



# Equity & Justice Organizational Review Final Report (Public Version)

Prepared for Generator  
Submitted by Zainab Amadahy  
December 7, 2020

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## **A Note on the Public Version**

*Generator is committed to transparency throughout our accountability process, and we wish to include the Generator community and the Toronto performance community involved in the work we are doing to evolve the organization. Although sharing the report publicly was not included in the initial Terms of Reference, we've chosen to make much of Zainab Amadahy's report publicly available, with her consent.*

*Alongside our commitment to transparency, we feel it is crucial that we honour the agreements of confidentiality we have made to participants in our review processes. This public version of Zainab's report on her review of Generator's Artist Producer Training program and our organizational operations omits two sections in order to protect the privacy of the participants who generously offered their candid perspectives in this process: Summary of Interview Responses, and Key Issues Identified. Likewise, the Terms of Reference included as an appendix to this report omit the background and context provided to Generator to protect the privacy of individuals described in it. We have retained the sections that include Zainab's reflections and recommendations based on the interviews she conducted and her review of our policies. We believe these give a clear picture of the nature of the feedback while protecting privacy.*

*—Generator's Board of Directors and Lead Producer, February 2021  
(Claire Burns, James Foy, Quinn Harris, Kristina Lemieux, Brendan McMurtry-Howlett, and ted witzel)*



## Scope of the Project

On September 13, 2020 I received a Terms of Reference for undertaking what I would call an Equity and Justice Inquiry into Generator's programming. These Terms are appended below.

The Terms refer to concerns that have been raised by cohort members, staff, Board and others in Generator's community. Initially these concerns were related to meeting the needs of those with social localities of queerness and racialization. The Terms further detail efforts made by Generator to provide "an accessible learning environment":

- With our small budget, we have struggled to be as accessible as we want to be in terms of physical and d/Deaf accessibility and accessibility to those who require childcare in particular
- We have researched having ASL interpretation for APT and discovered it would be \$5-7K for the year, which is out of our reach
- Our offices have changed 3 times in 3 years and have had various levels of accessibility to those using movement aids. Our current office space is not accessible, though spaces in the building are. To offset that we have been running our programs out of different spaces that are accessible.
- Our online offerings (social media and ArtistProducerResource.com) do what we can to be accessible: alt text, captions, ASL video, website designed for screen readers easier access
- Posting the following inclusion statement on all postings and applications: *Generator recognizes that producing is a creative practice. We reject the binary that separates "boring, efficient office worker" from "passionate, clueless creative" and embrace the exciting, fertile and collaborative space where arts management and live performance meet. We enthusiastically invite submissions from individuals from a diversity of performing arts practices who want to participate in Generator's collaborative [work culture](#). We especially welcome applications from folks from equity-seeking groups, including those who identify as: Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, Trans, Nonbinary, Queer, Disabled and intersections of those identities.*

**Goals** of this Project as stated in the Terms of Reference are: To better understand:

- How can we connect to and meet the needs of BIPOC artists and staff?
- What is preventing folks from feeling like they can't bring forward concerns they have with the program and how they are feeling?
- If someone wasn't comfortable coming forward with concerns, why not?



- What could have been different about the environment that would have made this a challenging program (skill-wise and intellectually), and not challenging personally?
- Any specific moments or incidents that made participants feel unsafe. What could have been done in those situations to make them feel safer?
- Provide a safe(r) space for feedback from folks who have participated in the program
- Determine if there a desire to engage in further healing through mediation or Transformative Justice
- Create a report that outlines:
  - Review of Work undertaken
  - Summary of Findings
  - Common Themes
  - Key Issues Raised
  - Reviewer Insights
  - Proposed Resolutions (systemic/structural & other), potentially including alternative means to provide organizational feedback and bring up conflict

## Review of Work Undertaken

The following work was undertaken to collect information, as proposed by Generator and negotiated with myself.

1. Reviewed the following documents for context:
  - Safe(r) space policy & Template Community Agreement
  - Final Community Agreements for APT 2019/2020 and APT 2020/2021
  - Staff Community Agreement from 2019/2020
  - Generator Generations survey sent in 2018
  - Canada Council Core grant (CCA application submitted)
  - <http://generatorto.com/artistproducer-training-program>
  - <http://generatorto.com/apply/apt2021>
2. Conducted 16 interviews.
  - Nine with former anonymous cohort members from the past 2 years:
    - 3 by email, 6 by phone
  - Three with staff
  - One with a former resident company member
  - One with the Lead Producer
  - Two with former Board members

Cohort respondents were given \$200 each as honoraria for their participation.



The RFP had specified eight interviews with staff and program participants. In the course of the work others indicated an interest in being interviewed so the number doubled and folks with different roles in the organization fed into the process. This expanded and helped clarify the information collected.

On Sept 16, interview questions were emailed to cohort members and staff. Contact info was provided by Generator. Cohort members were given the option of responding by email or scheduling a phone interview. The deadline for a response was 9am, Monday Sept 21, 2020. A few requests for interviews came after deadline and most of those participants were interviewed. One response came too late to be considered as I was already in the process of writing the report. The last interview was conducted on October 15.

Interview questions were developed by myself in consultation with Claire Burns and Kristina Lemieux. These questions appear in the Terms of Reference. In most cases the interviews were conducted in a Q & A fashion. In a handful of interviews, the questions did not elicit the desired information and responses came in the form of stories that the interviewee found relevant.

3. Drafted a report that was reviewed by the Board for clarity, flow, and issues of comprehensibility and access.
4. Revised the draft to create a Final Report.

## **Recommendations**

In this section I want to address the questions asked in the project's goals in the form of recommendations. I've done this in a Q & A format, recognizing that some questions and responses intersect. Recommendations are numbered.

In addition, I will share further recommendations that can help Generator respond to additional issues that arose as a result of addressing the goals.

As you read the recommendations below, you may recognize that most are already stated intentions of Generator's current leadership. Many were also put forward by cohort members and staff. Hence, I suspect most of this section will be comprised of ideas the reader has heard before. If this is true then my intention with this work has been realized as I feel the best judges of what actions Generator can take to satisfy its own goals are found within the organization's community. My job has mostly



been to collect, summarize, synthesize, and present information back to the Generator community in a concise and holistic form. I hope that is what I have done.

## **How can Generator connect to and meet the needs of BIPOC artists and staff?**

### **What could have been different about the environment that would have made this a challenging program (skill-wise and intellectually), and not challenging personally?**

1. While Generator is successfully representative of BIPOC communities at the staff and program levels, there is also a need to build authentic relationships with BIPOC communities and organizations in the sector. Inviting individuals from these groups into leadership positions is one of the desired outcomes of this relationship-building. Gaining insights and learning about culturally acceptable practices of implementing racial justice is another benefit. This leadership will play a role in creating structures, policies and practices that better meet the needs of folks in Generator's communities.
2. Care should be taken to ensure that BIPOC representation within the leadership reflects or exceeds parity. Even this would be less than the percentage (51.5% in 2016) of those in Toronto who identify as POC, a term that many Indigenous folks do not use to identify themselves. While quotas alone (soft or hard) do not ensure that the leadership qualities valued by Generator are met, it should nevertheless be factored in. Community organizations need to hold themselves accountable for reflecting the racial and other demographics of communities they serve and in which they operate.
3. It's clear that Generator needs to create more safety for BIPOC staff and cohort members. Rigidity, arbitrariness and racial bias (actual and perceived) need to be replaced with clear policies and procedures that are developed and reviewed with the input of BIPOC folks who not only have accepted an invitation to participate in the process but have skills and experience in the challenging and transformation of white supremacist organizations.
4. Generator seems to be committed to and have experience with treating their policies and procedures as living evolving concepts, where feedback is continuously sought and incorporated into revisions. This practice should continue as part of the process of rebuilding trust.



5. Decision-making among staff needs to be decentralized so the Lead Producer isn't able to monopolize power or be perceived as doing so. Shared decision-making will provide more accountability for the Lead Producer and mitigate against the appearance of unfairness.
6. Staff performance reviews need to be based in a model where board, staff, cohort and (depending on the job description) community members have some level of involvement. (If this is currently the case then the model in use needs to be revised to provide more safety and a sense of fairness. It's not unusual for staff to participate in developing performance review policies. There are many multilateral performance review models and they don't necessarily require external expertise or the extra expenditure of funds. BIPOC folks with experience and skills in challenging White supremacy need to be involved in developing or revising the performance review process. Not only will this process better hold the Lead Producer accountable it will contribute to dispelling perceptions of unaccountability. It will further benefit the Lead Producer in that whoever is in the position will receive the feedback they need to enhance their and Generator's performance. Because performance reviews can also be an opportunity to evaluate the employer's HR performance, they will also provide information that can inform decisions regarding pay raises, workload adjustments and other HR issues.
7. Generator needs to restructure in such a way that the Lead Producer's decision-making authority is more dispersed throughout the organization. There are many options to discuss, such as considering a shared leadership model that provides for accountability while ensuring a fair process that requires the invitation of feedback from different vantage points within Generator's community. This could also be structured in a way that disperses the LP's workload and responsibilities, which seem to be considerable (perhaps overwhelming?) under the current structure.
8. A transition plan needs to be developed for recruiting a new Lead Producer (or leadership team) and this should incorporate input from BIPOC folks in Generator's community including (but not limited to), previous BIPOC cohort members, staff, Board, and BIPOC organizations in the sector. The development of this plan could start with a discussion around co-leadership options or at least a structure that disperses/more widely shares some of the LP's responsibilities.
9. BIPOC representation needs to be involved in a process of developing fair and transparent policies for handling grievances, complaints and appeals.



10. It's important that Generator consider ways to recruit more BIPOC folks to facilitate their programs. It should be emphasized to all facilitators that racial justice is a priority for Generator. The screening process for engaging facilitators should favour those with the commitment and skills to further this priority.
11. As a leader in the sector, Generator has a responsibility to hold its partners and collaborating organizations accountable to a higher standard of racial justice.
12. Facilitators need to be held accountable for violating community agreements and for behaviours that contradict Generator's principles of racial justice. If they are willing, and if remuneration is available, previous BIPOC cohort members can be asked to take part in discussions around how accountability can be improved.
13. Standards of attendance and promptness for the APT needs to be re-conceptualized and revised so that it is respectful and facilitates the agency of cohort members. This process needs input from former cohort members, when there is willingness and remuneration is available.
14. Methods of holding folks accountable to their agreements around standards of performance need to be respectful, clear, fair and flexible. Past BIPOC cohort members should be invited into these conversations, under the above conditions.
15. Curriculum content and delivery needs to be reviewed through an equity/social justice lens, ideally with the participation of past cohort members (under the conditions mentioned above).

### **How can Generator provide a safe(r) space for feedback from folks who have participated in the program?**

### **What could be done to make participants feel safer in coming forward with concerns?**

16. Involve BIPOC folks and cohort members in drafting the agreements, policies and procedures that will impact them.
17. Ensure that those collecting and following up with feedback are representative, skilled, clear on organizational priorities and will report back on implementation.
18. Transparency is important in establishing, maintaining and rebuilding trust. Decisions can't be made anonymously or behind closed doors. Complaints cannot be dismissed or removed from the official record. Anonymity can be





preserved, when necessary and possible, in discussions on how to respond to complaints. Grievances should go into personnel files along with documentation on how they are handled. Policies, agreements and procedures concerning the handling of complaints and grievances must be clear and accessible. When it makes sense, public report backs and community conversations can be held to promote healthy relationships and trust.

19. The Board needs to at least annually review its own performance with regard to its formally set goals and standards, including an assessment of its racial equity and social justice objectives. The results of this assessment need to be reported at AGMs, transparent and publically accessible.

### **Determine if there is a desire to engage in further healing through mediation or Transformative Justice.**

No informant requested this option, but everyone appreciated the offer.

### **Further Recommendations**

20. One of the qualifications for Board and staff positions at Generator is to have skills in establishing racial justice and a track record of participation in efforts to dismantle White supremacy. The degree of experience and level of skill might vary across job descriptions, roles and responsibilities.
21. The Board needs to review Generator's existing HR policy to ensure alignment with the organization's social and racial justice aspirations. This would include how staff accountability is maintained. Furthermore, it might include provisions that flatten the hierarchy and provide for more shared responsibilities and decision-making.
22. Overall, Generator could benefit from a comprehensive strategic review and planning process facilitated by someone external to the organization, without any vested interest in outcomes. The takeaway would be a prioritized plan to implement the above recommendations while considering the larger context and other priorities. It's a difficult time to assess and predict what funding may be available for such a project but efforts to secure resources would be a first step.
23. While it is true that planning in our global context can be an exercise in fiction writing this doesn't prevent us from dreaming big, articulating a vision and identifying the outcomes we will strive to create regardless of how quickly and drastically the landscape shifts. We can also fortify our inner resources so we will be in the best shape as individuals, communities and organizations to meet the challenges ahead. So while comprehensive planning can feel somewhat futile in



these times, it is still worth doing, if only for the purposes of building sustainable relationships (inner and outer) and co-creating a compelling vision.

24. While no one interviewed for this project indicated an interest in Transformative Justice, it is clear that all stakeholders need healing and opportunities to rebuild their resiliency. This is not something Generator has been asked to provide nor is it necessarily best positioned to offer. What it can do is be nonjudgmental in providing its community members with time, understanding and official recognition when the need for healing and restoration is expressed. This could, obviously, and perhaps confusingly, take many forms but the intention to be responsive and accommodating is foundational.

Our entire global society is transforming and it is to be expected that our organizations will be similarly impacted. The stress levels on individuals is enormous and many supports that used to be available to people are overtaxed or no longer available. It is important that the organization provide some compassionate space for healing and reflection, even at the cost of slowing down its operations.

## Final Words

One of the reasons I have struggled to complete this report is because I have tried to frame the information from informants with care, in such a way as to be the least painful to all readers. That is not because I believe pain can or should be avoided. I actually believe that pain, like all our feelings, are forms of guidance, signals to steer us in the direction that will bring us the highest joy and sense of fulfillment. But when pain triggers old wounds and stirs up fears it can be hard for us to see the guidance and wisdom it offers. At the same time the Rumi quote I have often seen is true: "The wound is the place where the Light enters you."

It would be stating the obvious at Generator to note that dismantling White supremacy and establishing racial justice requires intentional effort, openness to taking emotional risks and the allocation of precious resources. Everyone is aware that mistakes get made and trust has to be rebuilt repeatedly throughout the process. There is no one right way to get the job done and no point at which the work is finished, since community organizations must consistently strive to meet ever-changing needs and social conditions. What's more, anyone authentically engaging in the process is going to be triggered and re-traumatized from time to time. When all of this is merely comprehended, much less undertaken, the whole endeavour feels daunting.



In my experience and according to my spiritual teachings, the key to minimizing the fear and pain, while maximizing fulfillment in organizational development work is something many people resist: **personal responsibility**.

Every person in the organization must love themselves enough to reflect on their fears, and do what is necessary to assuage them. No organization can possibly shield you from the pain that a White supremacist settler colonial society, in the midst of a global pandemic, is going to inflict on you and your loved ones. If you want to enjoy resiliency, some level of wellness, and personal sovereignty you **have** to take responsibility for doing your own healing and wellness work. No one else can do it for you.

Society is a reflection of the people that comprise it. Organizations are a reflection of the individuals that comprise them AND the society that contains them. The level of consciousness, the level of awareness, the beliefs and values of people in a society shape that society. The same is true for organizations. Our collective constructs are the result of our individual mindsets.

Transforming ourselves is integral to transforming our organizations, which is integral to transforming our society. You can't create (or co-create) a peaceful organization, much less a world, while your heart isn't peaceful. You can't create justice from the mindset of blame, shame and guilt. You can't create prosperity and abundance when your mindset is contracted and focused on scarcity. You can't feel or wield your power if you identify as a victim. You can't create a loving organization (or a love-filled life) if your heart isn't open and forgiving. This is the meaning of the meme often shared on social media that "you can't solve a problem with the mindset that created it."

At least half the work of transforming Generator has to be devoted to personal transformation. And while we can be supportive of each other, everyone taking personal responsibility is the only way that is ever going to happen. The other component of this dynamic that no one wants to hear is that we tend to underestimate how crucial personal healing is to personal transformation AND, because they are interconnected and interdependent, organizational transformation.

Healing is a much misunderstood and co-opted concept in our society. Even when there is clarity on a definition, too many of us do not have access to culturally appropriate healing practices or may even underestimate available resources due to internalized White supremacy, racism and colonialism. Many people, in fact, confuse healing with self-care but they are not the same thing.



Self-care is about taking action to relieve stress and feel better. Examples are spa days, movie nights, sleeping in, time off and vacations. There is absolutely nothing wrong with self-care. It should definitely be encouraged but not confused with healing. Self-care does not require a shift in consciousness. The lift one gets from self-care usually only lasts over the short term and doesn't involve dredging up past pain and trauma. In fact, it's usually quite the opposite and you are asked to forget about what troubles you, even if only for a while. And many people use self-care to distract themselves from the need to address their fear, pain and trauma. In contrast, healing is an opportunity to deeply feel your wounds, explore them, and extract the treasures encoded within. "Wisdom is nothing more than healed pain," a Buddhist teaching says.

It's a myth that we can impact change in our organizations, much less the world, without taking a deep dive within and exploring how we have to change to be able to become wise, open-hearted and healed enough to not only affect the kind of change that we envision but sustain it. This doesn't have to be as painful a process as people tend to imagine and everyone who does it knows how freeing and exhilarating it can be.

The tendency to externalize our efforts to change our organizations is a symptom of the illusion of separation, a feature of White supremacy, settler colonialism and capitalist ideologies. It's a mindset that operates under the false belief that social, organizational and individual development are separate unconnected processes.

However, if you believe, based on clear evidence, that we are all interconnected and interdependent, and that our organizations mirror our level of consciousness, then you have to apply this to your beliefs and actions around organizational change. The implications are that you have to put as much effort into your own individual healing and personal development as you do into transforming your organization. Consequently, the organization has to make space for that.

I wish I could discuss healing in more depth but that's not really the focus of this report. Nevertheless, I urge everyone at Generator to explore ideas and approaches to personal healing and development for our collective benefit. When you have done that perhaps the content of this report won't sting so much and the realization of the work to be done won't feel so intimidating. It has to be done, however, in Generator and everywhere else. There is no escaping evolution. Earth and humanity are evolving. There will not be many places left where one can feel comfortable being out of sync with the rhythms of our expanding global consciousness.

Having emphasized the need for healing, I nevertheless understand that Generator will not heal its way through this. It will have to **evolve** its way through. Healing is,



however, an important and foundational part of the process. And everyone I talked to for this project is up to the task if they choose it.

In sum, I urge each you to let excitement be your inspiration, rather than allow fear to contract you. Get excited over your personal vision of what Generator can be, how it can role model and contribute to the kind of social change you aspire to create. Dream big. Then be the change you seek.

Thank you for the honour and privilege of helping Generator better know itself and understand how it can transform to better serve our communities.

## Appendix: Terms of Reference

- **Generator’s capacity to provide an accessible learning environment:**
  - With our small budget, we have struggled to be as accessible as we want to be in terms of physical and d/Deaf accessibility and accessibility to those who require childcare in particular
  - We have researched having ASL interpretation for APT and discovered it would be \$5-7K for the year, which is out of our reach
  - Our offices have changed 3 times in 3 years and have had various levels of accessibility to those using movement aids. Our current office space is not accessible, though spaces in the building are. To offset that we have been running our programs out of different spaces that are accessible.
  - Our online offerings (social media and ArtistProducerResource.com) do what we can to be accessible: alt text, captions, ASL video, website designed for screen readers easier access
- **Our inclusion statement on all postings and applications:**
  - Generator recognizes that producing is a creative practice. We reject the binary that separates “boring, efficient office worker” from “passionate, clueless creative” and embrace the exciting, fertile and collaborative space where arts management and live performance meet. We enthusiastically invite submissions from individuals from a diversity of performing arts practices who want to participate in Generator’s collaborative [work culture](#). We especially welcome applications from folks from equity-seeking groups, including those who identify as: Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, Trans, Nonbinary, Queer, Disabled and intersections of those identities.



- **Context Pieces:**

- Safe(r) space policy & Template Community Agreement
- Final Community Agreements for APT 2019/2020 and APT 2020/2021
- Staff Community Agreement from 2019/2020
- Generator Generations survey sent in 2018
- Canada Council Core grant (CCA application submitted)
- <http://generatorto.com/artistproducer-training-program>
- <http://generatorto.com/apply/apt2021>

- **Desired outcomes**

We want to talk to participants of the past two years of APT - two years because the co-facilitators of those two years are the same - to ensure that they have safe(r) space to talk about their experiences with the program in terms of how the space and connections between folks is managed (i.e. not a curriculum review).

We'd also like to hear the experiences of all staff and select current and recent board members.

- **Goals**

- To better understand:
  - How can we be better connecting to and meeting the needs of BIPOC artists + staff as a PWI whose mission is to support artists in being better able to navigate funders, CRA, venues institutions, etc (all systems steeped in white supremacy, settler colonialism, and patriarchy)?
  - What is preventing folks from feeling like they can't bring the concerns they have with the program and how they are feeling to us as they are happening?
    - If you weren't comfortable coming forward, why not? If you felt your needs weren't being met, why did you not come to the facilitators?
  - What could have been different about the environment that would have made this challenging (skill-wise and intellectually) program, not challenging personally?
  - Any specific moments or incidents that made you feel unsafe and like you couldn't bring things forward. What could have been done in those situations to make you feel safer?



- Provide a safe(r) space for feedback from folks who have participated in the program
- Determine if there a desire to engage in further healing through mediation or TJ
- Create a report that outlines:
  - Review of Work undertaken
  - Summary of Findings
  - Common Themes
  - Key Issues Raised
  - Reviewer Insights
  - Proposed Resolutions (systemic/structural & other), potentially including alternative means to provide organizational feedback and bring up conflict

- **Process**

Zainab to reach out to folks on the provided contact list to ask for their participation as per the workplan

Interview at least 8 participants and all staff (more may be possible with participation)

We will also include your email address when we reach out to all program alumni to offer that you are an external party reviewing our last two cohorts of APT and that should anyone else wish to add their voice and their feedback they can reach out to you at your email address before September 28.

- **Participation honoraria & what it includes**

Each participant of APT who wants to talk to Zainab will be paid a fee of \$200 for participation in the information gathering process. This fee will be paid directly by Zainab and Generator will not know who has participated, unless they identify themselves.

- **Confidentiality**

Will be respected - whom the info will be shared with (With consent to be interviewed it must be clear that the information will be going into a report but the source of the info will be kept confidential except to identify whether the informant is staff or program participant)

- **Rough timelines**

As per workplan created by Zainab on Sept 4



- **Follow-up**

- **What will happen with report?**

It will be shared with Board and Staff, as well as anyone who participated. It will live in Generator's files to provide context for future leaders of the organization. The Board and Lead Producer have consulted with Zainab about the decision to release this abridged version of the report, as it was not outlined in the initial Terms of Reference.

- **What happens if there is interest in transformational justice/healing?**

Sedina and Kristina are willing to participate in any process that is requested. Zainab is available to facilitate, but we are also open to anyone choosing their own facilitator. Generator is open to covering the costs of mediation or TJ for individuals or groups. It is difficult to say to what extent as our budget is limited - but we could easily dedicate \$2-5K to a process(es), and possibly more depending on what is requested and needed.

