in discussions of personal experience or identity and culture, to actively listen, to respond with compassion, and to consider which voices are being heard and which voices are being marginalized.

Conversely, when one occupies a place of privilege, certain topics can feel like a personal attack. We ask that if participants are experiencing such an occurrence, they investigate whether the topic or comment applies to them personally and whether them expressing such a feeling would re-center their place of privilege and distract from the topic of oppression that is being discussed.

Always be aware that the level of risk and what is at stake is different for everyone. Those who are the most marginalized in the room often have more to risk due to the environment that exists outside the room. Creating a safe space requires everyone to be aware of this and commit to dismantling these oppressive systems so we all can be fully and authentically present. Even those with perceived power in a group must learn vulnerability so that transparency can help cultivate a true shared story between everyone.

Some guidelines when undertaking any discussions about bias, oppression, or identities:

- Listen for the sake of understanding, not in order to debate.
- Allow everyone to speak for themselves, not on behalf of an entire group.
- If the discussion is specifically focused on one specific identity, do not overtake and replace that discussion with a focus on a different identity (for example, in the past at BST, rehearsal room discussions about race have been co-opted into discussions about gender).
- Recognize natural or imposed power dynamics and imbalances and seek to actively work against them.
- Accept rather than fight the discomfort caused when confronting your own privilege.
- Acknowledge if you may have said something that was hurtful or insensitive to someone else; then, work to learn and correct the behavior.

BST acknowledges that microaggressions cause real, lasting harm. As believers in the power of language, we ask that everyone working with BST consider the ways in which bias can occur in speech. We ask that you work to avoid:

- Slut-shaming
- Words that contain violence against women
- Words that contain violence against any racial or ethnic group
- Words that exoticize a particular identity
- Homophobic comments
- Mis-gendering
- Ableist language
- Language that stigmatizes mental illness
- Language that assumes a gender binary
- Jokes that “punch down,” i.e., are at the expense of a less privileged group of people
- Gaslighting or dismissing another person’s experience, especially when based on a cultural identity

***A note on paraphrasing:** the scripts BST produces often contain language which has to be modernized in sometimes uncomfortable ways when we undertake paraphrasing. We do not think it is helpful to erase the existence of such viewpoints or to refuse to confront them when they are present in our work. However, some scenes in early modern drama can be particularly ugly, especially against women. If participants are worried about their paraphrasing causing harm to others, or even to themselves, they should speak to the dramaturg, director, and scene partners in advance. Additionally, sometimes these abusive scenes can cause laughter during table work. This laughter is usually born not out of mocking or insensitivity, but just from awkward discomfort. If such an occurrence bothers a participant or makes it harder to do their work, they should let everyone know, or speak to the director privately if preferred.*

BST believes that “ally” is not just a noun, but a verb—that being a good ally is a journey and not a destination: the work never ends. As such, we will all make mistakes in our journey. We ask that all participants take responsibility for any mistakes that they may make, and treat the mistakes of others with patience and understanding. Likewise, BST acknowledges that we as a company will make mistakes as we attempt to improve our inclusion and strengthen our anti-racism. We will continually learn from those mistakes and strive to do better.

Finally, while we are all capable of mistakes, BST will not tolerate any purposeful or ongoing harassment, whether based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity or presentation, ability, socio-economic class, sexuality, or body. Such behavior is a basis for termination.



PLEDGES AND ACTION PLAN

BST pledges to the following actions and philosophies in support of anti-racism and anti-oppression:

Continuous Philosophies

- Opening the possibility for non-traditional casting of all types across all roles
- Looking for opportunities for LGBTQ narratives and relationships in our productions
- Expanding our and our audience's definition of womanhood
- Expanding our and our audience's view of beauty and who can play what roles based on their body type
- Challenging heteronormative gender roles in the stories we present
- Handling stories of violence against a certain identity with sensitivity and collaboration with those directly affected
- Cutting language in scripts that is unnecessarily sexist, racist, or anti-semitic
- Encouraging the sharing of pronouns
- Preferring the re-gendering of characters and race-conscious casting as opposed to cross-gender and race-indifferent casting so that the characters themselves who inhabit these plays reflect the diversity of our world rather than just continuing to stand in for a cis white male "norm"
- Challenging and dissecting the racism, sexism, and ableism present in early modern texts, rather than ignoring or hiding it
- Honoring the triangle of pay that is livable, equitable, and competitive; achieving the facets of that list that we are able while working towards the ones we can't yet meet
- Prioritizing increasing artist and production team stipends as BST experiences financial growth

Achieved and Ongoing

- Labeling restrooms at Convergence in gender-neutral terms
- Improving the accessibility of our venue (we partnered with Convergence and Arts on the Horizon to install grab bars in the bathrooms and a wheelchair ramp at the entrance)
- Achieving or exceeding gender parity for women across artists, directors, and production team members
- Including land acknowledgements on our website and in our programs
- Removing gatekeeping from the audition process. Our auditions are open to all submissions, and actors seen are only limited by the time we have available. We will always accept video auditions from anyone who is unable to attend an open call in person.
- Providing training in various topics to artists in our season free of charge
- Including anti-racism training as part of our company training program
- BST's pay seeks to be equitable across positions



Immediate Next Steps and Short Term Goals

- Publishing a public statement of intent for BST's anti-racism steps
- Forming a committee composed of board members, artists, and community members to assess anti-racism and intersectionality at BST on an ongoing basis
- Striving to reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of our community in the people we cast and hire
- Placing marginalized voices in positions of power within the company, including improving the diversity of our board and those who direct productions for BST
- Expanding anti-racist training
- Working with more gender-nonconforming and trans artists and technicians, including more representation of these genders in the characters presented on BST's stages
- Publishing end-of-year reports, including financial and hiring breakdowns
- Compiling and publishing ten years of demographic statistics for auditions, offers, and casting
- Increasing pay to be competitive with other theatre companies our size
- Eliminating the 10-out-of-12 tech day
- Improving the diversity of the dramaturgs and experts featured in talkbacks for BST shows
- Expanding our networks of designers and production team members of color
- Supporting training in styling and consultation of Black hair and makeup for designers

Future and Long Term Goals

- Understanding the particular challenges faced by parents in this field and looking for ways in which BST as a company can support parents' ability to work with us
- Exceeding the racial diversity of our immediate community in the artists we cast and hire
- Supporting open-caption or sign-interpreted performances
- Investing in growing a more diverse audience and donor pool, reaching out to wider communities and businesses owned by marginalized members of the community
- Supporting mentorships, apprenticeships and career development, particularly in design and technical production
- Providing a livable wage and having a resident company

If you have suggestions for BST's anti-racism and intersectionality philosophy and goals, please do not hesitate to email the Artistic Director (charlene@bravespiritstheatre.com).



RELATED RESOURCES

BST Recommended Resources

- Genderbread Person: <https://www.genderbread.org/>
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- “Honoring Native Land”: <https://usdac.us/nativeland>
- *Me and White Supremacy*, the workbook: <https://www.meandwhitesupremacybook.com/>
- Rachel Cargle’s #DoTheWork 30-day course:
<https://mailchi.mp/rachelcargle/dothework-course-all-30days>
- About Gender-Neutral Pronouns: <https://time.com/4327915/gender-neutral-pronouns/>
- Yo, Is This Racist? podcast: <http://yoisthisracist.com/>
- *Dear White People* by Justin Simien (movie and TV show)
- Erika Rose keynote speech for the 2018 Women in Theatre conference:
<https://vimeo.com/287713068>
- “Being Antiracist”: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>
- *Dismantling Anti-Black Linguistic Racism in Shakespeare* by Lavina Jadhvani
https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/1Kpq3nTAUVKwTrY_XLiH6aCr3agUMu-pSCe87fg8DYQM/mobilebasic?urp=gmail_link

Reading List, courtesy of ArtEquity (www.artequity.org):

1. *Trajectory of Change* by Michael Albert
2. *A People’s History* by Howard Zinn
3. *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson
4. *New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander
5. *Race Matters* by Cornel West
6. *Indigenous People’s History* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
7. *Killers of the Dream* by Lillian Smith
8. *Transgender Warriors* by Leslie Feinberg
9. *Sister Outside* by Audre Lorde
10. *The Ground on White I Stand* by August Wilson
11. *Mapping the Margins* by Kimberle Crenshaw
12. *Disability Solidarity: Completing the “Vision for Black Lives”* by the Harriet Tubman Collective



Compilations of Resources

1. 158 Resources to Understand Racism in American, *Smithsonian Magazine*
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/158-resources-understanding-systemic-racism-america-180975029/?fbclid=IwAR0wnaqMU5RvKQW-cf02WHOqyf-V-3rhy-gkjrDWwA-Mbd1qv15iSYlxSes>
2. Black History Month Library
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0Bz011IF2Pu9TUWIXVWxybGJ1Ync?fbclid=IwAR1fZTABhIkPT7j5DFC8Bz7bBpxMrLQgHc2TrQoi386aaHbPKWRV-1fieDw>
3. Racism & Anti-Racism in the Theatre Community
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CzaevJ7FWWF2KHIoGNinFtyCULoj1ALz/view>
4. Anti-Racism Theater Resources
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M3kt19AnM2H8dOY9KtI-Pk2FMWhJaLWgpaMCoWq6ABU/edit?fbclid=IwAR19b__ShFTxizRARAmeulflewHG5K2bKQe1jT0kHZ3P8Sy51pWWvz3H0gs
5. Resource Packet for the League of Chicago Theatres
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d3oq5f00WAuBSxRwZUSVeVGIFkiCSXURnmFALzMIqiI/edit?fbclid=IwAR2ptjAjZlvfYqEbibomoPvcCUebQpnuOjmBrvVH5vrsaoEqWNT0VUPONbw>
6. Anti-Racist Resources from the TCG National Conference
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tdKRt1XkTgNKLbu__YVyNwbVmPEfavZzuJlZHaf4EPA/edit?pli=1#heading=h.dwcp7i5pra3k
7. Scaffolded Anti-Racism Resources
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PrAq4iBNb4nVlcTsLcNIW8zjaQXBLkWayL8EaPlh0bc/preview?fbclid=IwAR2HxBjnKYc6KyJoMddISqSnXJwAoMbSgJF0PUaKHZDLv4nubJuqycvgXxA&pru=AAABcpqW-_E%2AXJd99A9fmy6C5R6VwPmI2g
8. Anti-Racism Packet compiled by Jasmine Mitchell
<https://anti-racist.fyi>
9. [Anti-racism resources by Sarah Sophie Flicker and Alyssa Klein](https://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES)
bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES



SHAKESPEARE AND RACE

“All That Glisters Is Not Gold” NPR Code Switch interview with Ayanna Thompson:

<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/752850055>

Anti-racist Shakespeare by Farah Karim-Cooper:

<https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2020/05/26/anti-racist-shakespeare/>

Colorblind Shakespeare by Ayanna Thompson

David Sterling Brown: “Is Black so Base a Hue?: Black Life Matters in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*”

<https://vimeo.com/185518309>

“Directing Actors of Color in White Classic Texts: Tony Award Winner Ron Simons and Justin Emeka in Conversation,” *CONTINUUM: The Journal of African Diaspora Drama, Theatre and Performance*. Volume 4, Number 2 - December 2017.

<https://continuumjournal.org/index.php/115-volumes/issues/vol-4-no-2/4-2-articles/165-embodied-practice-a-new-old-directive-for-black-theater>

Hall, Kim, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995)

Jarrett-Macauley, Delia, *Shakespeare, Race and Performance: The Diverse Bard* (London: Routledge, 2016)

The King, and not I: Refusing neutrality — by Brandi K. Adams:

<https://medium.com/the-sundial-acmrs/the-king-and-not-i-refusing-neutrality-dbab4239e8a2>

Margo Hendricks — “Coloring the Past, Rewriting Our Future: RaceB4Race”

<https://www.folger.edu/institute/scholarly-programs/race-periodization/margo-hendricks>

Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, And Contemporary America by Ayanna Thompson

Shakespeare Anniversary Lecture Series: Kim F. Hall, Folger Shakespeare Library:

<https://soundcloud.com/folgershakespearelibrary/shakespeare-anniversary-lecture-series-kim-hall>

“Shakespeare’s Birthday 2020: Whiteness: A Primer for Understanding Shakespeare,” Folger interview with Ian Smith: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsD0DNk-0Oo>

Twitter hashtags to follow:

#ShakeRace

#RaceB4Race

Early Modern Race/Ethnic/Indigenous Studies: A (crowdsourced) Annotated Bibliography:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AaMp1al8y715FklUq1x5scqBHYS9QpzMzgYU_ZyFow/



AVAILABLE TRAINING AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IMPLICIT BIAS

- Microsoft's Unconscious Bias: <https://www.mslearning.microsoft.com/course/72169/launch>
- Harvard's Project Implicit: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

- Hollaback: <https://www.ihollaback.org/bystander-resources/>
- DC Peace Team: <https://dcpeaceteam.com/>

ANTI-RACISM TRAINING

- Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso: <https://www.driep.org/anti-racism-training>
- Nicole Brewer Anti-Racist Theatre Foundational Course: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/nicole-brewer-30494993084>
- We Must Do Better DC: <http://wemustdobetterdc.com/>

LOCAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Black Lives Matter DC: <http://www.blacklivesmatterdmv.org/>
- Showing Up For Racial Justice NOVA: <https://www.surjnova.org/>
- Showing Up for Racial Justice DC: <https://www.surjdc.com/>
- Showing Up for Racial Justice Montgomery County: <https://www.facebook.com/surjmocomd>



GLOSSARY

#notallmen - references a social media movement, or the general attitude, of responding to women's experiences of abusive, condescending, and/or sexist men with the notion that not every man behaves that way. The phrase "not all men" is used to invalidate women's claims about gender inequality or to make men feel less uncomfortable about their privilege.

Ableism / Ableist - a system of oppression based on ability. Ableism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice backed by institutional power that subordinates people because of their perceived ability. It is any social relations, practices, and ideas that presume that all people are without a disability.

Anti-racism - "the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably." - NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity; for more information see: <http://www.aclrc.com/antiracism-defined>

Bias - a conscious or unconscious preference that inhibits a person's capacity for impartial judgement.

Cisgender - someone whose gender identity and expression matches the biological sex they were assigned when they were born. The term can be shortened to "cis."

Colonialism - the domination/enslavement of one people or nation by another people or nation for the sole benefit of the oppressor nation/state. Colonialism actively removes people's access to independence by denying them avenues to create and maintain ownership and/or control over products, family, and culture. Within Shakespeare studies, inequality is inherent in the notion of giving the "gift" of Shakespeare to a community.

Diversity - a recognition of individual differences along dimensions of race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical abilities, neurological variations, nationality, language, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic background.

Equity - the state, quality, or ideal of being just. Activating equity requires a recognition of social inequalities and subsequently making intentional efforts to correct such imbalances within the confines of an organization.



Gender non-conforming - A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Other terms some people use include gender expansive, differently gendered, gender creative, gender variant, genderqueer, nonbinary, agender, gender fluid, gender neutral, bigender, androgynous, or gender diverse.

Heteronormativity - The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.

Inclusion - the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement of the diversity of an organization, system, and/or community in order to create equal access, well being, and a sense of belonging for all members.

Intersectionality - the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. The theory suggests that—and seeks to examine how—various biological, social, and cultural categories interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. This framework can be used to understand how systematic injustice and social inequality occur on a multidimensional basis.

Non-binary - An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. It is an identity term which some use exclusively, while others may use it interchangeably with terms like genderqueer, gender creative, gender nonconforming, gender diverse, or gender expansive. Individuals who identify as nonbinary may understand the identity as falling under the transgender umbrella, and may thus identify as transgender. Sometimes abbreviated as NB or Enby.

Oppression - any attitude, action, or institutional structure that subordinates a person because of their membership in a targeted group.

Microaggression -

- A. a small act of mostly non-physical aggression;
- B. an act of oppression committed person-to-person as opposed to by a system;
- C. a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.



D. according to Dr. Derald Wing Sue, “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults” towards marginalized groups.

Microaggressions are small moments of othering that create large damage.

Parity - the state or condition of being equal, especially regarding status or pay.

Patriarchy - a general structure in which men have power over women and those of other genders. A patriarchal society consists of a male-dominated power structure throughout organized society and in individual relationships. Patriarchy perpetuates oppressive and limiting gender roles, the gender binary, transphobia and cissexism, sexual assault, the political and economic subordination of women and those of other genders, and so much more.

Privilege - Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, access, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of marginalized groups.

Racism - Initial or non-initial prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

Note: Because of power structures, Black, Indigenous, People of Color can not be racist towards white people. They can be bigoted or prejudiced, but not racist. Reverse racism does not exist and was coined as a way for white people to avoid accountability.

Slut-shaming - the act of criticizing people, especially women and girls, for their real or presumed sexual activity, or for behaving in ways that someone thinks are associated with their real or presumed sexual activity. Slut-shaming is part of rape culture, which is the pervasive assumption that a woman who is sexually assaulted is somehow at fault for her assault, or could have prevented it by acting in a different way; or that only a certain type of woman experiences assault.

TERF - an acronym for Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist. The term was developed to differentiate the subset of radical feminists who believe that gender and sex are the same from the general population of radical feminists who believe the opposite. Many TERFs express a desire to keep women-only spaces as spaces for cisgender women and align with anti-feminist causes in denying trans people access to health care and other human rights.



Tokenism - making someone the sole bearer of their identity in a story, production, or organization.

Transgender - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Often shortened to trans.

White fragility - A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress on the part of white people becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves; discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

White supremacy - the idea that white people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to Black, Indigenous, People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

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