

SOME notes were taken during the discussions:

- Suggestions from attendees on examples of what can be said when a microaggression is heard:
  - “Excuse me, what?”
  - “New choice”
  - “Ouch”
    - One caution: Sometimes, groups use that mechanism to annoy another person or draw them out
    - For a zoom session, enable the comments and allow the students to be actively listening to peers, to engage in conversation about “why” the word ouch was used.
    - Ask the student who made the microaggression: “Can you explain to me why you made that choice?” so it appears less as someone is in trouble
      - If they can make a valid reason/argument as to why this choice was made, it can help temper things
    - Frontloading everything for the students and ourselves will help minimize microaggressions. We need to be able to make those choices, and anticipate what games will work with each group. Make the choices that still allow for creativity for kids
    - “Excuse me, what?” would be used within scenes as a student response to each other to indicate a trigger.
  - Be cautious of the lines that we walk with a cancelled culture. There’s a lot of responses as teachers where we need to impulsively determine something quickly. We provide the opportunity to call in, not call out. Be aware of how important the space is to open the dialogue. It’s all a journey, lots of learning across ages that needs to happen right now
    - Recognize what is informing narrative structure right now. Our history is limited to theater students.. We are not embracing the scope of what students have outside of that.
  - Creating a safe place, or “brave place”. Remove the human aspect of things, and approach improv games through animals for younger students K-2, so there’s no racial connotations. Move them through the duration of the program and apply what they’ve learned how to apply those characteristics to humans.
    - Has been helpful limiting stereotypes and microaggression
  - Importance of assuming the positive with the kid who makes the microaggression
    - “I know you’re not trying to be offensive, but when you said this...”
      - You don’t want to call the kid out and make them feel embarrassed. This has been helpful
  - Think about language to use to talk about the subject as objectively as possible first. Let’s look at what the character does here, let’s look at the scenario. How do we look at this from the lens of the story first?
- We as theater artists are life teachers, and it’s a way to reach kids where they are at to help them explore the world through a different set of eyes. Self education as an artist ourselves will help better productivity in your own classroom

- Who am i to say what is right and wrong when teaching black and brown students? Feedback is important with younger students. It has to be a discussion with the kids. “Pause. Something good is happening here. How does this make us feel?” So it comes from a place of safety. “I’m feeling uncomfortable and i’m not sure why, how do you feel?” our job is to make them feel confident.
  - And the improv mindset is all about saying YES to others' realities and owning our mistakes
  - Acknowledge the realities of participants
- Take a moment to practice and think about the language we use with each other and our students. It starts from us.
- The responsibility of artists. Being onstage is powerful and a privilege, and we have to go about our actions responsibly.
- To come up with characters with students, come up with character decks with students so we can have that conversation about the parameters we are looking for. This prevents extreme conversations because the parameters are already sent
  - Front Load -- combining a conversation about expectations with being creatively generative.
  - By thinking about frontloading, it can help us think about these teachable moments.
  - it shows that expectations about respect is built into/key to the success of the improv rather than a separate thing
    - And that can give students ownership over their work
- What triggers us doesn’t necessarily trigger kids
  - Unfortunately, this is a time and an opportunity for us to challenge the system, not the child.
- Racism is learned and socialized so early. I recall racist and anti-black thoughts I had in elementary school. As an educator, it’s my responsibility to engage with those ideas as young people develop. Fourth graders will become policymakers
- “I’m an improv performer as well, and last fall I made a HUGE blunder during a performance on a prominent Chicago stage. I shared it with my students the next day in class, while I was still processing what I had inadvertently said onstage. I wanted them to see me vulnerable, and still in a process of growing as well.”
  - The improv mindset is all about saying YES to others' realities and owning our mistakes. So great to model that.
  - We have the responsibility of artists. Being onstage is powerful and a privilege, and we have to go about our actions responsibly.
- We are quite susceptible right now as educators and have been conditioned to make assumptions about choices and characters brought into the space.
  - Those “stereotypes” are also rooted in White/Euro-centric narratives. Then we are saying let’s start from that as our foundation. We need to disrupt that notion that this is the “foundation.”
    - This is one of the reasons teaching the history of satire to older students can be helpful — it gives students a greater perspective
- Guessing games like The Dating Game and Party Quirks, to be quite problematic and challenging, unless the improviser is highly skilled and adept at character creation

- For older students, discuss archetype vs stereotype
- Using guidelines from day one can be helpful and setting class rules
  - Using the word “Ensemble” and create Ensemble rules/guidelines
    - It shows that expectations about respect is built into/key to the success of the improv rather than a separate thing
    - And that can give students ownership over their work
- It would be interesting if we all thought of one example of a microaggression we have heard or experienced in our classes and a possible response that they thought would be effective... Is there somewhere we could gather these examples to prompt further thinking in our work?