

HELP



BACV

GROUP PLAY

in partnership with

THE SHED

CONVERSATION GUIDE

The Shed is happy to partner with Broadway Advocacy Coalition on Group Play. Thank you for your willingness to pick up what has been left on the stage. In Group Play, **the aim is to foster reflection, conversation, and action in conjunction with *Help*** as a means to guide you through questions that have been provoked within you. This format, developed along with this guide by Group Play, is intended to create space for open and honest conversation and, hopefully, new discoveries and engagement with change work.

NOTE: Everyone may not feel safe enough to dive into this difficult conversation. If any person in your group (especially those who are Black, Indigenous, or of color) is unwilling to participate in the conversation, it is the duty of the group to honor the request to not participate and follow up personally when it feels appropriate. If at any moment you feel unsafe and want to pause or step out of the conversation, your group can use the safe word “HUDSON RIVER” to alert each other.

PART 1

COMMUNITY CHECK-IN

Broadway Advocacy Coalition’s hope is that this time deepens your connection to the play, the other participants, and yourself. You will be guided through a short reflection and an extended group discussion after seeing the performance with other “Macro Conversation” participants. Rather than having a conversation led by one individual, Group Play is designed to make space for everyone in the group to reckon with what the play unearths both individually and in the space. Consider this your very own community discussion with a plan to help specify your engagement with the show. SO, let’s see where we’ve landed.

INTRODUCTIONS

First, let’s start with just saying our names, pronouns, and where you call home. If you’re already familiar with one another, let’s do a quick check-in. What is a moment of joy you’ve experienced this week? What is something you’d like to leave at the door for this conversation? How does it feel to see live theater right now?

STEP ONE: HUMAN THERMOMETER

Introduction:

- Exercise that will help us connect as a group
- Who are we, coming into the room?
- What is our relationship to the production?
- How do we see ourselves and others in relation to making change?

I am going to give you a prompt. You will respond by raising your hand to the number that reflects your level of agreement. 10 is strongest agreement, 1 is weakest agreement.

- **Ten** – I resonate with that statement 100%.
- **One** – That statement does not apply to me.

Prompts:

- I was able to check in with my comfort levels while watching the play.
- I speak up when something happens that seems unfair or problematic.
- Overall, my values are reflected in the way I engage with society.

- I am comfortable engaging in difficult conversations around race.
- My race affects how others interact with me.
- I feel heard when I speak.
- I view myself as marginalized.
- My identity carries weight.
- I think here in America we all share the same lived reality regardless of experience.
- I saw myself, my experiences being reflected in the play.
- I understand how systems of power operates in America.
- I understand who benefits from power in America.
- I understand the difference between whiteness as a structural entity and white people.
- I see white supremacy culture as a threat that needs to be addressed now.

Dive In:

- What did that exercise illuminate for you?
- What did you notice about the responses of the group?
- What does that reveal to you?

STEP TWO: INTRODUCE LEVELS OF LISTENING

There are three levels of listening as outlined by our listening pager and we see each of these levels being displayed in the play. Let’s unpack each of these to ensure we understand what each one looks like and feels like.

Level 1: Internal listening—What Does This Mean to You?

- With Level 1 listening, you are listening to get information that you need or will use.

- The purpose is to meet your needs, carry out your responsibilities, and make decisions.

Level 2: Focused Listening—What Does This Mean for the Other Person / People ?

- With Level 2 Listening, your attention is entirely on the other person—their words and their nonverbal communication.
- You focus on relating to another person to enable that person to understand and communicate their experiences and perspective.
- Level 2 Listening enables you to convey that you have heard and understood what they shared.

Level 3: Global Listening—What Does This Mean in the Larger Context?

- With Level 3 Listening, you are bringing in additional knowledge of your surroundings and history to put the conversation in a larger context.
- Global listening involves paying attention to the surrounding environment and its relationship to the situation of the speaker.

*Learn more with an [in-depth guide to the three levels of listening](#).

STEP THREE: FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

- How do you know when you are listening to yourself and your needs? What does it feel like in your body when you are listening to yourself?
- When is it easiest for you to listen to others (Level 2 Listening)?
- What is one way that you can remind yourself to listen to others (Level 2 Listening) in your group throughout your discussions?
- Is there a level of listening that you're more reliant on?
- Is there a level of listening that is uncomfortable or challenging for you?
- What information would help you situate this play in a larger context? What outside knowledge are you bringing into this conversation?

STEP FOUR: HOPES & FEARS

Help delves into very specific personal experiences that, as it turns out, are incredibly universal. Now that you've experienced this piece, what hopes do you have about how you'll move forward with what this play has revealed to you? Do you hold any fears about the piece and how it will affect you or how it impacts you? What preconceived notions did you walk in with? What initial expectations were you holding coming into the show?

Example:

- Because of _____, I FEAR that _____.
- Because of _____, I HOPE that _____.

Use the space below to jot it down:

PART 2

LET'S DISCUSS

REMINDER: Everyone may not feel safe enough to dive into this difficult conversation. If any person in your group (especially those who are Black, Indigenous, or of color) is unwilling to participate in the conversation, it is the duty of the group to honor the request to not participate and follow up personally when it feels appropriate. If at any moment you feel unsafe and want to pause or step out of the conversation, your group can use the safe word “HUDSON RIVER” to alert each other. For those who may take up space in white bodies, we ask that you challenge yourself in any discomfort in an effort to be fully present and participatory in this conversation.

STEP ONE: QUESTION INTRO

Now let's engage in some group discussion. The emphasis of this discussion is to make space for one another to share their thoughts and feelings, so we'd like to gently encourage you to just relax and listen (now is a great time to remind ourselves of the levels of listening we introduced). For the purposes of this reflection, there is no need to engage in crosstalk. Additionally, we want to acknowledge the differences between spectatorship and bearing witness. Let us charge ourselves, particularly those with close proximity to whiteness, not to watch or spectate or expect those in disenfranchised bodies to educate you here. Instead, let us ALL be in CONVERSATION together with a keen understanding about any and all power dynamics that may show up in our silence. We can do so by asking this: how can we look at the characters as a means to see ourselves and investigate what change can look like?

There will be two rounds of discussion. For each round, a question will be investigated by the group. We'll go around the circle, and each person will have up to one minute to offer their response to the question. Once you've hit your time limit, we will gently make a gesture to let you know it's time to bring your response to a close.

If you don't have anything to say, or would rather not say anything, you can just say PASS. If you say PASS we'll come back to you at the end of the round just in case there's anything that you'd like to share then.

STEP TWO: LEVEL ONE, LISTENING TO YOURSELF

Assign a Timekeeper

ASSIGNMENT

1. ALL: Open the Notes App in your phone
2. TIME KEEPER: Set a timer for 60 seconds
3. ALL: Word vomit about your feelings for the allotted time. What images, words, characters, or themes from the show are sticking with you? What's still ringing in your ears or can you picture in your mind's eye? Try to avoid full phrases—just words, images, or sounds (silence is okay too). If silence is an active choice, we encourage those in white bodies to question what it means to choose silence in a conversation like this.
4. ALL: When the time is up, share your musings with the group

GROUP DISCUSSION

- If white people's fantasies are tomorrow's legislation, how can we pivot from fantasies that uphold white supremacy and towards new values of equity, justice and liberation? There is a world where _____ is happening around me.
- What does it mean for a Black life to matter in US society?
- What does accommodation (the ways in which the world moves or readjusts to maintain social order, or doesn't move in order to block the acknowledgment of inequities)

look like in a world made for white people?

- There were many conversations and social interactions our narrator had with white people during the play. Can you identify any conversations that left room for hope and others that reinforced despair and the status quo? How did they do that?
- How does the use of the poetic make this play more accessible? More digestible?
- Can we all agree that we live in the same reality, if no, why? What are the different realities we exist in the US?
- “Everybody’s asking me how do I feel? I don’t know how to feel.”—Darnella Frazier (witness and young teenager who witnessed and taped the murder of George Floyd) In this play, there is a lot of discussion on the social negotiations Black people must make in white spaces, in the midst of constant communal harm, what are the implications of constantly asking someone to dispel the discomfort they cause?
- “Maybe you’re thinking, that’s just politics. They’re just politicians. Maybe you think ordinary white men and women who live among us actually live among us. I myself have said “ideally, the structure is not the people.” But I could imagine that a critique of the structure must feel like a critique of the person. That, no doubt, must be when things get tricky.” With that in mind, how do we feel this play identifies “whiteness” as a structure we live within socially? And who has the choice about how they engage with it or control over how it impacts them?
- Does anyone feel they understand the difference between whiteness as a structural entity and white people?
- How has whiteness impacted you?
- What does it mean for Black women to be spoken for by another Black woman?
- If this is a “space full of imaginative possibilities,” can you identify a time where you have either experienced or perpetuated a microaggression or macroaggression? Can you dream of how, if faced with that again, you’d respond differently? Take a second and rescript.
- The narrator talks about uncovering and connecting with our deepest self. What is your deepest self? How do you change how you feel at the root and what you do going forward?

STEP THREE: LEVEL TWO, FOCUSED LISTENING TO OTHERS

As a group, choose a category of prompts to engage with.

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- Based on what you gathered during the show, where do the characters fall on the levels of listening? Where do you fall on the levels of listening in your personal relationships?
- What could a character changing their level of listening have done to change the circumstances that arose in the play? How have you tuned into different levels of listening in your life?

OR PROCESS YOUR RESPONSES:

- What characters or what scenarios felt really familiar or realistic to you?
- What characters or what scenarios felt unfamiliar to you, what was new to you that felt beyond your known reality?
- Do you see yourself being reflected enough in this piece to change yourself?
- What roles stuck with you? What specific moments stuck with you?

CLOSING: BREATHE INTO THE STICKY PARTS

GRATITUDE

We invite you to pay gratitude to those around you who participated. Maybe take this time to say thank you for your willingness to participate or whatever comes naturally to you at this moment. We are huge proponents of intentionally closing off the space. This play stirs up a lot of energy and discussing it can lead to mixed emotions and feelings.

BREATH WORK

Let’s take an opportunity to recenter ourselves and intentionally close this conversation

1. Breathing and centering exercises:
2. Get comfortable and think about what makes you/makes you comfortable.
3. Breathe in everything that has happened to you today, good, bad, stressful, calming. Hold and then clear.
4. Breath in 10, breathe out 10.
5. One more breath, intention you want to keep today and breathe into that intention. Count to 10. Breathe out.
6. Breathe in every positive fruit bearing thought, believe that thought is shared with everyone in the room. Count to 10. Breathe out 10

RESOURCES

ESSAYS & ARTICLES

Click the titles below to read more.

Judith Butler and George Yancy, "[What's Wrong With 'All Lives Matter'?](#)" *The New York Times*, January 12, 2015.

Robin DiAngelo, "[Why It's So Hard To Talk To White People About Racism](#)" *Huffington Post*, April 13, 2015.

Cheryl Harris, "[Whiteness As Property](#)," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1709 – 91.

Saidiya Hartman, "[Venus In Two Acts](#)," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1 – 14.

Peggy MacIntosh, "[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible](#)" *Peace and Freedom Magazine* (July / August 1989): 10-12.

Elizabeth Martinez, "[What Is White Supremacy?](#)" Published by Catalyst Project.

Fred Moten, "[Blackness and Nothingness \(Mysticism in The Flesh\)](#)" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 737 – 80.

Emma Okoro, "[BLACKNESS AND BEAUTY. WE NEED A RADICAL NEW PARADIGM FOR THINKING ABOUT BLACKNESS THAT RECOGNISES BEAUTY'S POTENTIAL TO SAVE LIVES](#)," *Aeon*, October 10, 2019.

Claudia Rankine, "[I Wanted to Know What White Men Thought About Their Privilege. So I Asked.](#)" *The New York Times*, July 17, 2019.

Thomas Rodger, "[The History of White People](#)": What It Means To Be White," *Salon*, March 23, 2010.

Ed Simon, "[How 'White People' Were Invented By A Playwright In 1613](#)," *Aeon*, September 12, 2017.

Hortense Spillers, "[Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book](#)," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 64 – 81.

ORGANIZATIONS

Allies for Racial Equity is an antiracist movement of white Unitarian Universalists working to understand whiteness and privilege, unlearn and challenge white supremacy, and confront racism in ways that are accountable to communities of color.

Catalyst Project is a center for political education and movement building committed to anti-racist work with mostly white sections of left / radical social movements.

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB) is a national and international collective of anti-racist, multi-cultural community organizers and educators dedicated to building an effective movement for social transformation.

Training for Change, White People Confronting Racism Workshop is for white people who want to challenge the racism around them—and in their own heads and hearts—and who are searching for a way to strengthen their work for racial justice.

Race Forward is a nonprofit organization that catalyzes movement building for racial justice. In partnership with communities, organizations, and sectors, we build strategies to advance racial justice in our policies, institutions, and culture.

The Racial Imaginary Institute is a collaborative organization committed to the activation of interdisciplinary work and a democratized exploration of race in our lives.

Interaction Institute For Social Change works with people and systems to build collaborative capacity in individuals, organizations, and networks working for social justice and racial equity.

Showing up For Racial Justice (SURJ) is a national network of groups and individuals working to undermine white supremacy and to work toward racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability.