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## Best Practices to Promote Racial Unity in Theatre

Cassandra Epps

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Columbus State University  
Best Practices to Promote Racial Unity  
in Theatre

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Arts

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Education in Theatre Education

By:

Cassandra Epps

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Best Practices to Promote Racial Unity in Theatre

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## Abstract

In this thesis I will be presenting a variety of practices that I believe will promote racial unity in theatre. I have included lesson plans and games that will help instructors create an open environment for students of all races. I will present research from theatre experts to conclude my best practices to create a more unified ensemble and culturally diverse curriculum in my theatre program, as well as present a list of activities, lesson plans, and production methods for directors and teachers to consider implementing. We as instructors must look critically at ourselves and our world view to begin this work to create a relaxing and accepting atmosphere for our ensemble. Once trust and social equality are established, your ensemble can participate in many mediums mentioned in this thesis such as puppetry, Theatre of the Oppressed, forum theatre, and more. Not every process or production will be right for your ensemble, but these practices could offer a valuable resource nonetheless.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family, Trenton, William, Deborah, Danielle, and Maximilian. Without your love and support this would not be possible. Thank you for everything and remember to follow your dreams.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Theatre is a living, breathing art form, and that is why it is my favorite medium for creativity. A cast and crew take words from a script and make them come to life in every sense of the word. The audience shares a moment with actors struggling in the world of the play through conflict, pain, hurt, beauty, loss, joy, injustice, and all things human. I will never tire of the world of theatre and all its vast, sparkling facets. Like a diamond, theatre endures and is still valuable today. Shakespeare described live theatre as a mirror up to society or a reflection of us- the people living and breathing in the world- past, present, and future in the quote “as 'twere, the mirror up to nature” (Hamlet, act two, scene three). I believe these things to be true, and to showcase all of the vibrant colors of theatre, we must share the stories of all people and adjust to growing diversity. Theatre artists “paint” with all colors; which includes stories and actors of all races and nationalities.

Teaching is an art form in itself that requires discipline and a lifelong love of learning. An instructor who seeks new strategies and knowledge is one who will never grow stagnate. Theatre instructors are special because they are teaching students how to live, act, deal with



conflict, and look at the world from different perspectives. It is a delicate process and must be treated with care and insight. Teachers often model how to respond to the world and what is acceptable. Students' minds are young and malleable, and we must take care to be intentional with what we consciously and unconsciously teach. Theatre teachers in today's times are called to open up their curriculum and production processes to diversity and new ways of thinking. Students are looking to theatre teachers to pave the way for more inclusive theatre practices and processes while defending diversity and inclusion in our spaces. If theatre is a reflection of life, then we must reflect it truly.

In this thesis I will be presenting a variety of practices collected from theatre experts that I believe can promote racial unity in theatre. I have included a few lesson plans and games to help instructors begin to create an open environment for students of all races. I will explore qualitative research from several theatre experts to conclude my own best practices to help create a more unified ensemble and culturally diverse curriculum in my own theatre program. I will explore production methods for directors and teachers to consider implementing. The scope of this research will span from various regions around the world. I will present ways to help integrate quality theatre education using techniques such as forum theatre, puppetry, creative dramatics, intentional cultural examples, and quantitative data from peer reviewed articles, books, magazines, and websites.

Race does not have a universally accepted definition but is most commonly determined using physical appearances and is therefore ideological (Jakubowski, 69). Jakubowski states that "...people begin with the unquestioned belief that the physical appearance of another individual or group signifies some psychological or social differences between them. Subsequently, these purported differences are/can be used to justify the differential use of power by some groups

over others “(69). This quote identifies the issues found in race relations due to the imbalance of power that can be found between them. I will be using this dictionary definition for race, which is: “ a group of persons related by common descent or heredity” (Dictionary.com). I will also make references to students’ ethnicity and cultural identity, because I do not think these social issues end with race but often start with it. The aim of this thesis is to help teachers and directors better prepare students for diverse and inclusive work in the theatre.

America today is a very diverse country and will only continue to grow more so. If we want to prepare students for this multicultural environment, then we should start in our own theatre programs. While diverse theatre programs do exist, we need to continue to open up our performances or classroom curriculum to include multicultural perspectives. A diverse theatre should include the history, culture, and unique perspectives of all races to become one united ensemble. This diversity is important to the growing theatre industry because it promotes new work that could inspire young students who are new to this country. Instructors also need to be aware of their own bias through this work, as these could affect students. If the instructor can be open-minded to these new practices then they may grow in their theatre pedagogy. I will provide tangible lesson plans, best practices, and proven production methods that the reader can take into their programs and implement today.

## Chapter Two: America Today and Why it is Time to Change

America is often described as a melting pot; a place where different cultures and races are mixed together, but I believe it is more like a salad bowl with ranch dressing where there are many people and cultures existing together but not quite “melting.” This ranch dressing I am describing is the dominant white culture, which can oppress others when no room is made for new ideas and practices. This dominant culture is why we need practices to promote a true “melting pot” in our theatre programs. Population Reference Bureau predicts that America will grow more diverse due to Asian and Hispanic populations tripling by 2050, making them the new majority (PRB) and we must prepare for this growth now. America has a tempestuous history with people perceived as different. For example, people were lynched based on their skin color and sexuality (Young, 19). African Americans in particular were discriminated against first by slavery (Young, 17). Hate crimes over race and sexual orientation still exist today and could affect our diverse population of students. If instructors do not include best practices such as critical thinking instruction with emphasis on racial unity in theatre, American society may not be able to grow and change in the future. This is also called socially responsible theatre education or the responsibility of fighting social injustice in our communities through theatre (Lazarus, 122). In *Signs of Change* by Joan Lazarus, Angie Lindbloom is interviewed and she participates in socially responsible theatre education because she feels it’s important to teach “...kids early that we live in a world where it’s important to be just and it’s important to accept other people.” (Lazarus, 122). The most important thing we can do as educators, theatre artists,

and directors is start implementing growth in the theatre, a place where stories told often elicit empathy and learning. If we welcome race and culture into our spaces it can promote a trusting and inclusive ensemble.

With these best practices in place we could expect to see a classroom where students who speak different languages are warming up together, are making connections to a foreign author's work, or even an audience being exposed to a new perspective during a play. If we promote the equality and unity of all races in our theatre work, students may go out into the world with respect for new cultures and a more tolerant outlook for new ideas. This would also open up the world of theatre in new ways with new target audiences searching for a market of theatre that produces culturally sound and exciting work. This work may spread to people who would not normally see culturally different shows. This new market would be lucrative for theatres and enable them to put on higher quality shows, which would open up more job opportunities to actors and technicians of color. We can begin with these best practices to promote racial unity in theatre today. It may be messy and imperfect at first, as studies show, but in the end it is worth it (Jakubowski, 71). Geneva Gay states:

I approach teaching as if it is an unfolding drama that is never finished. Each class session is a new episode in this drama. It has its own unique texture and function yet is a critical contribution to the construction of the larger story. I am responsible for creating the sets, props, and the rough draft of the scripts for the learning encounters that take place. But how these actually unfold is beyond my unilateral control because the students play crucial roles in my teaching. I neither dictate nor control exactly what these roles will be. I simply cast the parts, and the

students construct the characters. Together, we create teaching and learning dynamics that work best for us and what we are trying to accomplish. (199)

This quote explains how students are the key to determining which methods will work best for the group. This is also important to remember when choosing which methods and production processes will work well for your ensemble when working toward racial unity in theatre.

If you are not sure where to start then take a look at this pattern of awareness and action and think of it like a road map of where this thesis is going. Teacher-artists who are socially responsible tend to follow the pattern below.

Pattern of awareness and action:

1. Recognize there is a need of some kind in their school or community.
2. Acknowledge that theatre could be a viable and powerful tool for addressing this need.
3. Accept, as theatre artists and teachers, they are in a unique position to address this need and bring about positive change.
4. Identify strategies to address this need; and
5. Take action to effect positive change. (Lazarus, 123)

In this second chapter: America Today and Why it is Time to Change, we have discussed how there is a growing need for diversity in theatre curriculum. We have also discussed how theatre is powerful and can be used to bring about change, and theatre instructors must begin that change. In the next two chapters I will present the best practices or strategies to address the need of racial unity in theatre. It is up to the reader to implement these changes and reach step five in their theatres (Lazarus, 123).

### **Chapter Three: Best Practices and the Three Legged Stool**

The following methods are the best practices for encouraging racial unity in theatre. These are the “dos” in theatre that will help students, actors, and crew feel valued, empowered, and heard. This positivity and understanding can ultimately create a better synthesized ensemble, which in turn, promotes better shows for our audiences. I will start with Moses Goldberg’s “three legged stool” method as a basis for this thesis and research (Goldberg, 26). Goldberg was a highly influential theatre teacher and essayist on theatre for young audiences. His work gave theatre teachers a real platform for their practice in the eyes of the academic world. He recommended three ingredients for an effective arts program, which I believe can serve as the foundation of best practices to promote racial unity. The three categories in the three legged stool are: 1) Arts Instruction, 2) Arts Processes, and 3) Arts Experiences. Goldberg goes on to say “These areas act as a three-legged stool providing a solid foundation in the arts, maximizing the chances of influencing the child's total education, and significantly improving the chances of that individual child reaching his or her fullest potential as a human being and a contributor to society.” (26). This coincides with this thesis as we are aiming to influence the children’s total education in regards to new cultures and tolerance, helping them reach their full potential in expressing themselves and their heritage, as well as learning about others. They are becoming contributors to society by taking action in the classroom and on the stage to provide culturally and racially aware productions to a real audience. Productions that are inclusive to each child’s heritage and culture contribute to society because audiences tend to enjoy art and stories that make them feel connected to humanity and the human race. One of my favorite quotes explain what humanity lives for: “We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion.

And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for" (Primeau).

The first leg of Goldberg's stool is Arts Instruction; "This is the shared language of the theatre as well as the team work involved. This is the classroom instruction and evaluation" (Goldberg, 26). In other words, this is how the teacher or director can use instruction, curriculum, and best practices to educate theatre students about cultures, races, and diversity. "Arts Processes involve teachers having the mindset of an artist. To think creatively, accept critics, new ideas, and the individual. This is just a good teacher who teaches the whole child and lets children explore ideas and multiple solutions. This is also a teacher who promotes multiple intelligences" (Goldberg, 27). This process prepares us to teach and direct like all opinions matter, like all people matter, and like the individual has an artistic voice. It also correlates to teaching pedagogy with the promoting of the multiple intelligences theory and teaching the whole child. We must encourage all areas of a child; not just academic, but artistic, athletic, musical and more. Lastly, "Arts Experiences is the need for students to see high quality art so they can be appreciated as a learner, modeled quality art, and be inspired. The art must be age-appropriate and schools must make room in the budget to see good work or the opposite effect will take place" (Goldberg, 29). This is the leg that inspired the newest ideas for my theatre program. The need for students and young people to see quality theatre that is age-appropriate is vital to a growing artist. Seeing quality professional theatre is also important to students' education, as they may always remember the lessons of the production and how it made them feel; it is a life event that may be recorded into their long-term memory. If students are growing in their artistic journey, then they need a model or example of professional theatre to study. It is much easier to get a student excited and coming back to theatre than it is to get an adult who had

a bad experience with theatre in their youth to try theatre again. We must create young advocates for the arts now if they are to be lifelong supporters. These are the people who will be keeping the market and art form alive after we are gone.

First, and for the majority of this chapter, I would like to include examples from Art Instruction's leg of Goldberg's stool. We will begin with using appropriate materials and examples in your instruction. Students can feel alienated when the instructor or director uses examples or materials that are from their own personal experience or heritage. For example, you may say "Pretend you are in your house. What does the living room look like? Go into your backyard. What does it smell like?" This may seem like a standard sensory memory acting exercise, but in reality the students who are living in a homeless shelter, a basement, or a one-bedroom apartment may not be able to relate. Just the word "house" may make students uncomfortable if they live in a trailer or apartment. You must use words that include everyone such as "home". It is best if you get to know your students and their backgrounds so you can more specifically use examples from their life, heritage, and community. For example, if most students are Hispanic, the instructor could implement that culture by using more Spanish words, talking about grandparents, and mentioning authentic Hispanic food. This practice can also easily apply to the materials, scenes, and scripts used. If you are of the dominant culture in America, then look into what materials you are using in your classroom. Is it mostly European and Caucasian work? Try using folklore from other countries in your fairytale unit. Perhaps use a scene from a play by a playwright of color. For a musical, experiment with a song or dance that is cultural. It is easier to start with small changes, like including cultural and racial examples in your instruction, and then transitioning to bigger more inclusive changes. Small changes can make a big impact in your theatre. This may help students connect and engage more with the



lesson. While we can all identify with American things such as “Fortnight” and “Musicals”, try to intentionally include source material that will make everyone in the classroom feel welcome and “seen”. This can also apply to improvisation topics and decorations. Are all the posters in your class of white actors? Are the videos you show promoting only white casts? Are there only English words displayed in your classroom? Take a look at what you suggest for improvisation or acting scenarios and see if it includes diversity in culture. It may seem trivial, but it means a great deal to students who are not part of the dominant culture. To create a large impact, we must start with small change, which in this case starts with the instructor.

Another example of best practices to promote racial unity in theatre is beginning the year off with an ice-breaker that involves critical thinking about race and identity, which can also fall under Arts Processes as it accepts the whole student. This is a simple, yet profound activity that any instructor can implement. Gay likes to conduct these ice-breakers as a way to prepare the instructor for working with ethnically and culturally diverse students, as well as building a sense of community among students and creating a classroom setting characterized by inquiry, discourse, personal involvement, and novelty. She began the school year by asking students to get into pairs and look closely at each other to identify subtle physical features that excluded things like hair and eye color, height, race, and gender. They then had to describe each other to the class. This activity was impactful on students and teachers because they learned to look at individual traits and differences between different ethnic groups, which is not something often done cross racially (186). She also suggests this exercise to promote education on ethnic and cultural diversity. She asked several randomly selected students to “publicly declare their ethnic identities and give us ‘personal evidence’ of their claims of ethnic ownership. If they said, ‘I am Italian American, or Korean African American,’ then they had to provide some examples of

values, beliefs, and behaviors that signal these ethnic identities. Each student was probed in depth about his or her ethnicity before the next one was asked anything. After all the students shared, she asked the rest of the class what they thought was going on, if other people's revealing of their ethnicity prompted them to do likewise, and if there were any messages in this exercise for teaching K-12 students about ethnic and cultural diversity” (Gay, 186). This is a great example of best practices to promote racial unity in theatre, as the ensemble is acknowledging that each student has a different ethnic background or heritage, but they can still get to know each other and lean off each other’s strengths to become a greater ensemble. As long as we provide activities, warm ups, and games that acknowledge race, and not ignore it, then we are making strides toward racial inclusion and a better tomorrow (Gay, 186).

It is also important to fully prepare yourself and your students for any work that touches on difficult issues including race. If you are prepared to make a commitment to the critically responsive process to issues, then you must accept that it is an ever-changing process that may not be easy (Jakubowski, 71). Lisa Jakubowski suggests creating an environment in which students and instructors feel socially equal, which combines Arts Instruction and Arts Processes (65). This is not to say the instructor loses all power, but they accept that knowledge comes in many forms, and both teacher and student bring unique experiences and ideas to the table. Once this trust and understanding is established, students are more likely to speak on their perspectives, instead of being too scared of offending the teacher or not fitting in with the rest of the students (Jakubowski, 67). Now that students and instructors are socially equal, you can begin an action-oriented learning process that is a great step toward racial unity in the classroom and includes all three legs of Goldberg’s stool. This action-oriented learning process has four interrelated phases: articulation of experience, codification, decodification, and empowerment

(Jakubowski, 67). First, the students must be able to sit down in a group and be lead in a facilitated discussion on race and their personal experiences. This is not a right and wrong scenario, but an exploratory process for the ensemble to grow together by sharing their past experiences. This technique utilizes the Arts Processes as we learn about the students and not just their theatre skills. Then, without judgment, the students move on to codification, which is when the students take their experiences and put in into project-based learning. Take something you want to explore and experiment with it using theatre or art as your medium and present your work and findings to the group. Project-based learning is included in Arts Instruction as it requires some instruction on vocabulary and the shared knowledge of theatre. Jakubowski states, “These representations of real life could take other forms including songs, photographs, dance, or art. No matter what the form, a codification ‘re-presents the students’ reality back to the class and allows them to project their emotional and social responsive in a focused fashion” (67). As the students present their work to the class we move into the next phase: decodification. The group is invited to critically engage in an interchange of ideas that helps the students move from talking about these ideas to analyzing them layer by layer. To help students analyze the work, Jakubowski provides a “five step questioning strategy.” Think of these as focus questions: 1) Describe what they see. 2) Define the problem. 3) Share similar experiences. 4) Question why there is a problem. 5) Strategize what they can do about the problem (Jakubowski, 67). Now students have the structure they need to respond to these events and engage in critical thinking discussions. This may allow your theatre to move on to new projects with a better understanding of the whole ensemble, as well different race issues and what can be done about them. To take it a step further, Jakubowski suggests taking action in the community through a food drive, an open forum play, or even a race workshop (76). Going to see professional work implements Arts

Experiences and gives your students a future example to work toward. As your ensemble takes in this information, they can make progressive steps to be unified in the theatre despite their differences.

Another useful best practice to help students of all races come together in theatre is puppetry. Puppets are an exciting medium for students of all ages. From a simple and cost effective sock puppet to an elaborate 10-man puppet, puppets give the students a chance to express themselves without the pressure of performing as themselves. Puppets are extremely valuable as Agofure explains:

A child's play with a puppet has a symbolic value because we can recognize the child's feelings and his/her experience of the world in it. Puppets, as a mediator in the communication, teaching and learning process it improves interpersonal relations and relaxes the atmosphere in a group. (2)

The first step in puppetry is introducing the acting rules regarding a puppet and creating or using pre-made puppets. Once the basics are addressed, allow the students creative freedom. Let them explore their puppets and interact with other puppets in improvisation led by the instructor. This will help “relax the atmosphere” as Agofure said (2). Now, you can use puppets to explore racial themes and offer students a chance to express their emotions, resolve conflicts, and express their perspectives. Race and race related issues can be difficult, and there is not always an easy solution, but exploring the topic and coming to a better understanding of each other in the ensemble is a way to promote unity. I suggest creating a puppet forum where students speak through their puppets on instructor led issues and explore their experiences. From these experiences you can create “What if?” situations where the students get with partner puppets and explore. The instructor can observe how students express themselves through the puppets and how they resolve, or fail to resolve, conflicts. From this exercise, the students and instructor can

use the process of creative dramatics to devise a puppet show around the experiences, conflicts, and possible resolutions of racial issues. The instructor can help fine-tune these scenes and rehearse the puppet show for performances for friends and family. It may help students discover characteristics about themselves, like how they would respond in certain situations, or how others also go through tough circumstances. Puppets have various uses and iterations that could inspire racial unity and discussion within your theatre program. There is a puppetry lesson included in the appendix of this thesis on page 28.

#### **Chapter Four: Processes and Productions of Theatre**

This chapter focuses on the processes and productions of theatre that can encourage your ensemble to work together regardless of differences. This also includes Art Experiences and going to see professional age-appropriate theatre. The first form of theatre production that you may find useful is Theatre of the Oppressed (Barnes, Hazel, and Marié-Heleen Coetzee, 2). To understand Theatre of the Oppressed you must first understand the concept of “systematic oppression:”

Systematic oppression is where people in positions of privilege may, consciously or unconsciously, become a party to oppression through subtle means based on the values of the dominant culture. Through covert or overt display of personal and collective assumptions, biases and prejudices, all people can be both agents (oppressors/perpetrators) and targets (oppressed/victims) of different forms of oppression. (Barnes, Hazel, and Marié-Heleen Coetzee, 2)

Theatre of the Oppressed was created by Brazilian dramatist Augusto Boal as a way “to transform lives as spectators become performers, acting out solutions to social problems,” according to the Britannica. He also established a Center for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio De Janeiro in 1986 (Britannica).

This is an important reality of America today, and I believe this is an educational form of theatre to explore for our young actors. It is not only focused on the people facing oppression, but a way for oppressors to educate themselves and learn how they participate in the cycle of oppression. This is not always about white and black, “For instance, oppressors can be oppressed, liberators can turn into oppressors while the oppressed are often complicit in their own oppression” (Barnes, Hazel, and Marié-Heleen Coetzee, 4). There are many forms of oppression based on resources, privilege, and power (Barnes, Hazel, and Marié-Heleen Coetzee, 2). The work does not aim to point a finger or over simplify the reality of the oppressed or oppressor. It seeks to start conversations and facilitate realizations and growth. I would suggest having a conversation about oppressors and oppressed and how it is a part of our lives before starting this work. Then lay out a scene like Coetzee did in South Africa:

Students performed a story involving two black children seated on a bench in a chemist shop. The children were queuing for medication when a white woman arrived on the scene. The white woman (Woman 1) orders the children to move to the back of the

queue. Two black women enter the shop and one of them asks the two children if they are in the queue. In line with Boal's anti-model play in forum theatre, the play proceeds to demonstrate how the racial conflict between "whiteness", represented by Woman 1, and "blackness", represented by one of the black women (Woman 2), has continued to affect the post-apartheid generation of white and black students in South Africa. The anti-model play dramatizes the politics informing "whiteness" as an ideology of supremacy that advocated for the separation of races during the apartheid period. In contrast, "blackness" was equated with enslavement, exploitation and oppression (9).

The scene might be heated at first, but the director can introduce new ways to de-escalate the situation and promote interaction with acceptance. The instructor can modify the rules and genders/races in the scene and observe what happens. I would suggest having rules and a closing discussion after each round of the scenes. This can be a sensitive topic, but with an understanding ensemble who wants to make new discoveries as actors, this is extremely valuable. The best outcome would be students discovering how the oppressed can rise up or how the oppressors can offer a helping hand. Encourage them to take these ideas and put them into action in their real lives. If you cannot perform Theatre of the Oppressed yourselves, consider seeing professional theatre companies perform to implement the Arts Experiences leg.

The next performance type is interactive theatre. One form of interactive theatre is when you take embodied knowledge and pair it with issue-based theatre (Sutherland, 728). Embodied knowledge is "grounded in 'active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection'" (Sutherland, 729). This is the opposite of debating an issue, but instead getting up and experiencing something with all the senses of the physical body. As teachers, we aim to make long lasting connections and introduce events or lessons that students can connect with that will

be stored in their long-term memory. Sutherland describes how Rhodes University did this by creating an issue-based theatre piece created with student's accounts of real scenarios revolving around race in South Africa and how it changed a whole campus. The act of creating a script collaboratively is also known as devised theatre, which is what the students were doing when they combined their accounts together to create a show. They not only performed for every member of the freshman class, but also held an hour long discussion for the audience afterward. Sutherland argues that "we need to move beyond dialogue around race to activity, and that the embodied, multi-dimensional practices that the cast of the show did facilitated the shifts in understanding about race, particularly for the white members of the cast" (729). Students who saw the piece as audience members were affected by it and felt it was more engaging than a lecture. As one student writes, "I think the reason theatre is so effective is because it personalized things so much, we are right there and it's a very tangible experience. You are there, you can see the actors sweating, you can smell them, you can hear them, and there is a lot to be said about a visceral experience, you can just feel it as opposed to just witnessing. (Sutherland, 731). We can recreate this very process and performance that might change us as instructors, students as actors, and even the audience members themselves. It just requires an instructor with "extraordinary teaching and leadership, skillful enough to navigate the treacherous waters where martyrological memories clash" (Sutherland, 730). This is the mindset of Arts Processes. To implement this, you start with a writing assignment of real or fictitious scenes of racism or race-based issues in your art instruction, and then allow your students to share and discuss. The ensemble combines these stories into a type of variety show or anthology, which will be very personal to them and completely their own. Now, you cast the show and begin rehearsals along with discussions as



issues come up. Finally, you perform the show and include a talk back discussion, which is monitored and facilitated by an instructor. Sutherland states:

In this experience it became clear that students need to move beyond a cognitive or intellectual engagement with key issues. In this particular case, the process of firstly embodying, then collectively interpreting, different scenarios through a variety of performance strategies was a powerful means of change. Embodied knowledge is vital to creating sustainable changes in thinking, through feeling and doing. We need to put the body back into knowledge making. (738).

This same concept was similarly done involving undocumented Mexican students who wrote about their history and experiences to be shared in a poetry and theatre hybrid (Bagley, Carl and Ricardo Castro-Salazar, 247). The performance was presented to an audience of many undocumented Mexicans, instructors, and people of various races. The performance not only emotionally connected with its audience, but many audience members were changed and even stirred to action after the assumptions of a stereotypical undocumented immigrant were shattered. Bagley explains how this process aims to “create multi-vocal, dialogical texts that have the power to move an audience not only in an emotional sense but also in the sense of spurring the other and self to action or praxis” (241). Bagley also claims, “research suggests that students of Mexican origin encounter a range of racialized socio-economic, cultural and political challenges that include: unsupportive teaching climates” (243). How many other stories and perspectives are not being told in your theatre or school? Using this best practice of interactive theatre, we can share the untold stories of our students with each other and audiences.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are processes and best practices that instructors of all ages and skill levels can implement today in their theatre programs to promote racial unity in theatre. We as instructors must look critically at ourselves and our world view to begin this process. Then we must create a relaxing and accepting atmosphere for our ensemble to facilitate trust and cooperation. Once trust and social equality are established, the ensemble can work through many mediums mentioned in this thesis such as puppetry, theatre of the oppressed, forum theatre, and more. The road to change and discovery is often difficult, but try new things and always have an open mind to new experiences and reflections. Do not forget to indulge in Art Experiences by bringing your theatre department to see professional age-appropriate work. There are many free theatre shows available or even traveling shows that will come to your school. If you feel you are

not equipped to handle these topics, explore more resources and outlets. This thesis may be the beginning of your journey toward racial unity in theatre. To help save instructors on time, I have included an appendix of lesson plans, and games to implement with your students and test them out. Every small step is progress toward a more diverse and caring theatre ensemble.

Be aware, there will be challenges to promoting racial unity in theatre. Each class and each student can represent a new challenge or idea that conflicts with what we know, and it is how we as theatre artists respond to these challenges that matter. Keep the vision for your theatre program clear in your mind so you do not lose sight or heart on the important work you are doing. Always stay in communication with your school administration, parents, and community members about this exciting change and new work.

### **Appendices: Games**

Here are a few games that can be used as warm ups or icebreakers that promote a unified ensemble for all races.

<b><u>Name and Estimated Time to Play</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
<p>“Who are you?” This game can be played in as little as 10 minutes with a small ensemble or an hour for a large ensemble.</p>	<p>Students get into pairs and look at each other’s physical features. They must exclude things like hair color, eye color or skin color. They must look at the details of their partners face. Then, each pair shares in front of the class and describes their partner’s features. This promotes facial feature recognition of other races (Gay,186).</p>

<p>“Nationality Pride” This game can be played in as little as 5 minutes or up to 30 minutes.</p>	<p>First, the instructor asks for volunteers and if there are none, randomly selects students to share their ethnic identity and claims that back that statement up. They must share beliefs and traditions that provide evidence of their claim. The instructor can ask deeper questions to help them along. After everyone is done sharing, the instructor can ask the class if people sharing gave them confidence to share and what can be learned about diversity from this experience (Gay,186).</p>
<p>“What could make this worse?” This game can be played in as little as 10 minutes or up to 30 minutes.</p>	<p>This is an improvisation game that incorporates racial issues and problem solving. Two or more students are chosen as actors, and the instructor will give them a hat with racial conflicts in it for their scene. The conflicts are based on racial tensions and real life experiences. Students pick a theme and an audience member picks the location of the conflict. Then the scene begins. After a short time, the instructor “freezes” them and asks the audience what could make this scenario worse. After they have an added conflict, they will resume the scene with the new conflict added. The goal is to deal with the issues and resolve them if they can. You can freeze the scene once or a few times, or you can then have new actors and start a new scene.</p>
<p>“The Privilege Walk” This game takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Preferably with high school students and older.</p>	<p>This game helps students understand privilege in America. Have students line up in a straight line in the middle of the room. The instructor will have a list of instructions and statements like “If you have blue eyes, step forward”. The instructor will read the instructions and the students will take a step forward or back or not at all, if they do not wish to share. At the end have a circle discussion. Talk about how each student felt and how it felt to be at the front of back of the class. You can also open up the discussion to what we could do for social justice to change some of these things. The list of questions can be found at: <a href="https://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml">https://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml</a></p>
<p>“Where are you from?” This exercise takes about 15 minutes or more.</p>	<p>Take a large blank poster or a large sheet of colored paper and lay it on a table with markers before students arrive. Instruct the students to find a place on the paper to write the location they were born and draw one picture that represents that location. Once everyone has had a chance to write and draw, take the picture and hang it up were all can see. Now have each student come up and share what they wrote and what they drew. They can also share more about where they were born and if they consider the place where they were born “home”. This could also lead into a greater discussion about diversity.</p>
<p>“Who are you?” This exercise can take 30 minutes or more.</p>	<p>Have the students sketch a picture of themselves and write facts about themselves on a piece of paper. Once everyone is done, join the pictures together on a string, connecting each person together, and have the students introduce each other. Make sure to ask questions about their heritage and culture if they did not include it. Ask students what facts surprised them about their classmates and why that fact was surprising.</p>

<p>“Trust Walk!” This game can be played in 10-20 minutes.</p>	<p>Have students divide into pairs. Student one will close their eyes or apply a blindfold and hold out their arm palm down. Student two will put their arm under student one’s with student two’s palm up and guide student one around the room. They cannot talk and must move through the room of other walking pairs without bumping into anything. After a few minutes have the pairs switch. After the game, have a discussion of what it felt like and if it was hard to trust their partner.</p>
<p>“Race Discussion” This thinking exercise can be played in as little as 15 minutes.</p>	<p>Have the students think about race relations where they live. Then have them write down questions about things they have seen or want to know and put all the questions in a box. Have each student draw a questions and the group will have a facilitated discussion for 3 minutes per question. If the group gets heated or upset then the instructor can intervene and question why such strong feelings were brought up.</p>
<p>“Stand up” This exercise can be played in 5 to 10 minutes.</p>	<p>Assign students into pairs of two, especially students who may not know each other. Then have them stand back to back and interlock arms. Now they must sit down and try to stand up together. This may seem simple, but the pairing of different students is key to an ensemble who works and trusts each other.</p>
<p>“Fashion Show” This activity can take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour.</p>	<p>Tell the students we are having a fashion show and the theme is cultural heritage. Students are to bring or look through the costume closet for costumes to represent their heritage. A few students can also be announcers and photographers. Each student will walk the runway to exciting music and show off their costumes. After, students can explain what their costume represented.</p>

### Lesson Plans

Here are three lesson plans that may be implemented in your classroom to promote racial unity.

<b>Lesson Title:</b>	Puppetry	<b>Grade: 9-12th</b>
		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Learning - Focus</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	
<p><b>Essential Question(s)</b> 1-3 BIG ideas! How can these questions be used to guide your instruction?</p>	<p>What are the rules of Puppetry? How can we deescalate real life race issues?</p>	
<p><b>Central Focus</b> A description of the important understandings and core concepts that you want students to develop over the course of the learning segment.</p>	<p>Students will develop skills in basic puppetry. Students will use improvisation in puppet scenarios in groups. Students will explore scenarios given by the instructor about race. Students will discuss what they have learned.</p>	
<p><b>Daily Lesson Objective(s)</b> Objectives are measurable and aligned with the standard.</p>	<p>The student can create their own puppet. The students can improvise with their puppet. The students can discuss race issues.</p>	

<p><b>Materials</b> What resources can be used to engage students?</p>	<p>Markers, paper bags, sheets of felt, string, glue, scissors, and google eyes.</p>
<p><b>Introduction to Lesson/ Activating Thinking</b> What is the ‘hook’ for the lesson to tap into prior knowledge and develop students’ interests? This should tie directly into the lesson’s objective and standard and should promote higher level thinking.</p>	<p>Begin with asking how many students have created a puppet before. Now ask how many have heard of racial issues or situations in which race was brought up. Now have a short discussion on race and how it is important we recognize the situations happening in real life and how we might react to them or even create better outcomes. Now pass out supplies and instruct them on how to create a puppet.</p>
<p><b>Body of Lesson/ Teaching Strategies</b> What will you have the students do after you introduce the lesson to learn the standards?</p>	<p>Give instructions to the students to create the puppets. Then, teach them the basics of puppet theatre and how the puppets move and talk. Now, have the students get into pairs and practice entrances and exits. After that, introduce improvisation and how it is just like everyday life. The students may even want to describe improvisation to the rest of the class if they have done it before. Ask for a volunteer to improvise a scene with you so you may model the scene to your class. Have the students improvise a random scene with their partner to practice.</p> <p>Next, introduce race issues again and how we are going to explore what might happen if we were in these situations of if our puppet characters were in these situations. You may want to include some guidelines on the board such as no racial slurs, no raising your voice, and not taking the scene too far. Now provide open ended race relation scenarios such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Puppet one is a puppet of color and is at the airport. Puppet two is a TSA agent and has asked puppet one to step out of line for a security check. Puppet one does not want to do this.</li> <li>2. Puppet one wears a funny Native American Idian costume for Halloween and puppet two is offended.</li> <li>3. Puppet one just heard puppet two call him a mean name based on his skin color.</li> <li>4. Two puppets are up for the same job promotion and puppet one got the promotion over puppet two even though puppet one is new. Puppet one jokes that it is because of puppet two’s race.</li> </ol> <p>After a few scenarios, you may want to ask students real scenarios they have been faced with and try these out. You may also want to ask the students to try to replay some scenarios and come up with helpful and positive outcomes.</p>

<p><b>Closure/ Summarizing Strategies:</b> How will the students summarize and/or share what they have learned to prove they know and understand the standard(s) and its vocabulary? Will you provide opportunities for students to apply new knowledge while making connections to prior learning?</p>	<p>Now have a facilitated discussion on what students experienced or learned. Encourage students who have strong feelings or opinions about the scenarios to share. Now, ask if the students could have changed something they said or did in a scene to produce a positive outcome. Tie the puppet scenes to real life and ask students how they can combat race issues and situations in real life.</p> <p>End with any closing statements on what students learned in this activity.</p>
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<b>Lesson Title:</b>	Heritage Museum	<b>Grade: 9-12th</b>
		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Learning - Focus</b>		<b>Strategies</b>
<p><b>Essential Question(s)</b> 1-3 BIG ideas! How can these questions be used to guide your instruction?</p>	<p>How can we express our heritages? How can props symbolize heritage? What is the importance of a prop in a play?</p>	
<p><b>Central Focus</b> A description of the important understandings and core concepts that you want students to develop over the course of the learning segment.</p>	<p>Students will explore their own heritages and bring or create a prop to showcase in a heritage museum. Students will also prepare a brief summary of their prop, why it is important, and how it could be used in a play.</p>	
<p><b>Daily Lesson Objective(s)</b> Objectives are measurable and aligned with the standard.</p>	<p>Students will research their heritage and create or bring in a prop that represents them. Students will prepare a short speech on their prop to present to the class.</p>	
<p><b>Materials</b> What resources can be used to engage students?</p>	<p>Paper, pencils, internet access, and a printer.</p>	
<p><b>Introduction to Lesson/ Activating Thinking</b> What is the ‘hook’ for the lesson to tap into prior knowledge and develop students’</p>	<p>This lesson will begin with a research on heritage and what it is. Students will get in groups or work individually to define heritage and share examples. Each group or student will share until everyone understands</p>	

<p>interests? This should tie directly into the lesson's objective and standard and should promote higher level thinking.</p>	<p>the concept and a few examples. Students will then research what a prop is and why it is important to a show along with examples of famous props in shows. Once students share the instructor can introduce the objective of today: To create or find a prop that represents their individual heritage to display in our heritage museum. The students will also create a short speech about their prop and how it represent their heritage, why it is important to them, and how it could be used in a show.</p>
<p><b>Body of Lesson/ Teaching Strategies</b> What will you have the students do after you introduce the lesson to learn the standards?</p>	<p>Students will research their own heritage. They may need time to go home and speak to their relatives or parents. Students who honestly do not know their heritage may choose one. Students will also need to create, bring a prop from home, or find on in the props of thee theatre.</p> <p>Finally, students will need time to create their speeches about their prop.</p>
<p><b>Closure/ Summarizing Strategies:</b> How will the students summarize and/or share what they have learned to prove they know and understand the standard(s) and its vocabulary? Will you provide opportunities for students to apply new knowledge while making connections to prior learning?</p>	<p>Once all the props and speeches are finished, have the class write an index card with facts about the prop and place them on tables throughout the room. Turn on some soft music and allow the students to quietly walk through the museum and look at the objects. Once everyone has had a change to look at all the props, have the students present their props to the class and share their speeches.</p> <p>If you are able, have a class discussion about the experience and what they learned or felt.</p>



<b>Lesson Title:</b>	Project	<b>Grade: 9-12th</b>
		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Learning - Focus</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	
<b>Essential Question(s)</b> 1-3 BIG ideas! How can these questions be used to guide your instruction?	What are my experiences with race relations? What is project based learning? How can we use project based learning and action oriented learning to create an art form to express our experience with race relations? How did each of these performances impact me and what did I learn from them?	
<b>Central Focus</b> A description of the important understandings and core concepts that you want students to develop over the course of the learning segment.	Students will use project based learning to create an art performance to express their experience with race relations. Students will be provided choices in art forms and will perform for the class and if you wish, community members.	
<b>Daily Lesson Objective(s)</b> Objectives are measurable and aligned with the standard.	Students will create art performances and perform them for the class.	
<b>Materials</b> What resources can be used to engage students?	Students may need internet access to do research on their issue or their performance style. Students may need paper and pencil to write their ideas. Students may need a stage or area to perform as well as technical elements like sound and lights.	

<p><b>Introduction to Lesson/ Activating Thinking</b> What is the ‘hook’ for the lesson to tap into prior knowledge and develop students’ interests? This should tie directly into the lesson’s objective and standard and should promote higher level thinking.</p>	<p>Students will be introduced to project based learning and a choice of art forms to perform their scenes. This will take place in four stages: articulation of experience, codification, decodification, and empowerment.</p> <p>Then the students will be led in a facilitated discussion on race and race relations. The students may share their own experiences or experienced they heard about. This is not a right and wrong answer, but is an exploratory process as the ensemble grows together in sharing their past experiences. This is the articulation of experience phase. Then, without judgment, the students move on to codification, which is when the students take their experiences and put in into art (Jakubowski, 67).</p>
<p><b>Body of Lesson/ Teaching Strategies</b> What will you have the students do after you introduce the lesson to learn the standards?</p>	<p>The students will be introduced to the types of art forms they may choose based on your environment. They may rap, create a scene, dance, draw, paint, present on a PowerPoint, or many more. It all depends on your space and resources. The students may have one class period to work or several weeks. Students can work individually or in groups. Now the students present their work to the class and the class will respond, which is decodification. The group as a whole is invited to critically engage in an interchange of ideas that helps the students move from just talking about these ideas to really analyzing them layer by layer. To help with students analyze the work, Jakubowski, provides a “five step questioning strategy” think of these as focus questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe what they see.</li> <li>2) Define the problem.</li> <li>3) Share similar experiences.</li> <li>4) Question why there is a problem.</li> <li>5) Strategize what they can do about the problem (Jakubowski, 67).</li> </ol> <p>ve the students respond to these events and engage in critical thinking discussions</p>
<p><b>Closure/ Summarizing Strategies:</b> How will the students summarize and/or share what they have learned to prove they know and understand the standard(s) and its</p>	<p>Once all the students have responded to the performances, your group can discuss what they learned from this experience and what they can do in the future to ease racial tension. This may be the</p>

vocabulary? Will you provide opportunities for students to apply new knowledge while making connections to prior learning?

wrap up for your class to move on to other work or you can share these experiences with the public in a showcase or participate in a community event that would help the situation you brought up.

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