THEATRE SYSTEMS

PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING ANTI RACIST THEATRE SYSTEMS

As the calls for long overdue change sweep every aspect of our society, we are gathering in the theatre, the site of its cultural emergence and present. We are gathering in the theatre to demand a new vision for our field, one that directly addresses the profound legacies of colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchal power embedded in our institutions, practices, and lives. As theatre artists and advocates, we are committed to dismantling white supremacy in all of its forms, and to cultivating conditions of belonging and liberation for all people, regardless of their life experiences, gender identities, or artistic expression.

In order to make equity and justice our reality, we demand:

THEATER, OUR DEMANDS ARE IN

EQUITABLE PRESENCE

As the global majority, we demand a bare minimum of 50% BIPOC representation in programming and personnel, both on and off stage. This applies universally to all hiring tiers of Broadway, Off Broadway, regional theatres, funding recipients, artistic commissions, production companies, theatre schools, and educational institutions. We want anti-racism to be integral to all levels of theatre and its practice. We demand term limits on executive leadership service. While the arts and entertainment fields have historically fostered and enabled systemic racism to persist, they cannot continue to look away from their complicity in the maintenance of white supremacy throughout institutions and project workflow.

We require community with each other for our sustenance. Our ‘affinity spaces’ are biased by definition, access to making art should not be, and this includes the elimination of all institutional barriers to BIPOC access and opportunity. We demand safe and exclusive affinity spaces for BIPOC protection inside our workplaces.

We require regular accountability to antiracist measurables, as well as a racial integrity index ensuring that our 50% minimum representation in all offstage positions corresponds to onstage optics. An antiracist code of conduct must be adopted, with trainings instituted in all production meeting, theatre walkthrough, casting, board, PR, and marketing session, then maintained by all employees, contractors, vendors and investors. Protocols for disrupting racist incidents and bias must be established and implemented universally and consistently to dismantle white supremacy throughout the entire theatre system.

We require transparency regarding all investors, funding sources and the expenditure of all resources. This includes the review of all historical records of gender and BIPOC representation in programming and personnel, as well as the development of a ‘historical equity index’ to inform future hiring decisions. We demand a ‘transparency audit’ of our theatres and companies, and that the results be publicized.

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We require a culture of wellbeing, a culture of accountability, and a culture of transparency in all dealings pertaining to compensation. We demand the elimination of gendered and racialized experiences of ‘competition and scarcity, or the fallacy that our narratives must center only on white artists’.

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