

Summary

This is the BATS plan to address our history of white supremacy and transform into an anti-racist theatre.

Updates

We'll list updates to this page here.

- Version 1 (October 22, 2020): Initial plan
- Version 2 (March 2022 – current)

Introduction

At BATS, we are working to transform our theatre into an anti-racist organization. This requires dismantling the white supremacist power structures we've developed over the last thirty-five years.

We're grateful that the authors of the Living Document of BIPOC Experiences in Bay Area Theatre Companies have provided an action plan (at <https://www.bipoclivdoc.com/action-plan>) which has guided our process -- without this work, we would be moving much more slowly than we are.

We are fully committed to meeting all of the demands set out in the action plan. Given the length and complexity of the work involved, we are breaking our process up into three parts, which we explain in detail below. We'll update this page monthly with our progress.

Section A: Work in progress. In this section, we'll describe items from the action plan that are currently underway, along with an expected date of completion for each.

Section B: Work to be planned. In this section, we'll describe the items we intend to tackle next, along with an expected date for graduation to section A.

Section C: Completed work. In this section, we'll describe the ways in which BATS has met the action plan's demands.

As items graduate from Section B to Section A, we'll add new items to Section B, until the entire plan has been accounted for. This allows us to begin moving forward on the most critical items immediately.

Section A: Work in Progress

Diverse Company Membership

Demands addressed:

- Diversify content of programming to celebrate under-represented artists
- Produce plays* written by 60% BIPOC, queer, trans, womxn of color, non-binary and/or disabled playwrights in season programming
- Commission plays by 60% BIPOC, queer, trans, womxn of color, non-binary and/or disabled local playwrights
- Intentionally recruit, meaningfully include, gainfully employ, and actively support under-represented artists, ranging from content creation to consulting to designing to performing
- Offer Director positions in the company's season to 60% BIPOC, queer, trans, womxn of color, non-binary, and/or disabled artists

*BATS shows are completely improvised; we don't employ playwrights. Instead, our shows are all created and directed by the BATS Main Stage Company. This group has very few members in under-represented categories.

As of January 2020, the BATS Company included 12.5% membership in under-represented categories. At that time, our Artistic Director proposed a five-year timeline for increasing that percentage:

2021: 20%

2022: 30%

2023: 40%

2024: 50%

2025: 60%

As of June 2021, the Company's membership in under-represented categories had doubled from the start of the year to 25%. We're working with the Head of our School to increase enrollment among students of under-represented categories so as to create a pipeline of skilled improvisers who can eventually join the main stage Company.

Fair Ticket Prices

Demands addressed:

- Generate a system of Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC) to all Black and Brown patrons.
- Generate signage of said system posted and visible at the Box Office.

When our theater reopened in October, we began offering a half-price community-rate ticket to all Black and Brown patrons. We plan to implement a pay-what-you-can sliding scale pricing structure for tickets to shows in the near future. We introduced a sliding scale pay what you can pricing structure for venue rentals in February 2022

Native Land Acknowledgement

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement introduced in shows in autumn 2021. To be used in all classes and on the website.

Section B: Work To Be Planned

The BATS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee consists of diverse representatives from our leadership, school, board, staff and performing company.

As we complete the plans for these items, we'll bring the remaining items from the action plan into this section.

Company Culture

As we built our Conflict Policy (detailed in Section C), we developed plans to make the BATS Main Stage Company culture more inclusive.

Those include holding a group discussion with EDI committee to build understanding and shared commitment to this work, and to provide training for the Company about how to 'play safely' and prevent harm and establish consent when playing with race and other sensitive topics.

Land Tax

Demands Addressed:

- Annually contribute to a repatriation land tax to help Indigenous people in California regain access to stolen land.

BATS plans to contribute to the Ramaytush Ohlone Land Tax.

Section C: Completed Work

BATS is proud to note that we have met several demands from the action plan. Here is a timeline of our actions towards becoming an anti-racist theater:

- Oct 2020 - Org wide anti bias training

- Oct 2020 - Publish Equity Action Plan
- Nov 2020 - publish organization financials
- Jan 2021 - published updated Mission, Vision and Values
<https://www.improv.org/about-us/our-vision/>
- Dec 20 / Jan 21 - devise and implement cultural growth survey
- Feb/March - publish survey results and recommendations
- Feb / March 21 - community meetings facilitated by Dante King
- March 21 - draft and publish community standards [Community Standards, Our Agreement at BATS Improv](#)
- April / May 21 Updated hiring and recruitment process to remove bias
- May / June 21 SEEDS engaged to advise us on next steps and approaches to repair harm (individually and community-wide, past and future)
- May/June 21 Additional anti-bias training for theater leadership
- June 21 - package of guest artist briefing materials
- November 2021: Indigenous Land Acknowledgement introduced in all shows
- December 2021: New Conflict Process and Complaints process launched with all organization training and work group discussions
- Feb 2022, new pay-what you can rentals structure introduced for BIPOC led rentals

Further Details of the Items Completed

Publish an Action Plan

Demands addressed:

- Publish a thorough plan of actions marked within a timeline with a commitment to creating an equitable, just, and anti-racist theater
- Acknowledge structures and histories of harm to better inform forward progress

This page serves as our plan.

Fair Compensation

Demands addressed:

- Abolish unpaid artistic internship program
- Establish a budget that provides equitable artist compensations, at all cost
- Abolish culture of free artistic labor at all cost
- For Non-Union performers: provide a timesheet as a system for equitable hourly wage compensation based on the region's cost of living
- Publish our 990 federal tax returns including our budget on our website

At BATS, we strongly believe in compensating artists from our work. All of our artists, including actors, directors, lighting improvisers, and musicians, as well as teaching-artist coaches are provided equitable compensation based on the timesheets they submit twice per month.

Fair Board Participation

Demands addressed:

- Question the Board's Give/Get model that has historically barred participation of the BIPOC community
- Create a system in Board Membership that value means of support beyond Capitalism
- Board Membership should include stakeholders that the organization serves (ongoing)

Our board includes members from all parts of the BATS community (including company members, coaches, staff, and students) and has 60% BIPOC, queer, trans, womxn of color, and/or non-binary representation. We don't ask board members to contribute anything other than their time and expertise.

Hiring Process

Demands addressed:

- Hire actively and intentionally BIPOC, queer, trans, womxn of color, non-binary, and/or disabled staff.

In April 2021, BATS leadership worked with the EDI Committee to review our hiring process in an effort to remove bias from recruitment. We have adopted it in our new recruitment and hiring process which is now used for all staff positions.

Anti-racism Training

Demand addressed:

- Provide anti-racist and anti-bias training to all departments annually

In October 2020, BATS completed a 4 week training course, for all members of the performing company, coaches, staff and board covering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of underrepresented communities. Topics included: Inclusive Language, Privilege, Critical Allyship & Race and Ethnicity, Upstander Intervention & Gender and Sexuality, Dynamics of Oppression & Power structures and Safe and Brave Space Team Development.

In February and March 2021, we held a series of community meetings facilitated by Dante King (www.danteking.com) to begin to unpack the history of how systemic oppression and discrimination of BIPOC has manifested at BATS. That included affinity groups to unpick and to begin to collectively articulate and address systemic challenges for People with White Privilege and BIPOC at BATS. The intent was to build a more common understanding of shared challenges at BATS.

In May and June 2021 BATS Leadership comprised of Board President and Vice President, Managing Director, Head of School and Acting Artistic Director participated in 'Creating a Culture of Belonging' Training organized by Theatre Bay Area to support Bay Area theatres in becoming anti-racist.

Mission and Vision Statements

Demands addressed:

- Readjust Mission, Vision and Values statements reflecting all actions and changes.
- Initiate practice of sharing Mission, Vision and Values and company's history of upholding cultures of White Supremacy to all guest artists

In January 2021, we published an updated Mission, Vision Values statement at <https://www.improv.org/about-us/our-vision/>. In autumn 2021 we removed 'professionalism and excellence' from our organizational values.

In June 2021, we began a practice of distributing a welcome package of information to all guest artists that includes the vision statement along with our community standards. This has since been updated to include information about our conflict process and company guidelines about how to 'play safely', prevent harm and establish consent when playing with race and other sensitive topics.

No Tolerance Policy

Demands addressed:

- Create a No Tolerance Policy for harassment, prejudice, and discrimination towards all Black and Brown artists in the space
- End harmful practices, programs, and contracts with individuals with a history of problematic and racist behaviors (ongoing)
- Release Staff Members within the company who have a history of problematic, racist, and prejudiced behaviors. (ongoing)
- Reconfigure culture of interactions from company members to artists leaning towards respect. (ongoing)

In summer 2021 we discontinued our Safe Spaces committee and instead created a new Conflict Process grounded in restorative justice, to address harm and to ensure that all members of our community are protected from discrimination. We also updated our 'Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination Policy'. This, combined with our new 'Community Standards' launched in Feb 2021 and the new complaints form, will provide us with the tools and process to track and address repeated problematic behavior and to enforce our anti-harassment rules.

This package of tools, processes and structures, are now operational and we are continuing work to enable our community to fully understand and use these tools and participate in the positive organizational change process.

Actions taken to date:

- Dec 20/ Jan 21 Devise and implement a 'Cultural Growth Survey' to gather information relating to the demographics and experiences of our community members - seeking to identify patterns of repeated behaviors which are not in line with our 'community standards'
- Feb / March 2021 Publish our analysis of the findings of the 'Cultural Growth Survey' along with organizational recommendations which are available here <https://www.improv.org/about-us/cultural-growth-survey-findings-and-recommendations/>
- March 2021 Draft and publish a set of 'Community Standards' which are available on our website here [Community Standards. Our Agreement at BATS Improv](#)
- May 2021 BATS engaged SEEDS Community Resolution Centre Organizational Services (see <https://www.seedscrc.org/>) to help us create a package of tools, processes and structures to hold ourselves accountable to our Community Standards
- May / June 2021 SEEDS is helping us to repair a specific harm by facilitating meetings to address particular situations in which events occurred or patterns of behavior resulted in harm between specific people. SEEDS supported us to repair harm restoratively by supporting the party who caused the harm to recognize and be accountable for the impact of their actions on the persons who were harmed, and to bring their behavior into alignment with BATS' 'Community Standards. SEEDS helped us to determine a course of action to repair specific harm through individual coaching
- June 2021 - develop package of materials to share with all guest artists briefing them on our EDI work, our action plan, our updated mission, vision and values and complaints process
- June 2021 SEEDS and BATS co-designed an updated process for recording and addressing complaints so that we are able to track complaints, complainants and perpetrators and identify patterns of behavior. (Lauren Lofton/SEEDS to consult <https://www.uchastings.edu/people/lauren-lofton/>)
- June - October 2021 SEEDS and BATS co-designed a new Conflict Process to hold members of our community accountable to our agreed standards going forward. This replaced our 'Safe Space Committee' and equips the organization with restorative justice based processes (Lauren Lofton / SEEDS <https://www.uchastings.edu/people/lauren-lofton/>)
- December 2021 SEEDS designed and facilitated an organization wide meeting to launch the Conflict Process plus we held individual work group meetings to discuss the new policy and to build new understanding about how to work together going forward.

As of Jan 2022, our Managing Director is working with the EDI committee to plan further training to help everyone build familiarity with the new tools and ways of working.

Now that our No Tolerance policy is in place, it will be applied to problematic and racist practices and individuals within the organization.