

VETERANS THEATER TRAINING MANU

In performing Veterans Theater, our troop encounters resistances, such as the stigma of Being-homeless -veterans and the homeless 'Others' in the land of home-full. For example, the Critical Resistance of our methodology of theater, Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*. And how some people in some agencies, universities, governments, are resistant to Homeless Veterans, and Homeless doing Self-empowerment, and thereby moving out of dependence upon organizations giving, donating, charity.

Here are some introductory study guides to three kinds of Boal theater applied to leadership: [Image Theatre](#) | [Invisible Theatre](#) | [Forum Theatre](#)

Games of Power?

1. **IMAGE** 'Rainbow of your desire' Your cop in your head that limits your power in a situation? Your internalization of oppression?
2. **INVISIBLE** – Hegemonic power (power game whose rules are invisible to you)? Do not see your own complicity in keeping yourself or others disempowered and voiceless? E.g. Elites do not want voiceless to speak.
3. **FORUM** – Learning to play games of power. Trying out solutions to oppression in simulated games of power. Practice events where you try out a solution to your disempowerment. Game rules can be modified, but they still exist, to ensure that the players are involved in the same enterprise of power, and to facilitate the generation of serious and fruitful solution attempts (Boal, 1992: 18).

See Study guide on how to transform the Business College classroom – http://business.nmsu.edu/~dboje/388/leadership_theatre_event.htm

How to come up with Image, Invisible, and Forum in Veterans Theater plays?

Question 1: What are the types of Oppressions that you face at work, school, in shelters, in Veterans Administration, etc.?

Question 2: Pick one that you can share theatrically (Does not have to be most severe one; pick one you could share with one other person to work out the theatrics; You will *not* be asked to share the situation with theater group) – Describe it briefly: _____

Question Set # 3: Answer following *Theatrics of Oppression* questions about the Situation of Oppression you picked – (If any question is not clear [See short definitions](#) or [Septet Table](#) that explains how questions relate to Aristotle Poetics of Narrative & Kenneth Burke *Pentad*):

1. **WHO?** (the agents or characters – antagonist and protagonist involved in the oppression; who is involved) _____
2. **WHAT?** (act or behavior that was oppressive; what) _____

3. **WHEN/WHERE?** (scene or spectacle situation of the oppression; when and where) _____
4. **WHY?** (What was their motive and your motive or purpose in the scene of oppression; why are characters acting this way) _____

5. **HOW?** (By what means or agencies/instruments were you being oppressed; how) _____
6. **DIALOG?** (Write down a dialog/script between you and your oppressor that happened in one scene of oppression; they said and you said, etc.) Write out some key lines of dialogue here:

Rules of Veterans Theatre of the Oppressed

1. Always protect the safety of partners (& community). Do not let someone fall.
2. Always respect the body of other persons. Some people do not want to be touched. When posing characters, demonstrate (model) the pose you want and use sign language (hand & body gestures) to direct.
3. Every story has many interpretations. It is about your impression, not getting the protagonist to bare their soul (or story) to you.
4. Try to observe with an intellectual and critical eye, instead of taking the expected entertainment ride. Getting caught up in the laughter, and becoming emotionally empathetic to a character’s portrayal, will distract you from seeing the effects of systemic oppression. Are you being a mimetic passive spectator or an active intellectually-aware spectator?
5. If invited to be a character in someone’s theatre, you may not refuse to play.
6. Directors’ role is to start and stop action, facilitate reflection and discussion. As in real life, always obey your director. A director is also a joker, a provocateur, a disruptor to mimesis, to help spectators from taking the entertainment ride.
7. If anyone does not wish to abide by these rules, they may leave the theatre until the exercise is over.

Thank you.

SOME PRACTICE EXERCISES TO GET YOU READY FOR VETERANS THEATER SPECT-ACTOR ROLES

A spect-actor, is Boal’s combo-word that combines Being a spectator, and Being an actor, since in Veterans Theater, we invite spectators to become actors, on the stage.

First Exercise: Image Theatre – Story Sculpting Pairs Exercise – Pair off. No talking. No planning. Just improv (react). To begin, Director instructs Person A to shake hands with Person B. Both freeze into position. Person A unfreezes, walks around Person B, and imagines the next improv pose to make in relation to Person B; A strikes a pose in new relation to B. Next B is unfrozen, and walks around Person A; finds a new relationship that unfolds the improv-story. Continue until told to stop the story improv.

Discuss the exercise- how was it to tell a story without words? How was it to improvise the story? Were you able to improvise without planning ahead?

Second Exercise: Image Theatre – *Story Sculpting Trios Exercise* – Form trios. Repeat as above, but in trios. In this exercise two stay frozen, while the third unfreezes and forms a new relation.

Third Exercise: Image Theatre – *Veterans Administration*– Director picks spectators to be intake clerks, case managers, etc. lined up to process the in-coming veterans seeking an appointment. This is silent theatre (no talking by characters). The director says animate, and the robotic humans perform the routinized customer, worker, & manager routines.

Stop action – ask the spectators how realistic are the efficiency, , calculability, predictability, and control (e.g. role-scripting & surveillance).

Resume action – with characters incorporating the advice.

Discuss the Veterans Administration Theatricalization of the scene and its hegemony (defined as leadership or dominance by an administrative order i.e. the Department of Veterans Affairs, especially by one country or social group over others, such as the Home-full lording it over the Home-less).

Fourth Exercise: Invisibility Theatre – *Introduce some sexual harassment oppression* – This is still silent theatre. The VA clerks, case managers, security, nurses, social workers, psychologists, doctors begin to harass the veterans (male or female). This need not involve touching; looks, gestures, violations of personal space norms are enough.

Stop action – ask the spectators how the oppression could be made more realistic?

Resume action – with characters incorporating the advice.

Discuss the harassment observed backstage, and its relation to sustaining the advertised front stage spectacle.

Fifth Exercise: Forum Theatre – *Introduce games of oppression & power* – Verbal dialog is now permitted (optional), but the action and meaning is carried by the animated body images. The idea of a game of power is to set up a realistic oppression, and let spect-actors volunteer (or get selected) to try to resist and resolve the oppression. Several characters stay in their roles as oppressors (antagonists). Protagonists (volunteer spectators) after a bit of role modeling try out what they believe to be workable solution.

The game rule is, you cannot revise the oppressors or exit them from the game by firing them or replacing them with passive personalities. The point is to let the volunteer work on their skills of resistance. If an oppressor's strategic power behavior is defeated, then the audience can define a new game to play.

Director recruits characters to their script roles and gives command to animate the scene.

The oppression unfolds and plays out with a model giving one attempt at resistance. STOP is called by a spectator (or director) and a new person enters the game, to play to role of the victim of oppression. Usually, some spectator will suggest a way to play the game differently, and sees some solution possible.

Discuss – how real was that? What would make it more real? Are there other solutions to try?

Sixth Exercise – Adding Sound, and Talk to the Theater of Oppression

Think of an oppression and make the sound (rhythm) and the body-rhythm that represents for you the moment of oppression. Let the actors, without talking to each other, begin to speak the sound out loud, as they give body a rhythm (a gesture repeated, again, and again).

PART 1 of OPPRESSION RHYTHM GAME – Do this first with about ten volunteers. Have them do their own particular body and sound rhythm that conveys their moment of oppression, of being oppressed. Match up the similar sounds and body-rhythms in to pairs or small groups. Have actors discuss any similarities in their stories of oppression. Test afterwards to see if similar rhythms expressed any story similarities, in terms of the types of oppression.

PART 2 of OPPRESSION RHYTHM GAME ♦ Have entire theater troop express their sound and body rhythm all at once. Director, once everyone has their rhythm engaged, asks them to find one person with the most similar sound and body rhythm. They homogenize their differences into an integrated rhythm, they both agree upon (consensually-negotiated and without words of instruction). They sit and swap stories. Are their similarities?

QUESTIONS to Spect-actors? How was that? What did you observe about your similar images and similar story of oppression moments?

See [more Games of Power used to train in Theater of the Oppressed](#) or in [Business Consulting Seminar](#) in a leadership training class at a university somewhere in the Southwest.

In sum, Care comes from the Oppressed speaking back to Power, in acts of Self-Empowerment, then inviting spectators to make the theatricality more 'Realistic' and setting up the Games of Power on the stage, so that Power in the audience, can become spect-actors, by going onto the stage and taking a role, to bring about change.

You cannot give power to someone, you can delegate them doing tasks, but that is not empowerment. Empowerment is the most misused word in the English language. To Become empowered, means taking power, constituting power, being resistant to the oppressors, and that is the empowerment of Veterans Theater, to speak back to power, and then solve problems of the Situation with power and the oppressed, together (see boje & Rosile, 2001).

References

Boal, A. (2000). *Theater of the Oppressed*. Pluto Press.

Boje, David M. Boje; Rosile, GraceAnn. (2001). Where's the Power in Empowerment? Answers from Follett and Clegg, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, issue on Historical Perspectives of Workplace Empowerment. March, 2001, Vol. 37(1): 90-117.*http://business.nmsu.edu/~dboje/papers/CleggFollett4_index.html