

The Real Work: A Podcast About Theater Culture and Transformative Justice

Episode 6: Dreaming Forward

Tierra: What does it really mean to practice transformative justice? Could doing so heal patterns of oppression, violence, and abuse, and grow communities where everyone thrives? What about in the theater community? Where would we even start?

This six-episode audio series tells the story of 27 theater practitioners on unceded Lisjan Ohlone territory who gathered regularly for one year to explore using transformative justice, or TJ, in our creative spaces and our lives. We were guided by one of the founders of the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, Mia Mingus.

This podcast is a report back, and an invitation. May we invest in the real work it will take to end and heal all levels of violence, for ourselves, our communities, and our future generations.

MUSIC BREAK

Tierra: Episode 6: Dreaming Forward

Welcome, welcome in, everyone. It's ya girl Tierra and can y'all believe we're at the end of the series? This is it, right here, this is the final episode.

And if you're here right now, and you've been choosing to return to this work again and again, I want to say, thank you. Cuz If we want alternative means to responding to harm other than the systems on offer from the state, we are the ones who have to invest time, energy, labor into learning, healing, imagining, practicing, remembering, and organizing to get there. As Black feminist revolutionary writer June Jordan said, "we are the ones we have been waiting for." Now is the time to generously [00:01:39] bring forth our gifts and throw down for our collective liberation. So again, thank you for choosing to be here.

Let's dream forward.

SHORT MUSIC BREAK

Tierra: Our final episode is about integrating all the learning and unlearning we've done and deciding where we go next. So let's visit the final 8-hour workshop day of the

yearlong TJ intensive, which we dedicated to collectively envisioning what a year 2 of the work might look like.

I gotta tell you though, in reviewing audio recorded on the last workshop day, I noticed something...

SK: Welcome. Hi. Oh my gosh, it's our last session.

Group: Oh my God.

SK: First I have some sad news. I'm just gonna start with it. Mia's super sick.

Group: Aww...

SK: Yeah, has had a really rough flu and can't speak and so we were like, please take care of yourself today. We got it. She's super sad she couldn't make it and sends hella love to everyone here. It won't be our last time engaging with her, but she's not here today, so it's just gonna be us. Yeah. Yay. Maybe we can all send her some like healing vibes. I think there's a lot of folks in the room who are sick.

Group: Yeah.

SK: Myself included!

Tierra: Are you noticing what I'm noticing?

SK: It has come up in multiple, kind of like SEED group check-ins, the difference between folks who are like backed by an org and potentially getting compensated to show up. And the folks who are really not. And some people even turning down work to keep this commitment. So we're exploring like, oh, can we put together some stipends for the folks who really haven't been compensated [00:03:18] financially for being here? If this is you and a stipend would feel good for you and really help out and you haven't contacted me, just let me know. We're collecting a list.

Tierra: My only other announcement is that there's orange juice in the little fridge.

Group: Oh yay.

Tierra: Cuz, I'm sick too. So between the citrus over there and the citrus and juice store, may we all be well?

SK: Yes.

Tierra: Did I mention our last workshop was in December, 2019?

COUGH MONTAGE

Tierra: Yeah, so I have no idea if COVID-19 was in the room that day. I don't know if the germs that were there got spread to other folks, but I gotta say, speaking as someone who is not immunocompromised, that I invite folks to join me in learning from the COVID-19 pandemic and as much as possible committing to practicing disability justice moving forward by not pressuring others into coming into work sick and by not coming in sick ourselves. Again, as much as is possible, which means we gotta collectively build that future where no one has to choose between taking care of their health and meeting there and their family's other basic needs.

Okay. PSA over. Back to the workshop.

SK: So we're gonna kick it off. We're kind of sharing facilitation today. We'd just like really appreciate all y'all's support in kind of collectively holding this. We are not the experts, we are not Mia. So I just wanna lift up: yes, we are holding the space, but we are also not trying to be in any kind of teaching mode or whatever. So we just like encourage some co- holding of the space today from everyone.

Tierra: So as we're learning from the BATJC, some of their practices, who are holding space and doing this work, we usually have a grounding. And so we're gonna make the time for that. I would not say that I'm leading that, but I will hold time for it so folks can decide where they wanna be and how they want be. I think that it's been really valuable to hear from Mia that we've been offered practices and a way to ground ourselves, but ultimately over time there's an invitation for us to feel into what actually is what we need. And that can also change from day to day.

And you are invited to, if you would like to close your eyes. If you're not feeling that, another thing you can do is find a point of focus in front of you that you can rest your eyes on gently.

And I'm gonna go ahead and use a timer for myself to give us some time and I'll kind of let us know when we have maybe about a minute left. But we're gonna take about five minutes just in this moment to ground however you need to in this work.

Sarah: We'll move on to the next section, which is going to be our pair share. So we'll ask you all to pair up. Our questions today to discuss are surrounding your accountability partnership. How did it go? Any reflections? How have you grown through

this work? A more general kind of overarching question about the whole process. And what is your relationship to TJ in this moment?

Clive: Even when you do fail at your assignment, you are called to be accountable for not showing up for yourself in that moment, right? So it winds up working whether you did the act- for me was daily meditation- whether I actually sat on the days that Sarah checked in with me or I didn't, I still had to be accountable for whether I showed up for myself in that way or not.

And that was really instructive. And I'm deeply grateful.

Ray: I have worked to build accountability in the specific practice that I was working on for years, and it hadn't stuck until this time. And I had tried different accountability systems before with having an accountability buddy, like around this with calendar systems, with apps, with all of these different things. So I was glad to have brought accountability to this practice. It was exercising, I'll just say it.

But also I thought it was really interesting to note that. I think part of it is because it was tied to work where my accountability person sits right next to me, where I have a calendar and I'm using my work calendar. Why am I able to build accountability when it's on my work calendar instead of on my personal calendar? So that's real.

[general sounds of affirmation]

And I can be glad for having built this habit, which actually does feel like a habit now. And I had some feelings about why is it happening now? And my accountability partner and I are going to meet less regularly, but still regularly in the next year. And I'm interested to see where I want to build accountability in all of these higher stakes places in my life. And I'm interested to see how the skills transfer. So that feels both scary and exciting.

Leontyne: One of the things that just occurred to me was how difficult for me the notion of having somebody that I reported to or who cared enough to check on me, like that just, that was something that I felt like I, I needed to get used to, which was an interesting discovery, I guess. And so an interesting thing to learn that what it was that I needed to work on is making those kinds of connections.

Sarah: Something that my pair share partner and I talked about was how we both were thinking in our journeys of this accountability partnership and not always being very successful, is we were doing this with such kinda low stakes goals and how difficult it must be when the stakes are so much higher.

And like, not even for me, fully grasping what it would take to be able to be successful for something that felt really high stakes. And so this journey, I think the learning that kind of came out of it for me was just a lot about as a person, as Sarah, like what do I need to do to make myself accountable and not always have to rely on someone else to kind of pull me through or to be supporting me in that way, even though that's a huge part of it, but like really kind of building the skillset of being accountable to myself so that I can also then be more accountable to my accountability partner.

Emily: And like many things in my life I picked something that I thought was a four or less and was probably a six or a seven. And that made it really hard. And, I'm trying not to be like, well, that was a failure, cuz actually I am further along now than I was in January. Like, I have made progress. It's not as much as I wanted, but it is something and I have to like, I have to let myself acknowledge that.

And I think I have learned through the work outside of this group that I've been doing is that I do better when I have structure and somebody to check in because I haven't learned how to completely have my own back. And so sometimes I need to outsource that a little bit.

SK: I finally got this mic working if that would be helpful for people.

Eric: Just gonna say there are a lot of people that are sick in the room. Oh, my experience with mics is that they're not the best way to keep keep healthy people healthy. So I just wanted to say that out loud cause I don't want people to feel like they have to use the mic.

Group: Oh, that's a good point...

Eric: I'm just taking that information that we talked about...

MUSIC BREAK

Amanda: So we're gonna talk about some future visioning. We started to touch on this a little bit last time. Just in like, give us all of your ideas, right? Everything that you can think about like, let's write it down. And [00:11:33] then we also, as the SEED group, had check-ins with many folks like one-on-one to get further thoughts about where your thinking is.

So nothing is set in stone, but we want to just start thinking about what 2020 or beyond session eight looks like. And then what we did as the SEED group was to lift up common themes that came from the ways that we checked in with you guys, and then

those came into a couple of different areas and then some ideas that surfaced throughout.

So the first is sharing out, so potentially having a town hall follow up, having a podcast party. So as you know we're doing a podcast, potentially we do a launch party and talk about with our community where to find that podcast and how to listen to it. Then to also have a town hall follow up, like the town hall that generated this beginning. Potentially conference panel discussion so that could be through TCG, TBA or other conferences.

We also wanna look at community building. So as you may know, the BATJC has monthly potlucks that they host. It could be that we just joined those, they're open to, and I know some folks from this group have started attending those popups as they're able. We could create our own. We could start attending those, if that's an idea.

Book club reading. So towards the beginning of the sessions, we handed out copies of *The Revolution Starts at Home*, we could do a book club, reading that with each other, with community members. Talking about doing a deeper dive skill building, which could include consent training, accountability training, communication training, and an apology lab. So these would be ones that are led by Mia or someone at [00:13:12] the BATJC.

Having a TJ study group. So this would be cohort-led without leveraging the BATJC, we are getting together to continue to build our skills, but to also open it up to other community members. We know throughout this year there's been other theater folks who have reached out to share interest in wanting to join, but it was too late into the series for folks to be able to join this cohort. But we know folks are interested and they want to know, and we want more people to learn. And so this would be self-organized within the cohort and then doing some sort of formal TJ study. And so we're saying that this was a 101 this past year, and so maybe we look at what 201 looks like.

So those are the different areas that really surfaced out of what we shared last time in our one-on-one check-ins. And so what we're gonna spend the next 20 minutes doing is there's a sheet for each one of these larger categories. So what we're gonna ask is go to a section that you're drawn to. If there's one that sticks out for you, it's okay if the section has every walk or no one. We're just gonna organically let it flow. If there's multiple ones that strike your interest, start with one, move to another when it feels good. I also wanna ask before we get started, are there any major areas that are missing here that we need to make another sheet for? That way we can also look at stuff that might fall into a category that isn't listed here in these green sections.

Tierra: Buckle up y'all. Cause something happened when my fellow SEED group organizer, Amanda, posed this exercise to the cohort that had never happened on any

other workshop day before. No matter how out there, the ask from Mia had been not even that wacky drying communication exercise from episode four:

J Jha: So basically it will be small pink mountain, medium pink mountain, small pink mountain, medium pink mountain. Small pink mountain...

Tierra: So when Amanda invited folks to group themselves around the idea they were most interested in for what year two of the TJ intensive in Bay Area Theater might look like, that didn't happen. What happened next, as confirmed by the timestamps on the audio recordings, was another full half hour of conversation.

First, what exactly were we supposed to be doing on the large post-its?

Amanda: To do a deeper dive into what could fall into these categories. So we've listed some that came up repeatedly, but to start looking at like tangibly what sharing out to our community could look like.

Tierra: Next, should we just be thinking about the year 2020 for this exercise?

Amanda: Yeah, I mean it, I think it is. It could be both. But I would say don't feel hemmed in to one or the other. It can be as future thinking as you want, but also tactically like what do we want to be doing next with our time and resources? And it's okay too if as you're working, if there's like a whole other category that comes up, just let me know and we'll throw another sheet up there.

Tierra: What about offering interventions if there are issues that come up for the community?

Amanda: Yeah, and we've talked about this a lot in the SEED group and other SEED folks, if you wanna speak up as well to this: we're not in a place to be able to do something right now. I know there is harm that is happening in our community, but we aren't experts yet.

And so this [00:16:30] is looking at what we can do next based on where we are now. I would say just based on my own experience and the things that Mia has shared back with us, is we're not in a place to be experts enough that we could hold that.

Tierra: Could we work with Mia for a second year to get trained up to be able to facilitate TJ interventions? Was that not on the table?

SK: She has said a very small amount of people. If there's like one, two, maybe three who are really looking to train up to like facilitate and work in that way. She's doing that

with some people in the BATJC and is willing to take on a couple folks to like shadow and work on a couple processes with her.

I will say that I think that has to be like really individually led, but that opportunity is there. If someone really wants to go deep in that way.

There is a grant that we're looking to apply for. So I think there's potential for future funding. But also this work, I think we know, can't just be grant driven or funding driven, right? It's like people work, it's organizing work.

Tierra: If we had additional group training sessions with Mia, would they be limited to people already in the cohort or could they be open to other folks in Bay Area Theater? .

Sarah: The point of this next moment is to really dive into all of this and like not be hampered down by like, could we do this? But to be like, what would it look like if we did this and what would be the resources we need? Don't let your imaginations be hampered by the notion of like, but could we do this? Just put down what you wanna do and we'll see what kind of comes out of it. This is like a moment of deep diving.

Tierra: Could we have another post-it that's like other visions that just might like the wild card section?

But we heard more frustration that offering intervention services for our communities wasn't our main clear next step.

Amanda: Is there a way that we can have that, like to have some representation of that we can work towards? Because I agree that this is really looking at what we can do in the near term, but isn't focused on like what an end goal might look like.

And so, would it be helpful then to have an additional sheet that is like more future thinking and looking towards those goals and keeping our eye? Because then we'll come back to this larger group and discuss those and so we can have an opportunity to talk about what does it look like even beyond these?

Is that helpful?

Tierra: It got a little tense. One of our cohort members and my colleague at the time, Ray, offered some facilitation.

Ray: I also think this is where, I don't know, I'm having a little frustration where I'm like if we want to talk about the study group or the community building or whatever, I think that's where we were meant to segment a little bit.

But also I want to hold that I know I've had, especially in the beginning of this process: "okay, but when are we getting to this ending? Okay, when are we holding these processes?" And I hear those thoughts echoing throughout like small and large group conversations. And I also, I don't know, I have a really hard time with centering that at community building, for example, or that can be a part of it, right? If you look at those examples, maybe we're building community through a book club reading and what are we reading, right? But I think also one of the things that Mia keeps bringing back to us is we need to build our pods. We need to build self accountability. We need to build relationships so other people can hold us accountable.

We need to be able to do all of that stuff. And all of that is a lot of times what is gonna keep the harm from escalating. It's gonna put these structures in place. So when that work does need to maybe happen down the line, like I feel like that work is important. And I also don't want to lose that in us trying to get to a formal process or to a process that looks like one of those diagrams.

It feels very, I think we can hold both. And I think this work doesn't need to be specifically goal oriented when all of these other things have value as well. Even if we can't chart them out in the exact same way.

Tierra: Folks kept raising their hands. We heard about the urgent need to address harm happening in our community.

We heard that what was missing from this exercise was some sort of strategic plan looking forward many years ahead, that some people wanted a more detailed structure to vision within. One person said that they felt frustrated that all year they had wanted to share their personal experiences of harm and they didn't feel like they had a chance to, and they didn't know if they could have this visioning conversation because they didn't know if this group was really a community.

Someone voiced strong opposition to participating in anything that felt like a theory of TJ class for another year.

SK: I am actually hearing from the group that a lot of people really don't wanna break out. I don't know if that's true for folks. Like, it feels like maybe there's actually stuff we need to wrestle together right now in terms of future visioning. One.

Two, there's some fundamental shit we need to like actually kind of parse out. Like this group is not a pod. You know what I mean? Like, but there are people here who want to be in a pod together. Like both of those things are true. And then there's people here

who have been coming to these trainings actually just for their personal life, like not to do with theater at all.

Like I just wanna honor that a lot of people are coming here from really different points. And so to try to, I know that something that's been difficult for me is like to try to standardize, like, "oh, this is exactly what we're gonna do" has been really difficult. It's like, how can we actually create this space for all of those to be together?

For me, just SK speaking from SK: like that deep dive skill building is a fucking strategy. Like that is like something that I am like: hi you, I am not ready to like facilitate a process and I know you've caused harm. You're gonna get an intentional invite to come to this space. That is not insignificant.

Yes, to what Ray lifted up is about, so much of this is about building our pods, building the individual skills to actually show up and to create a web that can hold harm.

Tierra: I think I wanna bring kind of back to fundamentals to remind folks, and I believe Amanda went over this, but what kind of is parsed out on the board from future visioning came from [00:23:06] individual conversations that the SEED group had with all of you. So this is more like prompts based on themes that we heard from many people in the circle. And so talking about transformative justice as like preventing harm. Prevention work is really necessary, then like addressing it directly in interventions and healing from it long term. I feel an impulse actually to move from "let's keep having this conversation about other people's ideas and how I feel about them or what I wanted this group to be" -whether or not those actually were the intentions- and more like this is an opportunity to take moment for yourself to imagine what you would like to do next year or what you think that this group could hold.

Speaking personally, I would love for us to embrace the discomfort of that and the beautiful opportunity of that and like we are all artists in this room bring forth a vision so that we can talk about it.

Amanda: So do folks feel like breaking out into smaller groups?

Ray: I also am wondering when our lunch break is gonna be, if it's before or after, cuz I know when I am not drinking enough water and not eating like emotions can ramp up a little more. I'm probably not the only one. So just wanting to see if we want to take a break before doing the next thing or not.

Tierra: One more hand. Could the SEED group explain the exact process that would be used to decide which plans from our collective visioning would move forward before we all did that visioning?

Amanda: Yeah. So the idea was that these were the common themes that came up and that we would break out into groups and flesh them out a little bit, and then come back for a group discussion and to see what finds traction and where [00:24:45] folks are drawn, because then we can get traction on then organizing what happens in these next steps.

So what are folks feeling? Are we feeling hungry? Are we feeling like staying in a group? Are we feeling like breaking out into smaller groups?

Group: Hungry. Hungry. I feel like some fresh air could be nice...

Stephanie: I think we just take a little bit of a breather...

Tierra: *[deep breath]* Facilitation work can be humbling y'all. I for one, am always trying to learn and grow as a facilitator, and I don't necessarily think the SEED group got everything right here. We did ask folks to co-hold the space with us, and even so you can definitely hear that I had some frustration come up navigating question after question and comment after comment. My instinct though, is that this wholly unique response to this particular workshop prompt was mostly not a reaction to imperfect facilitation or a faultily designed exercise or a confusing process. I think it was resistance to having to rise into the responsibility of being the ones we've been waiting for. I think it's about the vulnerability of dreaming.

I've been fortunate in my artistic life to create performance and installation that invite audiences into speaking the futures that they long for, into mapping the community assets [00:26:24] that already exist and point the way to collective liberation. And I have seen time and again, even in the Bay Area, with our legacy of radical activism and reputation as a comparatively progressive minded place in the so-called US, that overall folks have a much easier time naming the problems than volunteering solutions. And why wouldn't that be the case given the systems we are all conditioned by?

It can be so vulnerable and take so much courage to allow yourself to dream of something better, to put yourself out there with ideas, not already rubber stamped by institutions or individuals with authority. Voices real and imagined can come in quick and loud with "that's not practical" and "hey, I'm just trying to be realistic here" and "that's nice and all, and I agree with you on principle, but I just don't see that happening" as they resign themselves to the status quo, as though that's a more savvy move than

trying to get free. Sometimes the call is coming from inside the house, and it's our own voice choking down our dreams. You ever caught yourself saying, "I mean, maybe not, I don't really know" when you're trying to voice something you authentically feel, think, want? Apologizing for holding onto even a spark of a dream, tamping it down and depriving it of the air it'd need to grow. And I'm all for exploring ideas with humility and care, but this ain't that.

I've been made to feel that if I didn't have the exact means-tested, foolproof blueprint to get from present conditions to something more liberatory and life-promoting, then what legitimate business could I have to say anything? And look, in such a time and place in history as we are in, with no shortage of despairing turns of events day after day, we can understand where these impulses to tamp down visioning can come from. Some of us aren't trying to get our hearts broken again.

But it brings me back to the conversation our audio producer Cat had with Mia in episode two:

Mia: I think living in the US and living in a western context where people - you know, we've kind of been brainwashed. Our revolutionary imaginations have been brainwashed out of us. So we like it when somebody tells us what to do. We like to have a manual or a workbook that says, this is how you do it. And with transformative justice, we really don't have that. And I think that's a good thing.

Cat: Absolutely. There's a quote by Grace Lee Boggs, who Mia mentions on her website. Grace Lee Boggs says that "there are times when expanding our imaginations is what's required." And I love how you articulate how that relates to TJ.

Tierra: I am so grateful for this group of folks who made sacrifices of time toward expanding our imaginations together.

And, pro tip: anytime you wanna support a group to do the labor of imagining, food helps. Blood sugar is real.

MUSIC BREAK

Tierra: So. We ate, and then we broke into groups, and then we came back together.

Sarah: So something that came up in our group that was helpful, I think. It was helpful to me. I also said it, but [*laughter*] as I'm thinking about this is, I was going back through my notes last night before I went to bed, and what stuck with me is what Mia was saying a lot throughout all of our sessions, is that it's about identifying and addressing the immediate needs while also working to transform the conditions.

What I realized I was a little less clear about is like, how do we address the immediate needs and what does that look like knowing kind of the limitations, and also just like the real capacity of us in this group. And so while we might not necessarily be ready to do an accountability process at, for instance, the town hall, what are the things that we can offer that might help address some of the immediate needs that people are holding?

Leontyne: The question arose of where are we in this process and what are we capable of doing. That even if we can't start a TJ process right now, what can we offer should someone come to us? And so the idea that we thought was creating a resource library.

Kim: So similar to, to like what we were thinking in terms of having resources, having the structure of like, okay, and yes, here's the town hall, share what we've learned and to be really realistic and honest about like the process that we've been through, and therefore be able to share those resources. But also say, okay, yes, and we are going to have these workshops. For if you would like to come through to those, and please also come to BATJC's monthly potluck. Like having those structures feeding through into like the next events and the next years and months after that as well.

Amanda: We talked a lot about both preventative and healing work and that a lot of these fall into one or the other, either preventing stuff from happening in the future, but also what does healing look like? And even if some of those are things that can't be activated right now, like part of healing would be to go through a TJ process, but maybe that's not something that's activated yet, but it's on the healing list. So we know that we're working towards that. But I had a new perspective around what are the goals? And someone in my group said, what are my individual goals? But then like, what are the shared cohort goals? Because those may or may not align all the way through.

Emily: One idea that really came up in a few different forms was connections in the idea of people saying, I have connections outside of theater. I have connection to other organizations, other areas of my life, people who are not involved in this pod or in this group or even in theater, but who I want to be in my pod. How do I bring them in? Like recognizing that it is larger than theater. [00:33:00] In order to build the world we want to see it will eventually grow out to hopefully include everybody, as well as reaching out to other theaters to partner with to host maybe a day of deep dive skills. And then also not just theaters, but other educational or community organizations to resource share and education share. And also just really hearing the longing in this group, I think, for more connection amongst each other and outside to the rest of our theater community. And that everyone perhaps is coming in with different gaps or fullness of their own pods. And so what is it that we're each seeking out of this group or the other people in our lives?

Valerie: This whole time we've been using the values, principles, practices of the BATJC, and we don't have our own. So I don't know if that's something that we need to craft. I often feel every time we read them, like there's a part of me that goes, but what does this one really mean in a theater context?

Clive: A couple of other things, quickly, that were brought up in our small group where the possibility of exploring a fund for TJ work to happen. Like were we to encounter a situation, be approached with a situation that needed some immediate attention, could we develop in cohort a fund that could, pay somebody from BATJC to come in and help lead a TJ circle? And the other thing was for the deep dive skills building, maybe there's a way [00:34:39] to share amongst some of the other cohort organizations who would host and devote resources to individual modules of that? That might be a way to share some of the weight across community.

Eric: What would it mean for different organizations to take on hosting different skill building workshops? Not dissimilar to like an EDI training workshop and focusing on like, like Cal Shakes, host an apology lab where everybody in the cohort -and then expand beyond that, right- can come and participate in that. And that way there's like a kind of community effort to build, to help deepen these skills. What would it be like to be able to go back to Berkeley Rep and say, "Hey, Berkeley Rep, host a skill building workshop on consent training."

It's mostly just about trying to expand beyond this circle, right? Like, like I'm here. But there are many artistic directors and managing directors that are not here, and Sarah's here now. [group cheers] Like when we talk about the like systemic transformation, right? And we're talking about specifically the theater scene, then that actually demands institutions and organizations look at the systems within which we are operating and try and transform those. But it's hard to do that from like, it's not impossible to do that from the ground up, but boy, it's a lot easier when you have buy-in across organizations and maybe this is an interesting way to get in that door.

Amanda: Yeah. Thank you all. I really appreciate that. That was great.

SK: Alright.

MUSIC BREAK

Tierra: This is a little turtle that used to be a key chain that I got when I studied abroad in Ghana. Part of why I was drawn to it was it being a symbol of adaptability, and coming from a place that I wanted more connection with. So we'll use this. We used a microphone as the talking piece before with Mia, but like, so this will function that way

and just know that there's that kind of energy in this when you're holding it, and it'll carry forth then the energy that we all want to bring to it.

And what I figured we would do is just, so maybe go around in threes. Let's have the first round be anything from this day that is sitting with you that you wanna put out there that's kind of your debrief, checkout for the day. We can hold that. That'll be the first circle.

Second, we can have a moment for thinking about this long journey of a year, these many sessions together, our makeup sessions, the one-on-one check-ins and other reflections from that sort of longer place you can share and hold for each other.

And then the last round we'll do will be appreciations and gratitude.

I'll go ahead and start. Oh, for the day, something that was sitting up top for me: when people's impulses to come back to centering and holding everyone's humanity and that being like such a foundation of transformative justice work and a lot of these ideas is like, how often do we see the impulse to do that when it's in reference to someone who's been impacted by harm, who's survived harm?[00:37:57]

And I, I feel that I have perceived that across this year and in other spaces outside when TJ gets brought up, is that the, like "let's talk about holding the humanity in everyone" gets like, we go to that when it's talking about holding folks accountable for doing harm more often. And I sit with that and I really want to vision around what does the world look like where we do that at least as equally when we talk about like, how do we hold the humanity and the need of someone who's been harmed and how are we actually thinking about that as a way of centering everyone's humanity? Of like, what about the healing that's needed there and the voice and the space that's needed for that to be heard.

So that's up top for me for today.

Radhika: The theme of this is we're not ready or are we ready? Question mark . But we're definitely in this space together. So I really wanna appreciate the circle experience today.

Leontyne: Today what is rising to the surface is the differences of how we envision, how we move forward, which seem to emblemize the difficulty that we will have in moving forward beyond this cohort.

Kim: An overarching thing that's also sitting with me as some like uncertainty, essentially, of like what's gonna come next. But also more specifically the focusing on

the urgent needs and what needs to be done now, and then looking at the larger picture and how to move and grow forward. So keeping those parallel and remembering the importance of both.

Fenner: I'm just really sad that we're not gonna all be together again. I'm just relishing the like care and attention and the space holding that everyone has brought today.

Emily: I don't feel like I get to see hardly ever examples of healthy conflict that is coming from a place of love anywhere in my life. And I really felt that today that even from the differing perspectives and like places of harm and passion and care that everyone in this room has a deep well of love for each other in this work. And that's what's really sitting with me and also the bittersweetness of this last day, which is only tempered by the fact that I know there will be more.

Sarah: What I'm holding right now is like a little bit of denial that the structure that we created over the past year is like gonna be changing after today. I haven't fully accepted that yet. And so it's like that combined with, as everyone's said, a little bit of grief that we won't be meeting each other every six weeks or two months or whatever it is. So, that's definitely coming up as well as, I think feeling the loss of having Mia guide us through this work and just the care that she puts into developing the lessons for us and how difficult that is to do, and like really now understanding kind of all of the time and thought and energy that she has put into making this something that we all value, I think, so strongly, and just feeling a lot of gratitude towards that, towards Mia in particular.

Ray: Feeling a little bit of weight and responsibility with it too. Feeling like even if we're not ready to swoop into a process. Like just quickly, like I got called Auntie to like a little kid that I'm in space with for the first time yesterday, and I was like- which is the highest of honors-

Group: Yes.

Ray: -for black women. And also I was like, "oh, that's like, that's a responsibility" and like I feel responsible to this little four and a half year old in a way that I have not before. So that's sitting with me today as well.

Jamila: Really just thinking about my personal accountability to myself a little bit. So I think moving forward, what is one thing that I personally wanna hold myself accountable to and work on that? And then I think the other thing that's sitting with me is one thing in my life that maybe I've been kind of running away from or avoiding and figuring out what are the steps to working that through for myself, because it probably will be mentally beneficial to me. I think what I took away from most of the sessions, more of like, what

are the personal aspects of my life I can work on, and then maybe think about helping someone else.

Nikki: What I'm thinking about for today is that it's not the end in that there's so much more out there that we're all gonna learn with this, whether or not we want to be a part of a big thing or a small thing.

Amanda: I think this is the first time we've like self-organized into a circle instead of a "U" and kind of into this like imperfect, like eyeball-y kind of circle. And there's just something in that I think that this is our closing day and that we've come into a circle that like there is, I don't know, I feel a connection and a commitment to somehow continuing this work. And so there is both ambiguity and commitment and just allowing both of those to exist.

Eric: Yeah feeling, feeling the grief and the mourning. And I've been thinking a lot today about trust, the sort of mercurial nature of it, right? How swiftly it can come and go. And I'm thinking about, for me, how this process started. And for me it started with, a person that I trusted more than life, kind of breaking that trust in a devastating way. And understanding right, that this work, there's like something so profoundly complicated about it and impenetrable about it.

But feeling like at the end of the day, when I look back on my time here at Cal Shakes, right, this is gonna be the thing that I'm most proud of. That 20-odd people came together eight times over the course of a year and tried. That seems like the lesson for me of this work is that it's, there's no, like, there's no end, there's no- I don't think so, personally- I don't see a, there's no end to it, but there is the trying and the effort. And I'm just very grateful to all of you for being a part of that.

J Jha: I'm sitting with, where are we?

Tierra: Moving into a round of intentionally making space to reflect on the experience of the year.

Ooh, one moment that popped up for me while other people were sharing was when we watched Hollow Water and I feel like I remember like something just about the energy and like the checkout circle after that and thinking about that as a shifting point where it meant so much to me to see an artistic, beautiful sharing of an incredibly devastating process, like, set of circumstances that folks over time came together to transform in a way that I hadn't seen evidence like that before even if I've had a longing for that. And the many different moments from this year of the different readings or different examples people have had of real examples of like that we get to pull from that like I

feel like I've been gifted, like this work that other people have done that gives me so much courage in my best moments actually.

I think it's so amazing to be in a practice of creating and to actually have my imagination about what's possible expanded in a beautiful way. And having that, actually, not coming from an arts practice actually, but coming from organizing, coming from these other spaces. And it's been like a joy for me to make time to help hold this space. And I think that has to do with the fact that it's like bringing in radical movement work, having that be here with theater making, which has been like, so life giving to me and having it be with all of you.

Stephanie: Allowing ourselves to dream and imagine like, what if this work could actually happen? Which is truly beautiful and that I'm eternally grateful and thankful to meet every single one of you, and to help me get through this year. And for me, discovering that patience is key with this type of work. Yeah, I just always think about that bridge, like the bridge over to water and how that took generations upon generations. And I keep thinking about being like, okay, what we're doing at least is planting little seeds, little trees to go out there.

Clive: I was asked to participate in a restorative justice circle for a young person last week. And if it had not been for the work done in this room with you all this year, I would've said no because I would not have felt prepared and in any way qualified to show up for that young person in the way that I was able to. I'm deeply grateful to everybody in this room for giving me that. It's a real gift.

Leontyne: The line that's been going through my head is the more I learn, the more I realize, the less I know.

Group: Yeah.

Fenner: Yeah. Just feeling like over the year I've been afforded this opportunity to learn so much about what can be done and the hope that's brought to my own experience of this fucked up world, to just feel more connected to not only like people in general, but this theater community. Feeling like, we're building these bridges and we're building these connections. And I'm just so excited to continue that work and deepen my learning and understanding and listening skills.

Sarah Rose: Something I've really loved about the TJ work is how my activist selves and my theater selves have been very separate forever, and it's been the one space where they overlap and how healing that feels and fruitful and exciting. And I love that it doesn't have anything to do with art, but is with theater people -and by art and the

creation of, we're not putting on a show. It feels good to not put on a show with theater people *[laughter]* and I 've never done that. But I really love the Yom Kippur part of this, like the part of like, okay, what's broken, what needs to be fixed?

SK: It was so evident for me between doing the first case study and the second case study, the first case study, I think was about to explode slash like slowly did over the course of the day. And then as chance would have, it had this like really big break and like intentional healing work that I did in between the first and second case study. And man, that second case study. *[laughter]* I was so patient, I was so loving, like I could feel people melting down around me and I was just like, this is, we're here, *[laughter]* we're trying. But like, I just felt like so steady about it and I was like, oh damn, like this is some potential for like people to be with each other. It makes me think about like what we're capable of when our needs are met.

Ray: I'm feeling pretty grateful for like myself, or past versions of myself, for doing a lot of work that I feel has set me up to the point to be able to receive a lot of this. In terms of being able to take accountability and apologize and some of those things.

Leeann: I'm really grateful for the people who have given me the gift of feedback. *[laughter]* Like really, it sounds like I'm joking, I'm really not joking because I like that is honestly like when we started to get into talking about accountability and feedback in particular, like I really felt that in my body, really felt like my stomach drop and a lot of tension in my shoulders. I just like, find it really terrifying and we all have talked about why that is and how scary failure feels, making mistakes feels.

Emily: I want to thank everyone who has shown incredible vulnerability. And also thank you for sitting with what must have come up for you as we confronted this work and still showing up. Cuz that is some shit.

And the baking, I'm sure this is very apparent, but I just, I wanted to say it, that the baking is a hopefully tangible way to say what is very hard to say, which is just a very deep love and deep gratitude for every single one of you. So thank you for eating the cake. *[group cheers and laughter]*

SK: I feel grateful to Kim Tran, who was like, two years ago or whatever, was like, have you heard of TJ before? Maybe you should look into it... And I'm grateful for Adrienne Sky, Roberts for like, teaching me what TJ was over like many coffees, and also presenting to like, really resistant theater people at the town hall. To Kira Jones for sharing her story of going through a process in Chicago at the town hall.

I'm grateful for Eric also for being here and for saying we should do something, and for being open to be in conversation about what that could look like. To Mia for fucking saying yes!

Valerie: Gratitude, I don't know to who, but to whoever said that this was not a training that was just for people who work at theaters or just for people who work at a specific theater or just for people who hold these kinds of jobs and for making this training not something that I had to audition for or apply for, but I could just say, I would like to join this training. And they went, yes, why don't you join this training? So whoever put that in this design, I would like to thank those persons or people as well cuz that was really important.

Ray: And I also am really grateful for all the people that we don't know who shared their stories of processes really generously, whether we had the name and the details or it was anonymous. Yeah. Like the community from Hollow Water. For me that was really important for this training. And I also can't imagine going through a process like that and then sharing all of that in this way. And it really is in service of the work.

Jamila: I know like if I start saying this, some people at Cal Shakes will be like, oh yeah, that's true. Like I think we can see how being in these sessions has started to [00:52:48] change the way we think about handling certain circumstances. Whether it's like working with artists who might have done something problematic in the past. I feel like at one point in time we might have said no. They're not working here anymore. Sorry. But I think we ask more questions now. We think about, okay, maybe it's not that they're coming right back, but how do we talk to them? How do we engage with them? Even someone who's currently working, okay, we have to talk to them about this thing and not just brush it under the mat. Not like we're not doing a TJ process, but we're taking some of the learnings and applying it. So thank you.

MUSIC BREAK

Tierra: As the year-long TJ Intensive came to a close, our audio producer, Cat, sat down with members of the cohort to hear the challenges, surprises, and lessons we were taking forward.

Nikki: My name is Nikki Anderson-Joy.

I was always very quiet. The only time I wasn't really quiet was at a makeup session when there were only four of us. Where like in a group of four, I have to speak up kind of. For myself, I chose to be quiet to like help with my self cope with like what we're talking about cuz it was deep stuff. Within like the cohort that we have created, it sounds

like we, we all want more from it. So it's like, then what are we going to do? We know that there are harmers within the community. So then that's always my question is like, so what now?

I mean, so my question from the beginning is still kind of the same for my personal self within like the harm and stuff. And also the fact that like nobody is aware of it. I mean some people are aware, but then it's like just it gets brushed off. And then like the audiences aren't aware of it either.

Cat: Right.

Nikki: And so it's like they love these people. You're like, hold up.

Emily: My name is Emily.

A challenge. I definitely found in the first few sessions as we were diving into like, what is this work was that I was like massively triggered all the time. And I think it brought up things that I thought I had put to rest and I thought I had processed. And it was okay and I was able to hold both like learn and absorb while also being very hyper aware that like things that have happened to me were like in the front of my mind.

And, but also really being affected by the idea that if I had a process like this, how much better I would feel in the present. And I think that really driving me to want to create a world where this is possible.

I basically just assume that almost everyone I meet is like carrying trauma and pain and recognizing that is affecting their behavior and giving a lot of leeway for that. While at the same time recognizing that it doesn't mean it's okay to harm other people.

I didn't know there were ways to respond to harm that didn't involve calling the cops and involving lawyers and judges. And so that has been a completely new idea for me.

I have been talking about this with everyone that I have catch up conversations with cuz it has been the single most important thing that has happened in my life in the last year.

I've got a lot of work to do in my own responses of like basically that I clam up when I get really angry and I have to do work to be able to speak through those moments so that I can have conversations. But I've been trying to have those conversations when they come up and not staying silent like I used to. And that is really different for me. Choosing discomfort and growth over comfort and silence.

Jamila: I'm Jamila. I'm not gonna lie, when we first started it was hard. It was hard because looking at TJ and then thinking about how it works in different cultural settings. So then I was thinking about how people end up in situations where they grow up in a society where like sexist remarks are the norm or the way you treat women is just the norm because you see it from your grandparents and your fathers and the whole community around you. So it's not necessarily the individual's fault, that's the life they have proceeded on, but it's also their responsibility to like assess who they are as a human being.

So I feel like coming into TJ it was hard because I was having a hard time imagining how it would work with someone who has lived their whole life knowing, okay, this is the way I'm supposed to be. And then you're coming at them and saying to them, no, actually the things you've learned your whole life are incorrect. You have to reevaluate your power dynamics, the way you talk to people, what's appropriate and what's not appropriate. And I was really struggling with, will they actually listen? And not just men, like also women, and anyone.

But then I think what I liked was there was this one video we watched where they were building a bridge and it just showed like it takes- one, it takes like years to build this bridge, and then also like you see the results of it not a month later, but years later for how it has helped society. So I feel like sometimes I want like immediate gratification. I wanna see the change now and like, okay, you're gonna see- like maybe my grandkids are gonna see whatever change is happening, but it's not gonna be immediate. And I feel like that was hard for me.

And I think the other thing that I liked initially, and I think Mia did this in our first session, was showing like how to stop problematic behavior. There was like this little graph and she showed like, sometimes you start noticing behavior down here and it's like initial signs of problematic behavior. And then if you don't address them at the 10% stage, then they keep climbing and then they get increasingly worse. And then eventually you hit like 80% and the person can explode. And that's where the behavior gets bad if you don't treat it. I mean, it was so true when I thought about it, even like in things like gun violence or even things like catcalling or, the way some people talk about women or talk about men or whatever. If you don't like stop someone at that stage, things can increasingly get worse. And that made sense to me because a lot of people get away with things and then it just gets worse.

So like, I think that first session- or that was, it was either the first or the second session- but anyway, after that I was like, oh, I see how this can work.

What I did realize and take away from TJ is it never makes sense to not tell someone about problematic behavior.

Because they either know and they don't care, or they aren't aware and someone has never told them about it. So I was like, you have to address it. And if you don't wanna address it on yourself, like, taking the pod idea from Mia, like, I'm a pod person, so maybe I can talk to that person because I know them. Or if that feels like you're, breaking their trust or whatever, I can be there with you when you're talking to the person, but it, you wanna address it so that it isn't just going unsaid.

Sarah Rose: My name is sarah Rose Leonard. TJ has changed my life.

I'm already someone who naturally organizes people within my community. And so the notion of the pods really was like, oh my god, so clarifying. Cuz it's not necessarily like, who do I enjoy spending time with who's in my community? But like, who's going to be there for me if something happens? And so I realized that those people definitely, I wanted them to know that they were in- we did this exercise of letting them know- and so I did that for people who were long distance away from me and for people close to me. And I've created like these pod dinners.

I think in terms of personal life and looking at relationships that have tendencies towards violence, I think has been a little bit of a wake up call. Like I am not anywhere near an abusive relationship and I feel very lucky, but it doesn't take long for me to think about some incidences that feel verbally abusive or just scary or unsafe or just emotionally or even looking at like my friend whose husband has anger issues and it's been like, oh again, I think my friend is safe. But like I see that a little bit more for what it is, which is the beginning of the curve. And I really believe that just being able to look at that and be like, how can I get in front of it? How can I support my friend? [01:02:42] I just don't think we have to look too far for incidences of even small violence. So it's kind of made me double down on something that I think generationally is already happening in theater in terms of our generation of wanting our work lives to be healthier and happier. Cuz this is not a profession built for longevity.

Cat: Yeah.

Sarah Rose: But all of us love it and would like to continue, and I think we actually have the power to make that change. And so TJ, I think has just shined- I just keep saying like, shined a light on the potential for changed behavior in terms of how we treat, we can treat each other better.

Valerie: *[over the phone]* My name is Valerie. What we're building for future generations. I work regularly with young people, middle school age, high school age, and that we're putting things in place for when those young folks become part of the professional theater world. Each day of the training was always very challenging, just in terms of the amount of energy that needed to come from us to be in the room and in the training to stay grounded and present through difficult conversations with people who were all coming at it from different places and different directions.

So not just only the different places and different directions of our own amounts of privilege and our background, but additionally where those privileges intersected with our roles in the theater community. I've seen it showing up for me personally in my choices around gender language. That's something that I think this year has given me a lot of practice in. And I hopefully think that I've gotten better about taking the gender binary out of my language. That's a really basic one. But I can also think of [01:04:21] things like talking to someone else who was dealing with a conflict and racial language based harm and having a conversation with them talking to them, what do I do about this? And me going, oh, make sure that you center what the survivor wants in your way that you deal with this.

I'm trying to stay connected to folks like, Hey, I think there's a training thing related. How are you using the work now? I try to, find a chance to check in with them about that.

I'm very interested, I think, in trying to figure out some of the ways to encourage the Bay Area theater community to adopt practices that fit in ways that will head off having larger harms happen. Like before we even get to that point where the pot is boiling, when we're still down where the pot is simmering-

Cat: Yeah.

Valerie: -What can we do to keep from having the temperature rise?

Leontyne: My name is Leontyne.

I'm a production manager. If I want to be the person that a cast member can come to, then I need to know where I stand, and how to process the information that comes to me, how to respond to it. Yeah. So that's a stepping stone, I guess for me, and an obstacle in that I don't feel that I yet know how to do that really effectively.

It is a hard thing to know that someone that you know has caused harm or that maybe you yourself have caused harm. And taking accountability or learning, learning how to take accountability and still hold onto that love is a thing that has been hard for me to

process throughout this, but that has been something that I have wanted to hold onto and that gives me hope about this process. That there is possibly a way of negotiating that. And it feels, it can feel like a betrayal of people that you know have been harmed. But if we truly believe in this process that I feel that is something that needs to be negotiated.

Clive: My name is Clive. I knew that it was going to be hard work. And I knew that the work that would lie ahead of us at the end of this year would be hard work. But to the extent that it actually is, I don't think I had a real understanding of that. I don't think I had a real understanding of how much it would challenge me personally, and what would be asked of me. And I'm grateful that I was able to continue to show up.

I've seen a lot of harm in Bay Area theater caused by people, again, mostly people who look like me with power enacting harm on those who have less power. And I never want to be that [01:07:39] bystander who doesn't do anything again.

Cat: Yeah.

Clive: Sorry.

Cat: No, it's okay.

Clive: *[breath]* Because the bystander ultimately is just as culpable on some level. And if this group of people coming together can forestall even one instance of harm going forward, then we have done miraculous work together.

Cat: Yeah.

Clive: And I would hope that we could continue it.

J Jha: *[via Zoom]* My name is J. We are trying to reshape the way society has been shaped for thousands of years. And we are trying to say that, yeah, that didn't work. We need another alternative. It will all start with personal work and it is all based on your own initiative of where you want this world and how you want this world to be formed. And it is certainly not one person's job. It is certainly not a few groups, but it will start there.

For an immigrant, there is this constant search- for me as an immigrant- there is this constant search of where is home? Where? Where? Where? Where? Where? And what does it look like? And how does it sound? And everything that I have grown up to believe home has gone, it's not here. It's never in the voices, in the sidewalks, or in the streets of this country. It will never be? So then where is home? What will the body know

where home is? And that's where TJ comes in. Because when you do that work, when you do that work in the community that you are wanting to call home, then it's home. And that's what TJ tells me. That, okay, this is the way to make home. And that's what I'm gonna do.

Sarah: My name is Sarah Williams.

Wow. Okay. So this is about baseline, like having a community foundation that we know just isn't there right now in the Bay Area community, and like what is it we need to do to start building that so we can get to a point eventually when if we have to address harm at this level, we'll be ready to do so.

This work of transformative justice has helped me to at least kind of come to terms with it in a different way and to be able to also look at things like the Harvey Weinstein trials that are going on to look at all of the cases that came up and came forth through the #MeToo movement, but especially those in the theater community in a different way than just having a very strong kind of binary reaction of this person did incredible harm, this person caused incredible violence, and so therefore this person is thrown out into the garbage forever. And we're not going to change conditions or we're not going to change behaviors so that this doesn't happen again. Instead, we're just gonna put this person in jail. And that's how we call being accountable. And like, transformative justice asks you to think about that differently and to hold multiple things at one time. And so that has just reframed how I like live in a world where all of those things are happening, but also like wanting to make the world a better place.

I mean, every session felt like a whole roller coaster of emotions. [01:10:57] People are coming to me and saying, we know you're doing this work, like, can't you help us fix this? And like not being able to authentically and genuinely say yes because that will ultimately cause more harm than good. And I feel that conflict kind of simmering in all of the sessions that we have and throughout the entire course of the year, and it comes up in different ways for different people. But that's been something we've been navigating the whole time.

What this work has shown me and has taught me is that it really starts from the roots. And if we're not paying attention to the roots of things, then we're not going to actually change behaviors and transform conditions.

Amanda: My name's Amanda Melton.

I have to do my own grounding work, my own healing work, all of the things I have to work on the way I show up into a space and the energy that I'm bringing. And I think

those are areas where- like, I feel like I've done more self-work in this past year, that I've like genuinely been called to do through TJ than I've done in the past. And I think those aha moments came for me time and time again.

I would say prior to this past year, I would've been far more defensive when those kinds of things came up. Not that I am like healed, or solved, or any of that, but I'm more willing to at least have that self-reflection. And I think prior to this year it was re- it's really hard. TJ tells us when you do harm, you're not thrown away as a person. And I think I'm someone where I feel like I am my mistake. Like, oh, I caused you harm, so I'm a bad person and that's not true. And now I know, oh, I did something wrong, I can like genuinely apologize for the harm that I've caused. And the times that I've done that and the healing that I've found with other folks when I've done that has just been incredible. And so now I have this willingness to look within when I didn't.

I feel like every session, there was some moment in that where I was like, oh shit, this is my work to do. This is gonna be the kind of work where a decade from now or two decades from now, we'll be able to look back and then see the trend starting from this point of like an increase in community coming together within theater, and then seeing like a decrease in harm. Like, I think those are the trends that we'll see, but it's gonna happen years from now. And yet here we are at such a painful place that it's like we just want that healing now.

Cat: Yeah.

Amanda: And it just, it can't happen in that way. And that, I think still I wrestle with that. Like, still looking for like, what's the big win though? What's the thing that we could do to be like, aha, like we did this, and, and it just, it's not gonna happen in that way.

What I've recognized over this past year is it's like I'm learning the information, I'm reading it, I'm letting it sink in, and then it shows up like six months later and I'm like oh, that's me bringing a TJ practice into my life. And I think that's how it's gonna unfold. And so I guess I want folks to know that it's a slow process and that it isn't a failure that it is taking as long as it is for it to, for those practices to sink in for each of us.

Ray: Hello, my name is Ray.

I think I've just realized more and more how much I don't know and how slow this is. And how much I have to build up my own very simple capacities to just show up in the ways that I want to show up in community, let alone be able to start to think about leading one of these processes.

Cat: Totally. Yeah.

Ray: Yeah. We are working to get people to a place where they're able to hold themselves accountable as opposed to the community either exiling somebody or trying to hold them accountable. Cause that's not a sustainable thing.

Cat: Yeah.

Ray: I was really surprised just from all of the different case studies that we read, and having heard about some of these processes, I didn't realize how long they would take. They're not even months, a lot of them are years long. It's this ongoing thing that is often unpaid work and just, I really can't imagine the amount of energy that takes. And then I was also surprised to hear that so many of these processes are not successful. We definitely read some studies where they were successful and that is just, it doesn't seem to be the usual thing, which is hard.

I feel like a lot of the work that I'm taking with me is around self-accountability. It's about building your pod, this group and community of support, learning how to make a good apology, all of these different things that will hopefully ripple out.

This work has really just made me realize how many other layers there are to look at. I'm just like, oh, I actually don't know about X, Y, and Z harm that's caused within the prison industrial complex or within ICE, or within all of these different systems. Like I feel like I have a quick version and I don't actually know a lot of the details of it or how any of those systems work. I feel like that was one of the big revelations to me, learning how people are caught up in all of these different ways and why we really need to not rely on them.

And I think the other thing which Mia has talked about is how you can weave a thread of TJ into other things. And that is something that really rung out to me, where maybe a full accountability or a transformative justice process is not appropriate or is not possible. But how are we able to use some of these skills, some of these principles and practices and bring it into other things. The daily practices from the BATJC has been something that has definitely stuck with me. And they're actually, they're above my workstation and they're on the back of my door.

So these are the daily practices from the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, and I find them very helpful.

So it's: Breathing. Staying connected to yourself and others, and group. Taking accountability. Self-reflection. Capacity. Emotional presence. Being present. Values, individual and shared. Kindness. Being in service to something larger than yourself.

MUSIC BREAK

Tierra: Cat also asked us, how do we want theater making to feel? This is what we said.

Leontyne: Fun. *[Cat laughs]* And that there is so much that goes into that. There is feeling of safety, there is feeling of unbounded creativity. There is a feeling of trust. There is a feeling of confidence in oneself and in the people that you're working with.

Nikki: Like a home. You're putting all your energy and effort into what you're doing and it should feel safe. And one person that I know says like, theater is healing, right? And so that's what it should feel like, I think. So, I think theater should feel safe. I mean, everywhere should feel safe, but...

Amanda: I want folks to feel as though they can show up and feel safe, be as vulnerable as they feel comfortable being without any limitations that are coming from outside forces, and to make great art. There is this like peeling back and vulnerability that we ask of artists that just, it doesn't exist in other traditional workplace settings. And so I think you have to [01:19:12] put extra care around that. And I want to be a part of creating that environment that allows artists to like, show up as authentically as they want to show up in a space to make that great art.

Sarah: The thing I always loved about making theater when I fancied myself an actor back in my youth was the community and the people and being in a group of people that really cared for one another that accepted you no matter who you were, where you came from, or what you looked like or anything like that. And so that's how I've always, that's what I've always loved about theater and why I like continue to be in this, this industry and this field and in these communities.

And so that's how I want theater to feel, theater making to feel for others. Like I always felt really safe in my rehearsal halls in high school and in college. And so that safety is what allowed me to kind of grow into the person that I am today and like to feel supported by the people that I was surrounding myself with. And that's how I want making theater to feel professionally. It should feel just as safe. Like just because it's a career choice and it's a business and it's professional, doesn't mean that it can't feel all of the same, like safety and fun and comradery that comes with doing a show in your high school auditorium.

Ray: I want any space that people are in to be relatively safe and for people to be able to show up [01:20:51] as fuller versions of themselves. But I also think that the theater community has a lot of the same challenges that other industries do as well. And I don't want us to think that we're exempt from that because we are art makers or creative or hold whatever political values.

Cat: Yeah.

Ray: And I think there just needs to be accountability in a rehearsal room, just like there would be in an office space or in all of these other spaces as well.

Kim: My name is Kim. And community led. It was collaborative, that's the word I was trying to think of, and very collaborative. Thinking of ways that we can change how we create theater and how we work together to form pieces in ways that can still create a show within three months and doesn't take a year, but like, or maybe it does take a year, but in a way that feels healthier and safer for everybody so that their voices feel heard no matter if they're an actor who has never worked for the company before, or if they are the person who is kind of directing or heralding the show forward, whoever they are, right, they still feel like they have the safety to say like, I have an idea, or I have a worry. Either way.

Valerie: *[on the phone]* Artistically, we can take certain risks, but we can take them in a way where we feel safe and supported to be able to create stories and tell stories that may be risky or challenging in nature for the audience, but doing them in a way where we know that we all are taking care of each other as we make them.

Emily: I want it to feel safe emotionally and [01:22:30] physically. I want it to feel liberating in the way that we are reflecting humanity and sharing truth. And I want it to bring me closer to my community. And I want it to give me a secure life, which I think it mostly does not for most of the people who practice it.

Sarah Rose: Feeling like you're heard. Feeling like you can rest and you can stop. The exciting pressure of art making, like not letting anything too slack, but that push and pull between creative ambition and really working to make something happen, but also allowing for there to be time to sleep and eat and make sure there's childcare and whatever the person needs. I think there's like a really interesting tension there that I have yet to see be institutionalized necessarily. And like there is a growing movement for a different type of rehearsal schedule that I think would be great. Like how cool would it be if our stage managers aren't all burnt out?

It's a really, really intense schedule and part of me loves that cuz it makes for really exciting creative friction and you have to push, but also it ruins relationships. And it wrecks your system.

Cat: Yeah.

Sarah Rose: And again, going back to longevity, I would love to see this profession transform into something someone can do for their whole lives. How can we change our field to be more healthy and make it fucking good art? Can we make something that's the best and not kill ourselves?

Clive: We want it to feel safe for all concerned. We want it to feel as though it is a space where everybody's voice is honored and heard. We want it to feel as though it is a place where each and every one of us can express our full selves without fear of any retribution or humiliation.

First and foremost, we want to be able to come together to create, and we cannot do that unless we all feel as though we are safe.

Stephanie: My name's Stephanie. I think this last year has been a really difficult year for me professionally and I think I just really want theater to be a place that's truly inclusive and proactive. I want it to feel like it's okay to take risks and really mean it and make art for the community by the community. So everyone is part of it. It's just, we're storytellers, right? But I feel like we've lost that part of storytelling. It's that connection in theater, so it's hard, it's been hard. But yeah.

Cat: Yeah.

Stephanie: Truly inclusive.

Jamila: Theater should feel joyful, but it should also challenge your belief systems. And it should, theater should make you think. It should make you feel- theater should make you feel [01:25:48] empowered. It should make you feel as though you've- there's growth. It should make you feel as though you're challenged, your perspectives are challenged. You can leave and have this in-depth conversation with someone you don't know about something you just learned. I like something that can strike a nerve and hopefully improve everyone's life in some way.

Leeann: My name is Leeann.

My answer is very big and abstract because I think right now the examples I have to pull from aren't, are so far away from what I'd hope for. So it's like trying to like imagine a new color.

I know that it's gonna be different than what we have, but it's hard to talk about what I think it should be. But something that's been- that I've taken on through working with folks like SK and Tierra is how much they talk about visioning or they use that word a lot, visioning. And that when I hear that, I'm like, Ooh, there's something in that. The idea that like theater, yes is helping us make sense of where we came from. I mean, I work at a company that produces largely Western classics. Like if we're gonna be producing those yes, we need to be thinking about telling stories about where we came from, what that means about who we are right now. Yes, theater can be about like things that are happening in our world and us trying to process them, but what that has meant is like [01:27:27] theater largely has been a place in which we like reenact violence and harm because that's like the stories we have- many of the stories we have are those stories. Or those are the stories we choose to tell. I have so many thoughts.

Anyway, but like that is kind of the theater we have now. And what I like about the visioning thing is it opens up this way for theater to look forward and for theater to say, yeah, like this is where we've been, this is what's going on right now, it's important to acknowledge this. And also tapping into our creativity, what could an answer to the question, what do you hope the world is like in 20 years? Like how do we think about that question?

And with TJ, there's been such an interesting intersection because Mia talks about the lack of structure that maybe at first I was like, I want steps. I want a one, two, and three, and a checklist. Like the fact that we don't have that means that we're called upon to do some visioning. We're called upon in the work of TJ to be coming up with creative solutions and that creativity piece of it. I'm like, oh, that is so connected to the way that I want theater to be made.

Tierra: Y'all. We've come to the end of The Real Work: A Podcast about Theater Culture and Transformative Justice. Thank you so much for making the time and spending the energy to show up, to engage, to hear the voices of folks in my community as we learned and unlearned and built our capacities to [01:29:06] make our art making places safer, relying on community, and not the state.

And because I'd never want to leave you hanging, I've got one final optional take-home exercise for you: Envision your community whole, healed, thriving. What does healing

look like? If you're a painter, paint it. If you're a dancer, dance it. If you like to write, write it. Or just make some quiet space in your mind... Envision your community whole, healed, thriving. What does healing look like? What does it taste like? What does it sound like, smell like? What does it feel like?

Everything in this world that was made by a human – and that includes all these systems threatening our lives, all life, all future life – started first in someone's imagination. Our liberation can start there too.

It's been a pleasure, y'all. Rest up. Take care.

MUSIC BED

Tierra: Thank you for listening to The Real Work: A Podcast about Theater Culture and Transformative Justice. Please check out the show notes for the transcript and for plenty of links and resources and please consider sharing this work with your communities.

Thank you to the Center for Cultural Innovation's Investing in Artist Grant, the City of Oakland's Cultural Funding Program, and to Cal Shakes for initially incubating this project.

Our theme music is by Zanda of DiaspoRADiCAL. This is a collaboration with We Rise Production and we'd love to hear from you. Connect with us at WeRiseProduction@pm.me, on the socials, and at WeRiseProduction.com.

MUSIC FADE OUT

Tierra: Do we wanna close with a collective breath?

Sarah: Sure.

SK: Sure.

[breath]

Tierra: All right. That's a wrap.

Sogorea Te' Land Trust: <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/>

Save the West Berkeley Shellmound: <https://shellmound.org/>

June Jordan: <http://www.junejordan.com/>

The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities, ed. Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha: <https://www.akpress.org/revolutionstartsathome.html>

Democracy Now!, "Remembering Grace Lee Boggs (1915-2015): 'We Have to Change Ourselves in Order to Change the World'": https://www.democracynow.org/2015/10/6/remembering_grace_lee_boggs_1915_2015

Kim Tran: <https://www.kimtranphd.com/>

Kyra Jones: <https://www.kyrajones.me/>

Adrienne Skye Roberts: <http://therapywithadrienneskye.com/>

Mia Mingus: <https://www.soiltip.org> & <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com>

Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective: <https://batjc.wordpress.com/>

For additional resources, including this episode's ASL video: <https://www.weriseproduction.com/therealwork>

zAnda of DiaspoRADiCAL: @diaspo.radical on Instagram & <https://soundcloud.com/diasporadical>

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