

**Part#2: Workshop on homophobia, using Theatre of the Oppressed**

**Finding ways to combat homophobia through:  
 “Forum Theatre, a collective rehearsal for reality” *Augusto Boal*  
*Theatre of the Oppressed: a focus on homophobia*  
 A 3 hour workshop for Secondary School**

<b>Date:</b> (of workshop)	<b>Location:</b> (school)	<b>Grade:</b> (or grades)	<b>Number of Students:</b> (will change group sizes)
<b>Requested focus for workshop:</b> teacher or counselor could make you aware of significant tension in terms of sexuality, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or class	<b>Length or workshop:</b> The workshop outline below would be ideal for a 2.5-3 hour workshop. It could be scaled down to 1.5 hrs or scaled up to 9 hrs (spread over 2 or 3 days)	<b>Period/time:</b> (of the day)	<b>Other:</b> (any other information collected from the school or organization that might be relevant)
<b>Teacher Materials:</b> 6 identity cards (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, straight), paper bag, coloured stickers or papers to form equal groups in the second half  <b>Space:</b> open and clear of desks and chairs		<b>Student Materials:</b> paper, pencils	
<p><b>Lesson Plan</b></p> <p><i>Note: this lesson plan is not recommended for an individual who does not have experience in forum theatre or drama for human development. It is absolutely vital for any facilitator of this kind of work to be constantly assessing the dynamic of the space created by the students. A facilitator must be confident in; stopping at any time to discuss issues that arise, addressing discriminatory language or behaviour in the moment it happens and adapting the workshop as needed to accommodate time, the needs of the students, change in mood or safety for all.</i></p> <p><b>Welcome (10mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-welcome all students into the space and have them form a circle sitting down</li> <li>-introduce yourself and welcome students to a workshop in the Theatre of the Oppressed</li> <li>-give a brief description on Theatre of the Oppressed           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* form of theatre founded by Augusto Boal who was Brazilian director and political activist</li> <li>* it was designed to help people struggling for liberation to learn ways to fight oppression</li> <li>*stage the problem, discuss and reflect on the problem, explore solutions for the problem</li> <li>* the audience becomes part of the performance and self empowerment is learned</li> <li>* the techniques of Augustor Boal are used in over 70 countries, and even used at the governmental level ( legislative theatre)</li> </ul> </li> <li>-have the students go around the circle and give their name and one word that describes how they are</li> </ul>			

feeling in the moment (one word)

-draw up a quick community agreement (what are going to be the rules and expectations of everyone's participation in the workshop)

-write the agreement on the board

### **Opening activity – You and me tell all (10-30 min, its up to facilitator)**

-have the students get up on their feet and move about the room, filling the entire space

-ask them to

a) shake hands with someone wearing the same colour as them

b) touch the foot of someone whose birthday is close to theirs

c) find someone who has the same (or close) number of siblings

d) stand back to back with someone who enjoys the same sport or art as you

-make sure everyone has found someone to stand back to back with

-walk around the space, in between the pairs and ask pairs to share with the group what their sport or art is that they had in common

-ask partners to find a spot in the room and sit down together

-ask the students what they think constitutes good listening skills and write their ideas on the board

- Ask everyone to think of a memory (that they are willing to share) of when they felt most accepted (other options are: when they felt really important, when their life changed, funniest moment, most memorable moment, when they received their most prized possession etc.)

-Then tell partners that they are to share their memories, in as much detail as they can with their partner. Each partner will get about 1-3min to tell their story before facilitator will ask them to switch.

- explain to the group that you are going to ask for a volunteer to share a story in front of the group, but that when they volunteer, the facilitator will tell them if they are going to tell their own story or their partners story

-have as many volunteers as time permits (or as many that want to) share their stories with the group

-have the group guess which story they are telling

-the exercise promotes attentive and supportive listening and builds a nice group dynamic

### **Setting the stage (20 mins)**

-ask each pair to find another pair to join (to form a group of 4) and grab a piece of paper and pencil

-write the word OPPRESSION on the board and ask groups to write down a definition that they can all agree on

-ask groups to share their definition

### Discussion questions:

How did you come up with this definition as a group?

As a group do you feel satisfied with your definition?

-Pose the question: Who experiences oppression?

-ask groups to again agree on an answer and write it down

-have the groups share with each other

### Discussion questions:

How many groups would now want to add or take away something from your answer? Why?  
 What do you think are the main causes of oppression?

-review and reinforce that oppression is an umbrella term and that there are many social identities that experience oppression and many ways to experience oppression or be an oppressor  
 -tell the students that an oppressor is someone who has power over someone and they are going to explore this power now silently and physically....

-have all of the students sit in a large circle, that everyone is part of  
 -tell the students that they are going to create a tableaux of power ( tableaux is a frozen picture)  
 -have one student come into the middle and take a position ( ask them not to do anything, imply anything, just take a neutral position with their body)  
 -ask another student to come into the circle and take another position that is more powerful than the first position ( ask students in the tableaux to maintain their positions silently)  
 -continue to ask students to enter the tableaux and take a higher position of power  
 -complete the tableaux by asking students to first hold the final picture and then slowly dissolve out of the picture

#### Discussion Questions:

What different techniques did we see used to take power?  
 How did it feel to be one of the first parts of the tableaux?

#### **Image Theatre – Introducing Homophobia (30-40mins)**

##### Pose questions for brief discussion:

1. What is homophobia?
2. Who is affected by homophobia? (be sure to discuss how straight students perceived to be gay are affected)
3. What are some effects of homophobia?

-write LGBTQ on the board

-ask if the students could explain what each letter stands for

-divide students into 6 groups and hand out identity cards, so that each group has one card  
 (1.lesbian 2.gay 3.bisexual 4.transgendered 5.questioning 6. straight)  
 -let the students know that they are going to be partaking in the first form of the Theatre of the Oppressed, “Image Theatre”. They are to think of a situation in which a student with the identity of the card their group has been given, might feel oppressed and/or experience oppression. The group is to decide on a situation and create a still image or ‘picture’ of the oppression occurring. Every student must be involved in the image in some way. Remind them that more then one person may be oppressed, more then one person may be the oppressor and to keep in mind that bystanders can be involved as well.  
 -circulate as the groups discuss and create their image

-have each group present their image, explain to the group that they are to hold their image until instructed to do otherwise

-as the group is holding their image, ask the rest of the students these questions:

1. What do we see?
2. Who is being oppressed and how?
3. Who is acting as the oppressor? How? Why?
  
4. How are we seeing power represented in this image?
5. How do you think it would feel to be that person (or people) being oppressed?

- then ask if anyone sitting in the audience can think of a way to give the oppressed more power or change the situation

-have that student go up to the image and change the image (acting as a sculptor) into what they would like to see happen. (remind the both the students who are part of the image and the sculptor to work in complete silence and let the change effect how they feel, as part of the image, internally)

-repeat for all of the groups (as time permits)

### **Forum Theatre – What does homophobia look like? (45-60 mins)**

-ask the group to return to the circle

*-could spend a few minutes reviewing the collective agreement or talking through any issues that may have arisen*

-tell the students that we are now looking for real life examples of oppression relating to homophobia

-ask students to think of a time when they have felt affected by homophobia, when a friend or family member they know has been affected, when someone in their school or community has been affected or (very last resort) when they have heard a story through others or the media about someone who was affected.

-ask them to write the situation down privately(the full incident,) with the pencils and paper provided, without including any names

-when they are finished they can fold up the situation and put it in the facilitators bag

### **BREAK**

-as students return from their break, hand each of them a coloured index card or tag of some kind. (The colours will determine their groups for the forum theatre projects and you will want groups of at least 3 to a maximum of 7)

-when the students return tell them that you have reviewed the situations to be sure that no personal information was revealed and that all of the situations were appropriate to be read aloud. Tell them the point of the exercise is not to try and figure out who wrote what, but to choose a scenario in which to dramatize and work with. The objective will be to investigate the oppression at work in the situation and work together to find new and different solutions.

-read aloud the situations to the students, give them short titles and write those titles on the board

-ask the students to find their group by colours

-ask each group to discuss which scenario they would be interested in dramatizing

-ask groups to put one of their names next to the situation on the board they would like to work with (sort out any doubling up, it is possible for more then one group to work on a situation as they might

present another lens from which to view the situation)

-give groups a time line in which to rehearse (suggested 5-10min)

-groups then present forum theatre style:

1. Group presents their dramatization, call 'scene' when finished (no audience clapping)
2. Groups presents a second time with the understanding that they are remain in role after
3. Facilitator asks the characters in the scene questions 'in role' (as their character). As the other students learn this technique or feel comfortable, it is possible for them to be part of this questioning.
4. Ask the students in audience if they can think of something different the person or people being oppressed could do in the situation to gain power or change the situation. DO NOT let them tell you, ask them to SHOW you by replacing the oppressed character(s) and replaying the scene as an improvisation. The rest of the group performing must adapt to having a new performer, but react to any new actions IN character.
5. Ask several students to try changing the situation for the better by stepping in the oppressed role.
6. Debrief the performers and close up with a discussion on the situation with the class

-repeat forum with some or all of the groups

### **Reflection**

-have students return to the circle

-open the space to comments, reactions, ideas, impression that they may have

-ask them to turn to the person next to them and briefly tell them what they have learned about homophobia

-talk about oppression as something we all experience, ask them to raise their hands if they have ever felt the affects of being oppressed by a person, an organization, a system?

-ask the students to go around the circle and say one word to describe how they are feeling now

### Optional

*-hand out safe space posters, stickers*

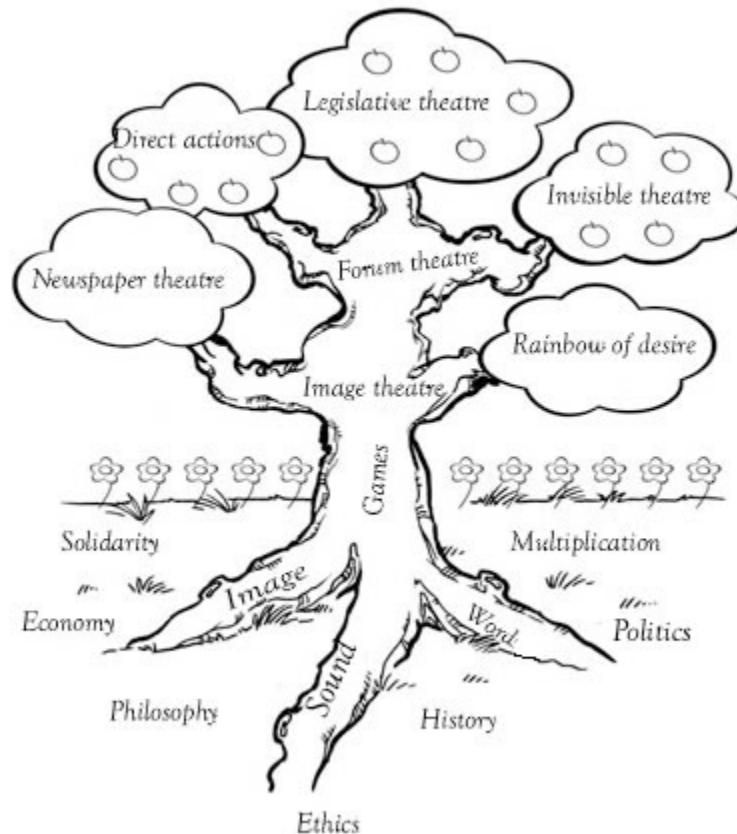
*-have resources on LGBTQ issues and creating a safe space in your school/organization*

*-have resources on Theatre of the Oppressed and how they could get involved in Toronto (Mixed Company)*

**Reflection:** as a facilitator, it is of great value to me to reflect on every workshop as the process of this kind of facilitation is a very hands on, in the moment, organic process.

### PART #3: Resources on Theatre of the Oppressed/Forum Theatre

#### **Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed**



(International Theatre of the Oppressed Organization, <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php>)

*“The act of transforming is transformatory. The spect-actor comes on stage and transforms the images that she sees and does not like - she transforms them into images she likes and desires, images of a just, convivial society and in the act of taking the stage, transforms herself into sculptor, musician, poet - in sum, entering the stage and showing her will in action, being the actor, being the protagonist, the spectator transforms herself into a citizen!”* Augusto Boal

**Theater of The Oppressed Laboratory.** Interactive Theatre workshop for Social change. The site provides basic information on Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed in the classroom and the basic techniques of Forum Theatre.

Email: [toplab@toplab.org](mailto:toplab@toplab.org), website: <http://www.toplab.org/>

**International Theatre of the Oppressed Organization.** Provides a global perspective on Theatre of the Oppressed organizations across the world; Theatre, news, libraries, forums, information on current projects and resources such as flyers, books and videos. <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php>

**Mixed Company** ( Toronto based Forum Theatre Company). Mixed Company is a not for profit theatrical company, with Simon Malbogot as Art Director, that specializes in "Forum Theatre" techniques. We offer workshops and services to corporations, community organizations and educational institutions as well as individuals and groups. Mixed Company Theatre has been a centre of T.O. since 1991 and has produced over 300 forum shows and the 8th Int.festival of T.O. called Ripple Effect.  
E-mail: [mixedco@echo-on.net](mailto:mixedco@echo-on.net) website: <http://www.mixedcompanytheatre.com/>

**Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed.** A website dedicated to an annual conference.  
<http://www.ptoweb.org>

### **Recommended books for teachers to explore the Theatre of the Oppressed**

**Boal, Augusto**  
Games for Actors and Non-Actors  
*London: Routledge (1992)*

**Boal, Augusto**  
The Rainbow of Desire  
*London: Routledge (1995)*

**Boal, Augusto**  
Legislative Theatre  
*London: Routledge (1998)*

**Boal, Augusto**  
Theatre of the Oppressed  
*London: Pluto (1979)*

### **Safe Schools Coalition**

#### **Resources for Drama Teachers**

**"Closets are for Clothes" (DVD and/or Performance script)** by: Gordon Hensley, for Gay-straight alliances and Theatre troupes. Synopsis: A compilation of true stories about coming out. The act of "coming out" has the power to transform every aspect of life: family, friendships, career, sexuality, spirituality. These accounts -- funny, heart-wrenching, and exhilarating -- encompass a wide breadth of backgrounds and experiences. From a teenager facing suicide to a father who must come out to his children at the risk of losing them -- from the cautious clergy to the raucous liberated femme -- each person tells of forging a unique path toward the difficult but emancipating recognition of finally being themselves. DVD: \$20 each; Performance: Scripts: \$7 each; Royalty: \$50/show. Contact: Gordon Hensley, [gordon@gordonhensley.com](mailto:gordon@gordonhensley.com)

***Dramatic Changes: Talking About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity with High School Students Through Drama*** by Paula Ressler, 2002. ISBN: 0325004145. "Teachers need no drama background or extensive knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity to use this book. Each chapter provides an introduction to the type of drama presented-from simple role plays through complex and extended pieces-along with educational objectives, rationales, resources, and materials needed." NH: Heinemann Publishing. \$21.00

**YouthAware Educational Theatre:** a program of the New Conservatory Theatre Center in San Francisco, CA - plays for young people that entertain, illuminate social issues, inspire and encourage healthier life choices. Offered at NCTC and on tour to Northern California schools and communities throughout the school year. For more information including producing a YouthAware theatre programs outside YouthAware's Northern California service area, contact Sara Staley, YouthAware Program Director at email: [sara@nctcsf.org](mailto:sara@nctcsf.org); phone: (415) 861-4914; website: <http://www.nctcsf.org/YouthAware.html>

## Resources for Journalism & Media Teachers

**National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association educators' toolbox:**

[http://www.nlgja.org/education/educators\\_toolbox.html](http://www.nlgja.org/education/educators_toolbox.html)

**Urban Youth: Writing for Change** (from Tolerance.org):

<http://www.tolerance.org/teens/stories/article.jsp?p=0&ar=45>

**High School and College Press Freedom Awards:** <http://www.splc.org/csaward.asp>

**Roy Aarons: An Appreciation** (the story of an openly gay journalist who championed diversity in the press): [http://209.11.49.220/eandp/search/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1000728233](http://209.11.49.220/eandp/search/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000728233)