

# ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE



Accountability Protocol

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**“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”**

- Angela Davis, (from a lecture delivered at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale on 02/13/14)

**Purpose:** In a racist and white supremacist society, perpetuating racism is the norm. To practice anti-racism, we have to be open to receiving and responding to feedback on issues of race. We seek to build a feedback-rich culture among Performing Arts Workshop’s artistic and administrative staff. Our goal is to use feedback to interrupt racism and support the well-being of our Black students and students of color.

The purpose of this document is to establish a standard protocol for receiving, applying, and giving feedback on issues of race, and to create transparency around that protocol. This is a living document, and is subject to change. The desired outcome of the protocol is to repair harm done to Black students and staff (administrative and artistic) and students and staff (administrative and artistic) of color, while also providing additional support and mentorship for artists that will help them grow their teaching practice. Our expectation is that every Workshop staff member will participate in this protocol at some point during their time here.

Our hope is that successful engagement with the protocol can be a resource for artists to better support their Black students and students of color. We expect all staff (administrative and artistic) to have a strong enough working foundation with anti-racist work in order to engage with the protocol successfully. We do not have the capacity to support individual growth in every situation, and are only able to offer opportunities for growth to those who have already demonstrated their understanding of and commitment to anti-racism. Failure to engage actively and thoughtfully with this protocol may have serious consequences. A response plan will be determined by an Acting Co Executive Director or Program Manager, and may depend on: the nature and severity of the issues raised, the artist’s responsiveness and incorporation of feedback, and the staff’s overall performance, specifically regarding anti-racism. If the issue raised shows a pattern of repeated similar behaviors, that will affect the severity and urgency of the response plan. The response plan could include a “Performance Improvement Plan” (series of specific steps a staff member must take to remain employed at the Workshop), or in some cases an end to the staff’ member’s employment at the Workshop.

## **Overview of the protocol:**

*Please note: Our navigation through this protocol may not be perfectly linear. In other words, this means that we may not need to engage in every step for every issue, or we may not need to start at “Step 1” for each issue. For example, engagement with the protocol could look like moving through Steps 1-9 OR Steps 5-9 OR Step 1 followed by Step 5, then Step 7, then Step 9, etc.*

- **Step 1: Observation and Feedback** - Someone observes an incident with a staff member and wishes to provide feedback about the racism (or other discriminatory act or comment) witnessed.
- **Step 2: Verification of Facts** - The facts involved in the feedback are investigated and verified by an Acting Co Executive Director or other manager. If the feedback regards an Acting Co Executive Director or other manager, the feedback will be investigated by someone other than the person who the feedback is for (options include the Anti-Racism Committee, another supervisory staff, the Board, etc).
- **Step 3: Mentor or Managerial Staff Huddle** - Artist Mentors or managerial staff discuss the feedback and make a recommendation regarding course of action.
- **Step 4: Determination of Merit** - an Acting Co Executive Director or Manager determines whether the facts as established call for corrective action. The feedback will be investigated by someone other than the person who the feedback is for (options include the Anti-Racism Committee, another supervisory staff, the Board, etc).
- **Step 5: Feedback Shared with Staff Member** - The Artist Mentor or managerial staff shares the observer’s feedback with the staff member for their reflection. Artist Mentor or managerial staff will use [this document](#) to take notes and record next steps.
- **Step 6: Initial Meeting Between Staff and Manager** - The staff member and manager meet to discuss the feedback.
- **Step 7: Action Plan for Repair and Growth** - The staff member and manager design an action plan to address the feedback.
- **Step 8: Mentorship** - The staff member and manager implement the action plan (this might include: in-class observations, debrief meetings, research, lesson plan review, staff meetings, project collaborations, etc.)
- **Step 9: Reflection** - The staff member and manager meet to reflect on the process and discuss next steps.

## **The Protocol:**

### **Step 1: Observation and Feedback**

Someone observes an incident that raises issues around racism (or other discriminatory action/comment), and that person wishes to provide feedback. The observer contacts an Acting Co-Executive Director, another member of the Program Team, or Artist Mentor (whoever they feel most comfortable sharing with). In some cases, the observer may choose to share their feedback with the artist directly. The observer either writes down or makes an audio recording of their feedback. (The Voice Memo app can be used for recording. The Workshop has iPads loaded with the app for anyone who would like to use one for this purpose.) The goal of creating a record of the feedback is to be as clear as possible. The observer's feedback should not be judged based on storytelling or writing ability, but on its content.

You can [submit your feedback here](#).

**Step 2: Verification of Facts** - The facts involved in the feedback are investigated. This will involve talking with others present or involved in the feedback. If the feedback originates with Artist Mentors, or the Co-Executive Directors, no further investigation is required. If the feedback regards a Co-Executive Director, the Co-Executive Director will not be involved in the verification process. This step is to allow the Workshop to take responsibility for the actions it takes as a result of the feedback.

### **Step 3: Anti-Racism Committee Huddle**

The feedback is shared with the Anti-Racism Committee. They are invited to provide responses, which might include pairing the staff member with a manager or colleague (relative to the person's position and nature of the feedback).

**Step 4: Determination of Merit** - the Co-Executive Directors determine whether the facts as established call for corrective action. If the feedback involves the Co-Executive Directors, the Co-Executive Directors will not be involved in the determination of the need for corrective action.

### **Step 5: Feedback Shared with Staff Member**

The manager shares the observer's feedback (either written or recorded) via email with the artist. If the feedback is written, it will be shared in such a way that the staff member may add comments to the document itself (i.e. in "Suggesting Mode"). Performing Arts Workshop's goal is to provide written/recorded feedback in a timely manner (within 48 hours), but a delay does not invalidate the feedback.

### **Step 6: Initial Meeting Between Staff Member and Manager**

The manager schedules an initial meeting with the staff member, either in person or on the phone. During that meeting, the staff member will be invited to share their own recollection of the event, their perspective on the feedback, and their ideas for repair and growth.

### **Step 7: Action Plan for Repair and Growth**

The manager decides how to design an action plan for addressing the feedback: either the manager, the staff member, or the mentor and the staff member working together create the plan. This choice depends on the content of the initial meeting and the issues raised during the class in question. Special attention will be paid to immediate actions that the artist will take the next time they hold class with the same group of students. Whenever possible, the repair plan will include meeting the needs of the person harmed in alignment with our values and practices.

### **Step 8: Mentorship**

The staff member and manager implement the action plan. The specific structure of the mentorship will be determined by the action plan, and may include: in-class observations, in-person and/or phone meetings and debriefs, further reading/research, and providing lesson plans for review and revision.

Artists and Artist Mentors will be compensated for 2-4 hours to participate in this mentorship.

#### For example:

- Initial meeting - 1 hour
- Debrief of first in-class observation - 1 hour
- Debrief of second in-class observation - 30 minutes
- Reflection - 1 hour
- Total: 3.5 hours

### **Step 9: Reflection**

The manager and the staff member reflect on the progress made on the action plan. This reflection can be conducted in person or via phone, at the mentor's discretion. The reflection is not meant to be a resolution, but rather the beginning of a new cycle of inquiry (reflection and revision). If the process involves class support, the manager may choose to combine the reflection with their final class observation debrief, at their discretion.

#### Example Guiding Questions:

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- What adjustments would the artist make in the future?
- Is there more to be addressed?

If the lead mentor believes that the artist has failed to engage actively and thoughtfully with the protocol, they share their concerns with an Acting Co-Executive Director or Program Manager. They determine appropriate consequences. Consequences could include a "Performance

Improvement Plan” (series of specific steps an artist must take to remain employed at the Workshop), or in some cases an end to the artist’s employment at the Workshop.

### **Notes:**

#### **Who can give feedback?**

Helpful and productive feedback can come from anyone. Observations can be made by artists, partners, Board members, administrative staff, students, etc.

Performing Arts Workshop uses the Teaching Skills Assessment (TSA) to provide regular feedback from Artist Mentors to Teaching Artists twice per year. However, the TSA is not the only way Teaching Artists receive feedback on their practice. There may be a time where a staff member and/or visitor comes to an artist’s class for a non-evaluative observation (i.e. a funder wants to see the program). Although the purpose of this kind of observation is not to evaluate the artist’s teaching, feedback from participants and/or observers is possible at any time.

It’s also the job of managers and the Anti-Racist Committee to identify if the feedback given is unfair or inconsistent with our values. For example, if a site partner gives feedback to a teaching artist that is racist or otherwise misaligned with our frameworks, it is our role to counter that feedback.

#### **When is the right time to give feedback?**

Helpful and productive feedback can come at any time. We encourage feedback to be given as soon as possible so accountability, learning, and any necessary repair can begin quickly. When racism can be addressed in the moment, it can also minimize repair needed by opening up space to address it right then.

However, it is not always possible for feedback to be given in person, or to be given immediately. For example, the observer may not want to interrupt the artist’s class, or they may need time to think through and articulate their feedback. This delay does not invalidate their feedback.

#### **Providing Feedback to Artist Mentors, Program Staff, Program Director, Co-Executive Directors**

Artist Mentors, Program Team members, and Co-Executive Directors are not exempt from receiving feedback on issues of race. Instead, they should strive to uphold an anti-racist standard, modeling openness and responsiveness to feedback and sharing their experiences with the full artistic staff.

If a Teaching Artist or other member of the Workshop community wishes to provide feedback to one of these people, they may choose to share it directly. If that is not possible or they do not

feel comfortable doing so, they may share feedback with: any Artist Mentor serving on the Anti-Racism Committee, any member of the Program Team, or Acting Co-Executive Directors. Artist Mentors may also be paired with another mentor to go through this protocol.

### **Anonymity**

The observer may choose to remain anonymous. We have initiated this protocol as an anti-racist strategy to avoid the predominant pattern of Black people and people of color taking on the undue burden of educating people about anti-Blackness and racism. Though we encourage folks to engage directly with each other, the option of anonymity is especially available for people of color who do not consent to the additional labor these conversations and processes require.

### **Confidentiality**

Written feedback, action plans, and other information about a staff member's engagement with this protocol is confidential and may only be shared with the Anti-Racism Committee and managerial staff. However, we hope that Teaching Artists will choose to share their experience addressing feedback on issues of race as a teaching tool for the full artistic staff. Our goal is to create a culture where this is the norm.