



Statement of Belonging

This past year has marked a time of sustained reflection and social reckoning. As individuals and as an organization -whose mission it is to serve our community- we want to do better. A first step towards change is recognizing and acknowledging the privilege that we hold as a theatre company, as a non-profit organization, and as individuals. At San Francisco Playhouse we view our theatre as an Empathy Gym where we come to practice our powers of compassion. It is a part of our Empathy Gym's mission to empower voices different from our own and pass the mic to those voices who have systemically been left out of the conversation. We want to acknowledge this country's long history of systemic racism and inequality. Aware of our privilege, we want to use it to educate, advocate, and build bridges. We want the Empathy Gym to be a place where we cannot only practice our powers of compassion but continue to build a place of belonging. We believe that a true sense of belonging can be achieved when diversity, inclusion, and equity overlap. [1]

Diversity

Diversity is about the unique identities represented in a collective or a group. Diversity can only exist in relationship to others. In the complex DEI equation, the variable of diversity can be viewed as "the people". [1]

Inclusion

Inclusion is the measure of active, intentional, and ongoing engagement of an organization's diversity in the creation of culture and programming that allows access, well-being, and a sense of belonging. In the complex DEI equation, the variable of inclusion can be viewed as "the vehicle". [1]

Equity

Equity is a principle, a process, and an outcome of fairness and justice that when applied allows for the opportunity of equal outcomes among people, ensures people across differences have what they need to succeed, and is a principle that must be interrogated to ensure it is being enacted. Equity is not a fixed variable. In the complex DEI equation, the variable of equity can be viewed as "the path or map". [1]

Belonging

A true sense of belonging can be reached when all those parameters of diversity, inclusion, and equity have been taken into account, are met, and overlap. Together, they create the foundation for an environment that supports safe and brave collaboration. Together, they create a sense of belonging. [1]

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin by making a land acknowledgement. A land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes the history and legacy of colonialism that impacted Indigenous peoples. We want this acknowledgement to be a step towards inviting and honoring the truth.

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather belongs to the Ohlone people of past, present and future, whose homelands extend from Big Sur to the San Francisco Bay Area. We recognize that every member of the Bay Area community has, and continues to benefit from, the use and occupation of this land.

It is vitally important that we not only recognize the history of the land on which we stand, but also, we recognize that the Ohlone people are alive and flourishing members of the Bay Area communities today.



We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and learn on their land. We would like to acknowledge our respect and reverence for the Ohlone People, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations, while not forgetting the colonization of this land. [3] [4]

Our Commitment to Antiracism, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

At San Francisco Playhouse, empathy is our guiding principle. We refer to ourselves as The Empathy Gym, and we practice empathy every day. Our core mission is to “share stories that uplift spirits, deepen self-awareness and nurture compassionate community.”

We embrace Antiracism and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) as movements heralding permanent societal change, not ephemeral causes, and we won’t stand on the sidelines. Together with the support of our constituencies — employees, donors, ticket buyers and volunteers — and their representatives, we rededicate ourselves to antiracism, equity, diversity and inclusion. To that end, we’ve launched a task force—our EDI Committee—consisting of board members, management, and staff whose focus is to review our practices and policies and to recommend meaningful changes and improvements.

We are reviewing our Mission, Strategic Plan, Values and Vision and will refresh them continuously to reflect the spirit and depth of our dedication to antiracism, equity, diversity and inclusion. We’ll vigorously enforce our No Tolerance Policy and challenge intimidation and discrimination in all their forms. We’ll seek input from, and collaboration with, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+, non-binary and disabled people with respect to all our company employment practices and artistic activities.

We will increase access to employment and leadership positions through training and mentorship programs. To better reflect the composition of our community, we’ll continue to diversify our board of directors, management, staff, and artists. Further, we’ll require our staff and leadership to participate in equity, diversity and inclusion training.

As to the Native peoples of the Bay Area, we’ll strive to engage them and their representatives with a view to adopting mutually beneficial programs and initiatives.

We intend this Commitment Statement to be a living document. We will amplify or amend it as future circumstances warrant.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to share stories that uplift spirits, deepen self-awareness, and nurture compassionate community.

Our theater is an Empathy Gym where we come to practice our powers of compassion. Here, safe in the dark, we can risk sharing in the lives of the characters. We feel what they feel, fear what they fear, and love what they love. And as we walk through our doors, we take with us greater powers of understanding to make our community a better place, one play at a time.

San Francisco Playhouse's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee

Our EDI Committee was founded in June 2020. Since then, we have been meeting regularly to address how our organization can do better and how we can work towards creating a space of belonging. We want the idea of our Empathy Gym to not only be a noun but a verb and a phrase of action. We want to hold ourselves accountable to improve communication across the organization, advocate for education and training across the organization, and proactively seek out feedback and input from staff members, board members, visiting artists, and patrons, to create a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and safe space of belonging at San Francisco Playhouse.

Our current EDI Committee is comprised of staff members, leadership, as well as members of our San Francisco Playhouse Board of Directors. Our current EDI Committee members include (in alphabetical order):

Nancy K. Austin, *Board Member*
Linda Brewer, *Board Member*
Carolyn Copeland, *Board Member*
Susi Damilano, *Co-Founder and Producing Director*
Sheila Devitt, *Front of House Manager and COVID Compliance Officer*
Marie-Claire Erdynast, *Associate Artistic Director*
Danika Rodriguez Ingraham, *General Manager and COVID Compliance Officer*
Elizabeth Newton, *Grants Coordinator and Operations Associate*
Louis Parnell, *Board Member*
Wera von Wulfen, *DEI Lead and Marketing & Casting Associate*

The EDI Committee has been working on:

- Comprehensive introspection and reflection around the organization's existing EDI efforts
- Examining and discussing the "Bay Area Living Google Document"
- Examining and discussing the "We See You White American Theatre" demands
- Examining San Francisco Playhouse's Mission Statement
- Alignment of San Francisco Playhouse values with our mission
- Creating internal "group agreements" to support inclusive and respectful collaboration
- Organizing and providing EDI trainings:
 - Dr. Lizette Ortega Dolan conducted EDI training with the San Francisco Playhouse Board of Directors
 - Our EDI Committee participated in a training conducted by Britney Noelle Torres at Littler Mendelson P.C.
 - Our entire staff and most members of our Board of Directors participated in a two-day intensive EDI training conducted by Beatrice Thompson, organized by Theatre Bay Area

The EDI Committee is currently working to:

- Improve and streamline communication across the organization
- Offer EDI trainings to all staff, visiting artists, and temporary workers
- Support each department in setting goals pertaining to equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Initiate regular accountability check-ins with each department and support each department's progress in creating a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and safe workspace
- Create clear lines of communication and points of contact for visiting artists and temporary staff to seamlessly reach our HR Department and DEIB Lead to report any issues, provide feedback, and ask questions
- Invite, seek, and compile post-production reflection and feedback from staff, visiting artists, and temporary workers

Community Agreements

The Empathy Gym in action:

- 1. Speak up and encourage others to contribute**

We believe respectful communication and active participation lay the groundwork for good collaboration. We encourage everyone to speak up, especially those who might usually not. Conversely, we encourage those who usually “take the mic first” to step back and create space for others to contribute.
- 2. Practice active listening and be curious**

We believe active listening and curiosity support respectful collaboration and interaction. We encourage you to listen with the intent to understand instead of the intent to respond. We encourage you to let curiosity be your guiding principle and to embrace questions and discussions as opportunities for learning and growth.
- 3. Presence is participation**

We believe showing up is key to fostering a respectful space and brave collaboration. We encourage everyone to actively participate by being present. We want to respect boundaries and reassure everyone that it is okay to “pass the mic”. Your presence is participation.
- 4. Share experiences, not assumptions**

We believe being specific and speaking from one’s own personal experiences best supports respectful communication and collaboration. We ask everyone to avoid speaking in generalities and making assumptions.
- 5. Work to recognize our privilege**

We believe recognizing our own privilege is necessary to identify areas in which we are perpetuating oppression in order to stop and change those behaviors. We believe recognizing our own privilege is necessary to identify areas where we have the power and access to change the system. We understand that privilege and oppression are two sides of the same coin. We encourage everyone to identify and recognize their own privilege: advantages that you have, that others do not.
- 6. Cultivate an environment of learning, generosity, and wonder**

We believe in cultivating a learning environment that deepens understanding and fosters growth. We encourage everyone to speak their truth in ways that respect other people’s truths. We encourage everyone to show grace to yourself and others. We encourage everyone to lead with generosity. We believe in approaching one another with a sense of wonder rather than judgement.
- 7. Own intention and impact**

We believe owning the intention as well as the impact of our actions is necessary for allowing real growth to take place. We believe in holding ourselves accountable when our desired intent and actual impact do not align. We encourage everyone to cultivate self-awareness and practice accountability.
- 8. Challenge with care**

We believe in creating brave and safe spaces for everyone to be vulnerable. We encourage everyone to join us in creating brave, safe spaces that allow us to deepen our mutual understanding and challenge with care. We believe that respect, empathy, and courage are essential to challenging with care.

Sources and Credit

This statement is inspired by individuals and organization who have been leading the way in education around the topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. It is our intention to update our list of sources as we learn more and add to this statement. We are especially grateful to Beatrice Thomas, whose training inspired this updated statement and our continued work.

[1]: DEI Training with Beatrice Thomas, organized by Theatre Bay Area

[2]: "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Iljeoma Oluo

[3]: Holy Names University, Oakland

[4]: University of California, Berkeley

Selected Resources

Links to Organizations and other Resources:

❖ **Native-Land.ca**

<https://native-land.ca/>

Native-Land.ca is a website run by the nonprofit organization Native Land Digital. Native-Land.ca strives to map Indigenous lands in a way that changes, challenges, and improves the way people see the history of their countries and peoples.

<https://native-land.ca/resources/territory-acknowledgement/>

Learn more about territory acknowledgements

❖ **We See You White American Theatre**

<https://www.weseeyouwat.com/>

Principles for Building Anti-Racist Theatre Systems

❖ **The National Museum of African American History and Culture**

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>

The National Museum of African American History and Culture tackles the topic of “whiteness” in order to further understand race in America.

❖ **Broadway for Racial Justice**

<https://www.bfrj.org/>

Broadway for Racial Justice’s Mission: Fighting for racial justice and equity by providing immediate resources, assistance, and amplification for BIPOC in the Broadway and Theatrical community at-large.

❖ **Americans for the Arts**

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/cultural-equity/tools-and-templates>

Tools Americans for the Arts have found useful in their work around cultural equity.

Books on Anti-Racism and History:

- ❖ **How to Be an Antiracist** by Ibram X. Kendi
- ❖ **White Fragility** by Robin DiAngelo
- ❖ **So You Want to Talk About Race** by Ijeoma Oluo
- ❖ **Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America** by Ibram X. Kendi
- ❖ **The New Jim Crow – Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness** by Michelle Alexander
- ❖ **The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America** by Richard Rothstein
- ❖ **White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide** by Carol Anderson
- ❖ **Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents** by Isabel Wilkerson
- ❖ **The Origin of Others** by Toni Morrison

Relevant Articles:

- ❖ **The New York Times: “Four Black Artists on How Racism Corrodes the Theater World”,** Interviews by Laura Collins-Hughes, Michael Paulson and Salamishah Tillet
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/theater/systemic-racism-theater.html>
- ❖ **The Atlantic: “What We Mean When We Say ‘Race Is a Social Construct’”** by Ta-Nehisi Coates
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/05/what-we-mean-when-we-say-race-is-a-social-construct/275872/>
- ❖ **The Atlantic: “The Case for Reparations”** by Ta-Nehisi Coates
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- ❖ **The New York Times: “Theaters for Young Audiences Say They Need to Be More Diverse”** by Michael Paulson
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/theater/children-theater-diversity.html>

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We intend this statement to be a living document. Please check <https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/our-commitment-to-antiracism-equity-diversity-and-inclusion/> or <https://sfplayhouse.org/edi> for updates.