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Theatre of the Oppressed A Manual for Educators

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Theatre of the Oppressed
A Manual for Educators

Masters Project

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(University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	5
An Introduction to the Manual.....	6
Theatre of the Oppressed -a brief introduction	8
Why a Manual on Theatre of the Oppressed?	11
Who is this Manual meant for?	12
Assumptions about the workshop/class sessions :	13
A List of Things To Do Before You Start.....	14
A List of Things To Do After You Start / During the Sessions	15
Session 1.....	19
Painting yourself into the picture.....	19
Warm-up Activity	20
Activity Name- Look what I've got!	20
Main Activity - Columbian Hypnosis	21
Debrief Questions:.....	22
Closure Activity – Buzz.....	23
Session 2.....	24
Warm-up Activity.- Check In	24
Main Activity – Touching the Earth	24
Debrief Questions:.....	25
Main Activity – Listen to body, experience movement	25
Closure Activity	27
Session 3.....	27
Warm Up Activity	27
Main Activity – Fill the Space	28
Main Activity – Slow Tag	29
Debrief Questions:.....	30
Closure Activity.....	30
Session 4.....	31
Warm up – Name with sound.....	31
Main Activity – Person-person Quebec style	31
Main Activity - Adding sound	32
Debrief Questions:.....	32
Main Activity - Complete the Picture/Image.....	33
Closure Activity.....	34
Session 5	35
Warm Up Activity.....	35
Main Activity – Pair Sculpt and Group Sculpt	35
Debrief Questions:.....	36
Main Activity – Group Sculpt.....	37
Debrief Questions:.....	38
Main Activity – Self Sculpt with sound and motion	38
Debrief Questions:.....	40
Closure Activity.....	40
Session 6	41
Warm Up Activity.....	41
Main Activity – Noises	41

Main Activity- Blind Car.....	41
Debrief Questions:.....	42
Main Activity – Group Sculpt.....	42
Debrief Questions:.....	43
Closure Activity.....	43
Session 7.....	44
Warm Up Activity.....	44
Main Activity – Group images.....	44
Main Activity: Image in Transition.....	46
Debrief Questions:.....	47
Closure Activity	48
Session 8.....	49
Warm Up Activity.....	49
Main Activity -Machine	49
Main Activity : The Living Newspaper.....	50
Closure Activity	52
Session 9.....	53
Warm Up Activity.....	53
Main Activity -Forum theatre 1a.....	53
Main Activity -Forum theatre 1b.....	54
Closure Activity	56
Session 10.....	57
Warm Up Activity- Check In.....	57
Main Activity – Acting Games.....	57
Main Activity -Forum theatre 2	58
Debrief Questions:.....	58
Closure Activity.....	58
Final Performance Day.....	59
Warm up Activity.....	59
Main Activity - Performance	59
Closure Activity	59
Way forward – How to keep the practice alive.....	60
Invisible theatre – a brief introduction and ethical issues	61
Annexure 1 – Warm Up Activities.....	62
Amoeba Tag.....	62
Lines of four	62
Going within.....	62
Check in.....	63
Annexure 2 – Closure Activities.....	64
The Magic Box	64
Buzz.....	64
Check in	65
Pass the gift.....	65
Annexure 3- Useful Resources.....	66
Books	66
Articles.....	66
Websites.....	67
References.....	68

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This Manual would not have been possible without the help and support of my Theatre of the Oppressed colleagues from Hampshire College, Massachusetts, USA.

As a team, they helped me understand the finer points of Theatre of the Oppressed. In January 2010, we attended a workshop together. We talked, we acted, we played and finally we performed pieces of *invisible theatre* and *forum theatre*. For me, that opened the doors to a much deeper reflection of what Theatre of the Oppressed is and how it may be used.

Finally, a special thanks to Natalie Sowell, a wonderful teacher and guide who encouraged me to write this Manual.

An Introduction to the Manual

Promoting social equity and justice, I think, are not just important but *essential* qualities in a good educator. My experience as a graduate student at University of Massachusetts helped me understand and practice different ways in which this could be done. For instance, I learnt how I could promote social justice through changes in curriculum, co-operative learning, inter-group dialogues or multicultural education.

However, my search was for *a method that did not require literacy as a pre-requisite* and that *went beyond mere conversations about social justice*. One of the key elements of the power structures which lead to oppression, I felt, was the ability to read and write. Hence, fighting oppression with a tool which required proficiency in reading and writing, to me, was still buying into the oppression. Secondly, although engaging in dialogues about ethnic or racial differences was crucial, I felt it needed a more action-oriented element to complement it.

What could this method be?

It had to transcend the barriers of literacy and also have a strong action component. As I reflected upon my experience in India, there was one art form which seemed to have both these qualities. **Theatre**.

I had seen it performed across villages and cities alike in India. It had a universal appeal. Although, most of what I had seen seemed to serve a primarily entertainment purpose, there were a few plays which highlighted oppression. Plays like "Ismat Aapa ke Naam" [In the honor of Ismat] dealt with issues like society's reaction to homosexuality. Others like "Zahareeli Hawa"[Poisonous Air] chronicled the Bhopal gas tragedy. In all these plays, though, the audience was a silent spectator and the purpose was to inform.

Hence, when I came across a form of theatre which could lead to social equity by involving the audience actively, I wanted to learn it, to master it. It was a form of theatre attributed to the noted Brazilian activist Augusto Boal and was appropriately called the "Theatre of the Oppressed" (TO).

So, in January 2010, I spent almost a month in intense workshops with other participants and a teacher who had worked with Augusto Boal himself! It was a powerful experience of doing theatre and I searched for ways in which I could bring it to schools. I looked for books, articles,

videos, podcasts - anything that could send to my colleagues and educators.

But I soon realized that I had been fortunate in finding a workshop on TO. It was the only way to learn this unique and intense form of theatre. I could find TO activities and theatre games but I could not find anything on how one could proceed with these games and activities. *A step-by-step approach to doing Theatre of the Oppressed was simply not available .*

It was then that the idea of writing a Manual on Theatre of the Oppressed took shape. As I thought more about it and talked to my colleagues in theatre, I felt that a manual that could serve as a “how-to” guide for those who would like to bring TO into a classroom/workshop environment was much needed. My colleagues encouraged me on this endeavor and I am deeply grateful for all their comments and help which went towards making this manual a reality.

Theatre of the Oppressed -a brief introduction

It is very difficult to describe and explain Theatre of the Oppressed in words. Perhaps, the best way to understand this form of theatre is to perform it. However, I provide here a brief introduction using an example. As I mentioned earlier, this form of theatre is credited to the Brazilian activist Augusto Boal. He was influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. He wanted to create a form of theatre where the people becomes active and they **explore, show, analyze and transform** the reality in which they are living.

In his acclaimed book, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal (1979) lays down his philosophy behind the form of theatre. He argues against the Aristotelian coercive means of oppression by dividing theatre into the aristocrats (the protagonists on the stage) and the masses (the chorus). Boal refers to how the bourgeoisie then gave these actors exceptional heroic values making them the new aristocrats and widening the gap between them and the other people. This was followed by Brecht's form of theatre which re-emphasized the character on the stage not as a subject but as **an object of the social forces** acting on him. Hence, in Boal's view, TO completes the cycle by breaking the barrier between the audience and the actors.

The book also talks about Newspaper Theatre and how it emerged as a way to represent local problems to the audiences; it describes the experiments in Forum Theatre (an example is given below) and Invisible Theatre (where theatre is performed in public places without the knowledge of the audience).

So how do we “do” TO? How can we use it to fight oppression? Let us take an example for Forum Theatre in a school setting :

Imagine a grade 5 classroom. The new teacher asks the student to take out their maths textbooks. The students open their bags and take out the textbook. C (a student) cannot find his textbook and asks the student sitting on his right to share it with him. He refuses to do so. The student on C's left also says no.

The teacher's attention is drawn to that section of the classroom.

“Hey, you..... fat boy..what happened?”, he asks.

The whole class giggles. C weighs more than most students of his age.

C is embarrassed. He fumbles with the pencil on his desk and mumbles something.

“We don't have whole day...what happened?”, shouts the teacher.

“Sir, he is always like this...he always forgets..”, say some of the students in a chorus. One can also hear words like “fatso” and “dumbo”. Most students are laughing now.

The teacher just stares at C, waiting for a response.

C begins to cry and rushes out of the room.

There are multiple oppressions in this short fictional piece. Who/What is to blame? How can C learn to deal with these hurtful remarks? Or perhaps, is the onus on him to manage this situation? Are there other students who understand his plight? How could the whole school community reflect upon what happened and find ways in which they could deal with such kind of oppressions?

*So, a TO facilitator could work with the students to dramatize the short scenario above. This play would last between 5 and 10 minutes. It is important that the idea and the issue remain specific to the school and the facilitator shapes the “how” of performance, but **not** the “what”. At a given time, the school community is asked to attend this performance. This short play would show how C ends up suffering the injustice. The audience usually feels uncomfortable because the play ends on a painful note.*

At the end of this first performance, the facilitator (also called as the Joker) would turn to the audience and mention that they would perform the play again but this time, any member of the audience can stop the play at any moment if they have a way to stop this injustice. The Joker encourages the audience to shout “Stop” when they think they have a solution and the actors would try their strategy.

The students start the performance again. Since the problem is something that everyone can relate to and understand, it is usually a matter of time before someone shouts “Stop”. This person is then encouraged by the joker to describe their strategy. The person can ask a specific actor (say, the person playing the teacher or the student sitting next to C or C himself) to change his lines and say or do something different this time or they can step on the stage and be that actor.

The fourth wall is broken and the audience becomes a “spect-actor”! Each strategy is played out till the school community feels that they have an actionable solution. Even if no actionable solution is reached, the play has provoked the audience to reflect that it is they who would have to act and change status quo.

Forum Theatre, as one might observe, requires not just strong facilitation (Jokering) skills but

also the actors' ability and experience to improvise based on what the audience requests them to do.

As the example illustrates, TO is a form of theatre which deals with specific local problems (sexual harassment, domestic violence or physical punishment at schools). It is inspired by **local issues** and proposes an approach where the **people who face these local issues are the ones who try to find ways to resolve them.**

There are other forms of TO : Image Theatre (theatre with minimal dependence on spoken language) and Legislative Theatre (theatre focused on political activity).

Let me end this short introduction using the words of Augusto Boal:

"I believe that all the truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theater so that the people themselves may utilize them. The theater is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it."(Boal, 1993)

Please note that this Manual is not meant to explain in detail the theoretical underpinnings of TO (Why and What kind of TO approaches). Rather, the purpose is to present a "how-to" approach to doing TO and therefore it serves as a companion to the existing literature on TO. A list of resources (books, websites and article) on different forms of TO and their theoretical rationale has been provided in Annexure 3.

Why a Manual on Theatre of the Oppressed?

Although I briefly explained my rationale in the introduction, I think it would be useful to provide a more detailed account of the gaps that I faced during my learning of Theatre of the Oppressed. As the intense workshop on TO that I had attended drew to a close, there were still a few issues that troubled me:

1. It was a very powerful approach but I really did not know **where to begin** if I had to explain it to educators.
2. Boal and other noted authors have described many games and methods which might be used to build the “arsenal” of TO. However, I did not find any book, article or manual which would help me structure the TO experience for participants. The questions before me were :
 - 2.1. Which games or activities could be used effectively in an education context?
 - a) When should they be used? Which activity would come earlier, which one later?
 - b) What to be mindful of when facilitating these games? How long should be a session? How much space is needed? What kind of space would be required? What kind of materials could be needed?
 - c) How to debrief these games? What to ask? How to engage in inquiry with the participants?
 - d) How to know if the team is making progress? How to encourage self-reflection and talk about it?
 - e) How to have a structure which allows the participants to feel safe and yet challenged?
3. During my own training to be a TO teacher, I also felt that there could be **ethical issues** with Invisible Theatre (a form of TO). I wanted to highlight them.

I draw upon my own experience as a trainee in Boal's methods of different kinds of theatre and as a performer in Invisible and Forum theatre to answer these questions in this Manual.

Who is this Manual meant for?

Although it is not necessary to be a theatre artist/ activist to use this manual, there are two pre-requisites:

1. The user must be **comfortable facilitating theatre exercises** .
2. The user should also be **familiar with the concept of Theatre of the Oppressed** . If this is not the case, I would suggest that the user read through the resources mentioned in Annexure 3 before beginning the workshop.

The following people would find this Manual useful:

- (a) **Educators in school settings**: The primary audience. Although geared for middle–high school, the games in this Manual can be modified for higher age groups. The idea is to provide a balanced verbal and non-verbal approach to identifying and dealing with oppression within and outside the school.
- (b) **Community workers** : Those who are in direct contact with and want to work with communities and promote social justice. Again, some of the activities might need to be modified for higher age-groups.
- (c) **Professionals in theatre** : Those who want to increase the tools in their “arsenal” of theatre activities and also those who would like to experience and experiment with TO.

The manual is a **suggested approach** to TO – and must never be considered the only way to do it. Hence, this Manual, I hope is used **as a structuring aid** and NOT the last word on how to do TO.

I have used the term Facilitator as a generic term for all the above audiences. Further, in the Manual, I have referred to the facilitator as “You”. I have also used the words participants and people interchangeably throughout the manual .

From here onwards, the Manual speaks directly to the facilitator (You) in a more conversational tone. Theatre of the Oppressed is about bringing social justice and a formal tone, I feel, interrupts that. A formal tone, I believe, comes with the connotation of a power structure and places the writer on a higher level than the reader. I do not want that to happen. Besides, TO is theatre and theatre is fun!

Assumptions about the workshop/class sessions :

1. Each workshop session which follows is expected to take about 90 minutes. In my experience, most schools have class periods of about 45 minutes. So, I have assumed a two class period session. Ensure that the participants have enough time to reflect on the sessions and there is a time for taking breaks.
2. Although there are no homework assignments, you can use your judgement to raise a few questions at the end of a session and ask participants to reflect on them before the next session.
3. Each session starts with a Warm-up activity. Any five minute warm-up activity which allows the participants to be ready to engage in TO exercises would work. I have highlighted a few of these in the Annexure 1. If you know other activities, feel free to use them.
4. Similarly, it is important to have a Closure activity. It ties everything done during that session and participants will leave feeling more peaceful and organized. Most of them take less than a minute, so I recommend them highly. See Annexure 2.
5. I have assumed that the participants are not meeting for the first time. If they are, spend some time for group-formation. Try and use Warm-up activities like Name Game or Getting to Know in the first few sessions.
6. The default seating arrangement for each activity is the circle. Ensure that the circle does not become a U or is broken with empty spaces. Be seated at the same or lower level as the participants – everyone preferably on the floor. If some participants have a disability and they cannot sit on the floor, acknowledge that and encourage them to sit comfortably as they prefer.

Use this Manual as a starting point for doing TO exercises, follow the directions, keep notes, read and re-read the resources from Annexure 3 to deepen your understanding and let your own experience be the guide as you let the TO experience evolve!

A List of Things To Do Before You Start

1. Explore the space where your TO sessions would be held before you begin. Go there and request for a few minutes of solitary awareness.
 - 1.1. Walk around the **space**. Go fast. Go slow. Feel the space. Ask yourself:
 - 1.2. Is the lighting enough?
 - 1.3. Is it well ventilated?
 - 1.4. Is it the right temperature? What can you do if it gets too hot or too cold?
 - 1.5. Is it empty and free from obstructions? Can you move around with your eyes closed and not be afraid of hurting yourself? Spaces with fixed furniture or pillars in the middle of the room will not be suitable.
 - 1.6. Does it allow silence? Is there any construction work happening during the sessions which will create loud noise?
 - 1.7. Is the floor clean? Can participants and you sit on it comfortably? Can you lie on it?
 - 1.8. Does it allow privacy? Can you hold performances or talk about personal stories without being heard outside the room?
2. Check if the restrooms and water is nearby.
3. Talk to the Person-In-Charge to ensure that the place is reserved for the whole duration of the workshop. If the participants come to the same space every time, that space becomes linked to TO and they would find it easier to transition themselves from the work they were doing just before the session.
4. Try to schedule the workshop at a time when people are most energetic and fresh, say early mornings. A workshop which begins just after lunch is probably not a good idea.
5. Also think about the place for the final performance. It would be great if the participants could perform in the same space as they come to for the sessions.

A List of Things To Do After You Start / During the Sessions

1. Always be the **first one to reach** when the sessions have started. Sometimes, the people who use the space before you rearrange the furniture or do not clean the floor properly. Your being early will ensure any such unpleasant surprises are taken care of and would give a positive impression of you being fully prepared. If the space is a classroom, then establish a routine with the participants that they take responsibility for cleaning the space every time. Don't ask the school staff to clean it. It prevents the sense of ownership and investment.
2. Debrief methods. During the workshop activities (as described later in this manual), participants are likely to feel strong emotions. It is important to have frequent debrief sessions and make sure that participants' feelings are not repressed. However, this is easier said than done. It is important to start the debrief by allowing people to describe what they feel or think. Then slowly move into probing questions and gently help them inquire into the source of such feelings and thoughts. Here is one way to do this:
 - 2.1. Start with affective (feeling) questions:
 - a) What was that like for you?
 - b) How did you feel when you saw/heard/did that?
 - 2.2. Now let the thoughts be verbalized:
 - a) What came to your mind when you saw/heard/did that?
 - b) What connections did you see, if any?
 - 2.3. Probe:
 - a) How do you know this? (Instead of "Why did you say that?" which might come across as an accusation rather than a genuine inquiry)
 - b) Can you elaborate on that or talk more about it?
 - c) How does that affect our lives, our relationships?
 - d) What could be the history behind this?

-
- 2.4. Throughout the debrief, encourage people to be gentle.
 - 2.5. Use paraphrasing. For instance, “ I heard you say that.....so, did you mean.....or.....”.
 - 2.6. Describe personal emotions instead of judging other’s behavior. For instance, “I felt when you said / did....” as opposed to “What you said was not ok”.
 - 2.7. Encourage people to notice their emotions as if they were a witness. I often give the analogy of being like the sky and watching the clouds (of thoughts) form shape. My role then shifts to being a witness of my feelings and thoughts.
 - 2.8. Be aware of your own emotions. Dont judge them. Notice what you notice.
 - 2.9. At times, summarize or request the participants to collectively summarize what they heard during the debrief. Take multiple truths and encourage integration and connections.
 - 2.10. It is not necessary to debrief activities during the workshop as a big group. Once you do an activity with the group, it is sometimes useful to break the group into smaller sub-groups and allow people to talk about what they felt and thought. This will depend on time available for the day and your judgement of group dynamics. You can also ask the sub-groups to come back and do a quick 2 minute share of their dialogue.
 3. Reflection time: Theatre of the Oppressed is an effective tool to bring social change. Its use, however, requires continuous reflection. Encourage participants to have a private note-book or diary where they **write what they feel**. Or, they can **draw or paint what they feel**. Hence setting up a separate space and time for it within the session is useful. This might change from one session to another but give them at least 5-10 **silent** minutes EVERY SESSION when they can write their reflections or draw the impact of the activities. Do make it clear that this is a personal diary and it is up to them if they want to share it with anyone -which includes you.
 - 3.1. Also, if they do not feel like writing a **diary or drawing**, respect that choice. Still, err on the side of nudging them towards somehow recording their experience. This will allow them to not just remember what happened in the workshops but see how they moved in their paths in TO. If some participants want to share their diary /notebook with you, be thankful and accept them. Ask them if you can write back to them what you felt

and thought about when you read their diary or looked at their drawings– maybe within the diary itself. This is one of the most powerful ways to connect to them. Participants, who prefer to be shy and quiet during the sessions, often come up with fascinating insights. Appreciate that. Be gentle, yet provocative, in your responses – and **do not share what someone wrote in his/her diary**. Never. TO is about trust.

- 3.2. I also encourage you to use that time to write your own diary. Participants often observe the facilitator closely and you must walk the talk. You might even share your diary with them if you feel comfortable. If you do indeed decide to share, this must be done with the whole group, not just one participant.
- 3.3. Keep extra paper and pens just in case someone forgets their diary / notebook and stationery. Create an atmosphere which stimulates reflection – so silence is a must. Allow participants to do anything so far as it respects others in the same space and does not distract them. The only rule is “no conversations” within or outside the session space during this Reflection time.

Guidelines, Not Rules: Although some people suggest creating Workshop Rules to ensure discipline in young students, I do not recommend such an exercise. Not only do rules show that you don't trust the participants to be intrinsically thoughtful, but also these rules are always interpretive.

However, you may come up with a set of Working Guidelines with the participants as the session progresses. Explain that these Guidelines can change during the workshop. You may start with broad guidelines like “ Being respectful”, “ Maintaining confidentiality” or “Giving others the opportunity to talk”. It might be useful to share with the group some of the phrases mentioned earlier in the section on Debrief Methods.

Ok, so hang on tight, here we go into the sessions...

Sessions

Most sessions can be divided into the following :

Warm-Up Activity – This activity would usually take 5-10 minutes. The aim is to help the participant transition into the TO workshop. In the following pages, I have provided a brief description of such activities.

Two Main Activities – Together, these activities would take about 60-70 minutes. I have provided a more detailed description with a rationale and process and sometimes specific debrief questions.

Debrief – When participants come together and talk about their experience- say 10-15 minutes.

Closure Activity- This activity would usually take 1-2 minutes. The aim is to help the participant transition out of the TO workshop. In the following pages, I have provided a brief description of such activities.

Although not mentioned specifically, there must be time allotted for Reflection and for taking breaks. Use your discretion to structure these.

Session 1

Painting yourself into the picture

(Arnold, 1991)

Facilitating a session on TO requires you to be first open and honest about who you are and why you are conducting the sessions.

Take a moment now and answer the following:

- Why am I conducting this session?
- Who will this workshop impact? Who are my audience? (think of as many as you can- students, school principal, trustees, parents of students)
- Why do I think they would benefit from these sessions?
- Do I need to establish trust with them? If so, how would I go about doing so?
- How will I introduce myself to my audience?

To answer these honestly is important. It is possible that you have been invited by the school Principal or an enthusiastic parent or perhaps are a parent yourself and felt that school is unconsciously becoming an instrument of oppression. Be open and share your objectives of being there.

I like to start the session by telling my participants about my background, a bit about my journey with TO and how it shaped me as a person. Then, I explain who invited me to do this session and what do I see in it for me and the participants.

TO is about trust and trust cannot be built by having a hidden agenda. If you feel that you cannot declare who invited you or why you are conducting the session, think again.

Warm-up Activity

You may choose any of the warm-up activity from Annexure 1, but I suggest using the following for the first session:

Activity Name- Look what I've got!

Process:

1. Actually, this activity requires preparation before the TO session meets for the first time. So, you might need to request everyone to bring 2 items which they relate to – for the first TO session. *Anything is fine.* I have seen people bring movies which have influenced them, books, artwork they made, scarves, photographs and so on.
2. Everyone (**including You**)¹ gets into a big circle, sits down, show their items one-by-one and talk about them to the whole group. *If possible, you show your items first so that people feel more comfortable.*
3. Applaud after each person shares and describes their items.
4. Once everyone has shared their short narratives, everyone stands up.
5. Now, they rub their own palms, while you say, “We are rubbing the husk off a seed of very focused, attentive, enthusiastic creative energy. Once the husk is off, stop rubbing, let the seed of energy grow between your palms. Then lift that energy above your head and let it wash over your body, making sure the energy wakes up your eyes, ears, your expressive face, and your whole body, because we will use it a lot today”. *As you say this, you must also rub your own palms, stop and lift them up when required.*

I remember that when I first conducted this activity, I was quite nervous. I was not sure that everyone would get something. To my surprise, almost everyone remembered to get a couple of personal items. I asked those that did not, to just open up their bags or search their pockets to take out something which they connected to.

For me, the surprising part was the smiles and looks of recognition this activity brought forth.

¹ Everyone would always include you – unless otherwise mentioned

Main Activity - Columbian Hypnosis

(Boal, 2002, p. 51)

Rationale

Reconnecting to the body. Understanding that we are the thought, feeling and the body- all together. They are not part of us, they are us. It is also a good loosen-up activity and can be used whenever you feel.

Process

- Divide the group into pairs.
- Ask each pair to decide which one of the participants would play the **Hypnotized**. The other participant in the pair shall be the **Lead**.
- Now the Lead holds her hand - palm forward. This is the *hypnotizing hand*. Ask the other actor to be totally hypnotized by this hand and start following the hand keeping a constant distance (say 6 inches) from it. The Lead now slowly moves the palm the way she feels. Up, down, left, right or at any angle.
- Ask the Lead participants to experiment with different levels. They can do so slowly or fast, smoothly or with jerks, and even stay still.
- Let the Lead participants move around the room and the Hypnotized ones follow in different body positions, thus loosening up the joints. Ask the Hypnotized to be AWARE of their bodies.

Pairing: One method is to ask them to spread out in the space and walk. After a couple of moments, ask them to stop. Stand in the middle of the room. And by hand, divide it into two halves such that there are roughly equal number of people in each half.

Then, ask them to stand in two lines on either side of the room facing each other. Then, they proceed towards the person standing directly opposite them.

This approach leads to quite good random pairs and can be used frequently.

- Do this for 5 minutes. Swap roles and do this for another 5 minutes.

Variation

- Divide the group into sub-groups of 4 – 5 participants.
- Instead of one hypnotized, each sub-group would have 3-4 Hypnotized participants following the hand and/or feet or other body parts of the Lead.

Another Variation

- Let one actor go into the middle of the circle and be the Lead.
- Then another person from the group follows and gets hypnotized by a body part or ornament he chooses (e.g. hand, ear, foot, ankle, ear-ring, bangle or head).
- Then another participant steps in and chooses to be hypnotized by the body part of any of the two participants in the circle. This continues till the last person in the group is hypnotized.

As a participant in Columbian Hypnosis, I played all the variations. Each experience was different. In one-one groups, I felt very vulnerable as the Hypnotized and very responsible as the Lead. In bigger groups of 5 people, it was extremely immersive. I was totally lost in the activity.

When we did this as One large group, it was absolute fun. A small movement by the first person who was the Lead led to a ripple effect which was fascinating to observe and participate in. Great for group building and laughter.

Debrief Questions:

1. What did this activity evoke?
2. Was it easy to do? Why? Why not?
3. What did you notice about yourself while doing this?

4. How did you feel when you were the leader?
5. How did you feel when you were the hypnotized?

Closure Activity – Buzz

(See Annexure 2)

Session 2

Warm-up Activity.- Check In

(see Annexure 1)

Main Activity – Touching the Earth

(Boal, 2002, p. 56) – an adaptation

Rationale

Being more aware and sensitive of our physicality and prompting tactile sense.

Process

- Request participants to lie down such that most of their body is touching the earth or the floor. Let them relax for a few moments.
- Ask them to breathe deeply and be aware of which parts of the body are in contact with the floor. They now focus on each part one-by one – listening to the tension in each part as their body lies on the floor.
- Then, ask them to start raising their bodies till they are in minimal touch with the floor. For example, they can stand up so that only the feet or toes touch the floor or just lie on their upper back. It is up to each person on how they want to follow this direction.
- Now invite them to continuously shift their posture and experiment with putting body weight on different parts or combination of parts- one foot, one hand ; the arms; upper back; toe and nail- whatever works.
- They must keep experimenting such that at one time or another each part of the body must have touched the floor.
- Encourage them to be as slow and as aware of the body and the muscles as they can.
- After a few minutes, ask participants to partner while doing this activity. The aim is to be in minimal touch with the floor, keep moving and find different ways. They can lean into each other, push-pull, use their backs to keep a continuous flow.
- Keep going for another 5-10 minutes.

When I was a participant in this activity, I found it wonderful to re-discover my body. It seemed easy at first, but I found it difficult to find positions for minimal touch which did not involve the feet. It really brought me back to the body.

On another note, the activity made us acknowledge the power of something we take for granted (i.e.gravity) and how just shifting our position can make us more aware of it.

Although Boal mandates silence for this activity, our group occasionally went into laughter, especially when we were working with partners. My view is that an occasional whisper and giggle can be useful to break the tension. So far as the participants are sincere about following the instructions, it is ok..

Debrief Questions:

1. What did you notice about yourself while doing this?
2. How did you feel when you were on the ground?
3. When did it get difficult? When was it easy?
4. What made it different when you were with a partner? How were you stretched in a different direction?

Main Activity – Listen to body, experience movement

Rationale

Being more aware and sensitive of what our body is saying. Going within. Building trust.

Process

- Ask participants to stand in a circle. Now quickly raise both your arms, take a deep breath, stretch your arms as much as you can (as if you want them to touch the ceiling) and then slowly let them fall over your head and body (as if pouring something down on yourself). Breathe out and lower your whole body as the arms go down.

-
- Some participants will start to mimic. If not, indicate that non-verbally (a nod of the head, for example).
 - Keep doing the described action for 2-3 minutes.
 - *No verbal instructions so far. The surprise of your movement will catch them and the intrigue of "what next" would help them focus.*
 - Then introduce another movement – the "jiggley-jiggle". You begin to do a jiggle. There is no real pattern to it. Just a flowing movement of the whole body while standing at the same place. Imagine yourself as a puppet on a string and the strings were being randomly moved. Say "jiggley-jiggle" as you move. Let everyone follow.
 - Another 2-3 minutes later, introduce the "hiccup". While doing the jiggle, you throw a hiccup using your body. It is a sudden jerky movement which punctuates the rhythm of the jiggle. Don't think too much, just let any part of your body do the hiccup. *Let the body decide.* Some participants might feel conscious. It is ok, you keep going.
 - Do the three movements – breathing, jiggley jiggle and hiccup in order – at least 5-6 times till you feel that most of the group has got a hang of it.
 - Give the following instructions one-by-one. You can wait a few seconds or even a few minutes after every instruction. Change instructions if you feel the group energy is dissipating:
 - "Start moving..walking"
 - "Try all these three forms during your movement...Breathe...Jiggle-jiggle.. .hiccup...in any order you feel..play with the order"
 - (3-4 minutes later) "Walk. Just walk.....Slow down your pace if you feel like...quicken your pace if you feel like..just go with the flow. Go within, eyes open but look within..LOOK out for others. Be safe"
 - "Let's add a layer....you can move only in right angles...Only right angles...no diagonals. Move in right angles. Play with your pace"
 - "Focus within...do what your body is telling you to..."
 - "Wonderful...beautiful" (*actually, this can be said anytime or any number of times*)
-

-
- “Play with levels. Crawl if you feel..jump if you feel like”.
 - “Have moments of stillness in between. Play with stillness. Be a statue for some time when you feel. When you feel the impulse to move..move again.”
 - “Wonderful...beautiful”
 - “Play with stillness...let the moment of walking be the exception now. Move when you are compelled to ..”
 - “Now, you can move in curves...try that if you feel like”
 - “Freeze....” (Wait for a few seconds)
 - “..Move”
 - “Now the room is half as big..that wall has come closer..imagine it...you are slowing down...soon everything will come to a stop...as I count down from 5, different parts of your body tend to become still and stop..by the time we reach 1, it is impossible to move.....”
 - “ 5.4.....3...2...1” (*take your time here in counting down to 1*)
 - “Relax..Give yourself a nice shrug..now when you feel like..go to your diaries and write what it felt like..this is for your eyes only..if you feel like drawing, draw..”

If you have time, do a quick debrief in a circle or ask people to form in groups of 3 and talk about the activity for 5 minutes.

Closure Activity

Choose any from Annexure 2.

Session 3

Warm Up Activity

(Choose any one from Annexure 1)

Main Activity – Fill the Space

(Boal, 2002, p. 127)- an adaptation

Rationale

Being more aware and sensitive of space around us. Become aware of others in the same space.

Process

- Participants walk around the room without touching each other. Encourage participants to fill the empty space in the room. They must **keep walking** to leave no significant empty spaces in the room. Once someone fills a space, she keeps moving to another empty space.
- As they walk, give the following instructions with suitable time intervals ²:
 - “Freeze.”
 - “Shake out your whole body.”
 - “Walk again.”
 - “Extend your awareness to one other person in the room. Try to walk like them.”
 - “Walk again in your natural style.”
 - “Stop.”
- Explain that from now, anyone in the room can freeze at any moment. However, as soon as someone sees one person freeze, they should freeze too. *There should be no vocal cues here.*
- Explain that once everyone has frozen, anyone can begin walking again, which should cue the whole group to begin moving again. Continue trying to stop and start as a group about five times.
- Now call out the following situations with a 5-6 seconds delay between each call:
 - “You are made of jelly”
 - “Your left leg is shorter than your right leg”

² I do not have any way of pre-determining what is a suitable time gap for the instructions. It depends on the group. As a facilitator, you can experiment with the gaps between the instructions to see how they work.

- “You are really old”
- “You are carrying a bucket full of water on your head. Don't spill it”
- “You are five years old”
- “You are an atom”
- “Ouch. You just developed a cramp in your right knee.”
- “Stop”
- “Shake out your whole body one more time”
- Get everyone back in the circle

Variations

- Instead of saying “Stop”, say a number and the participants have to form groups of that number. This works as a great grouping activity.
- Say body parts. For instance “6 wrists, 2 noses”. Now the participants have to form groups in a way that 6 wrists and 2 noses within that group are touching.

Main Activity – Slow Tag

Rationale

Being more aware and sensitive of our physicality and prompting tactile sense.

Process

- Ask people if they really reflect on what happens when they run. Ask them to mentally go through their running/fast walking and see if they remember which muscle groups are used.
- Begin by aligning everyone in one line as in a race.
- Now they have to *run* but the movements have to be really slow so that they can experience each muscle group coming into play.
- Ask them to imagine that they are running full steam but in slow-motion.

- Let them start running in this slow way.
- They must be attentive to everything – the ball of the foot, the heel, the toe, the knees, the stomach, the head ...and the breathing which goes with it. This is not a race. They are just experiencing their running in a different way.
- Continue for 3-4 minutes.
- Stop.
- Explain the game of playing tag. One person (the runner) has to touch any of the other participants who are running away from her. If she does touch someone, then that person becomes the runner and the others run away to avoid being tagged.
- Just ask someone to be the runner and then the game starts. Remember, everyone does this in s-l-o-w motion. Do this for as long as you feel the group is having fun. 10-15 minutes is good.

As a participant, this was perhaps one of the most fun activities I engaged in. It was not easy to run slowly. As the runner came close, most of us scampered. Sometimes people fell in slow motion! Great energy. Lots of laughter.

Debrief Questions:

1. What did you notice about yourself while doing this?
2. What did you notice about others?
3. When did it get difficult? When was it easy?
4. How can you make it different? What variations can you think of?

Closure Activity

Choose any from Annexure 2.

Session 4

Warm up – Name with sound

(See Annexure 1)

Main Activity – Person-person Quebec style

(Boal, 2002, p 77)

Rationale

Being more aware and sensitive of each other. Getting to be together. Building TRUST.

Process

- Everyone gets into pairs – preferably with someone they don't know that well. Ask each other if they are comfortable with touching. Make it clear that this is a game to build more trust.
- Mention that touching must be appropriate. For instance, touching sexual parts is not acceptable.
- Also explain that if at any time the participants feel *very* uncomfortable, they can step out of the game.
- Now, call out the names of the body parts which the pairs have to touch together. For instance, if you say knee-wrist , then one of the partners has to touch his knee with the other's wrist. As you mention the two parts, the pairs have to ensure that they keep the earlier parts mentioned still joined. To continue the example, if you now say head-head, then the participants have to touch their heads while ensuring that the knee-wrist contact is still maintained. They can experiment, change positions, sit, stand..whatever to keep their balance while following the instructions.
- Give different instructions – Head-head, knee-wrist, ear-ear, cheek-cheek, palm-back, shoulder-elbow and so on.
- Keep doing this till you feel all pairs are sufficiently tangled up.
- Then, ask them to dis-entangle and start afresh with new instructions.

- Keep engaging with the same partner till the pairs become comfortable with each other.
- Change partners and repeat the instructions.

Variation

After a couple of times, you can ask someone else to call out the new body-part instructions.

Main Activity - Adding sound

Rationale

A deliberate use of sound to increase TRUST.

Process

- Continue with the pairs formed in the previous activity. Let one person be X and the other be Y.
- Person X says "A", person Y says "B", X says "C", now Y says "A", X says "B".. and the cycle continues with each of them saying one alphabet at a time. Do this for a couple of minutes till they get into rhythm.
- Now ask them to replace A with any sound and keep the cycle going.
- Now replace B with any sound.
- After a couple of minutes, ask them to replace C with any sound.
- At this point every pair is using three different sounds.
- Let them get into a rhythm.
- Now, ask them to return to using C instead of the sound they were using...then B and then after some time A.
- At the end, every group is back to using A,B and C alternately.
- Ask partners to talk to each other (within their pairs) about the activity before they return to the big circle.

Debrief Questions:

1. What did you notice about yourself while doing this?

2. When did it get difficult? When was it easy?
3. How did adding of sound make a difference? What difference did it make?
4. What variations can you think of?

Explain now that you are going to get into image theatre – a silent form of theatre where we sculpt our own bodies to form images.

Main Activity - Complete the Picture/Image

Rationale

To provide participants a feel of image-theatre (p174) so that they can go beyond “words” as a means of expression. A more active reflection on how small gestures can change interpretation. Team building and getting comfortable with touch.

Process

- Everyone gets into a circle.
- Ask for a volunteer to come in the center and strike any pose.
- Now you go ahead and pose with the volunteer to make a picture/image that creates a relationship between you two. There is no right or wrong way to pose. Go with your gut-feel. The relationship is something that exists in your mind. Each person will interpret the picture of you two differently.
- As you freeze, ask her (the volunteer) to unfreeze and pose to create a new picture/image with your frozen image. As she poses, you say ,“I relax and I look at (the name of volunteer)’s pose. I make another pose that relates to her” .You freeze.” Now, my partner relaxes and chooses another pose”...
- Keep doing this for 3 or 4 poses. Try different things- Touching,Varying the distance

I would strongly recommend getting someone to play this role of the volunteer **beforehand**. At an earlier time, explain this activity to that person and if she feels comfortable, run a demo so that both of you know what to do.

between her and you, Lying down, changing facial expressions and so on.

- Now everyone gets into pairs.
- These pairs have to find a space in the room where they can begin to create images together.
- Remind everyone to go with their gut-feel and simply “play”. There is no right or wrong image. If they get stuck, it is fine.
- After about 2 minutes of creating such joint images, ask everyone to stop, relax and remain silent.
- Explain that you will now call out words. Ask them to let the words influence the images they make together. If the word makes them feel stuck, they may ignore the word.
- Ask for questions or clarifications.
- Call out a word and ask them to resume creating images together. Suggested Words:
 - Family
 - Happiness
 - Team
 - Rain
 - Bully and the student
 - Strict teacher and student
 - Flower and the pot
 - Independence
 - Hand and glove
 - Pen and ink
 - The gardener and the garden....and so on

Closure Activity

Choose any one from Annexure 2.

Session 5

Warm Up Activity

Choose any from Annexure 1

Main Activity – Pair Sculpt and Group Sculpt

(Boal, 2002, p 136)

Rationale

Building on the image exercises as a group. Getting more comfortable with each other's touch. A more visual representation of what you feel through others. Understanding the richness of others' interpretations.

Process

- Everyone stands in a circle.
- Give instructions - “ Today we are going to use our bodies as clay and allow them to be sculpted”
- Request a volunteer to step in the middle.
- Stand opposite him and call out the word “anger”.
- Now make a pose for anger and the volunteer would mirror it **Or** you can mold the volunteer into your desired pose by touching.
- Call out another word, say “Reflect” and sculpt the volunteer. Explain that you are the **sculptor** and the volunteer is your **clay**.
- Now everyone gets into pairs and finds a space in the room. Each pair decides who shall be the sculptor and who shall be the clay.
- Now tell them that you will call out a word and the sculptors will let the word influence them and mold their clay (the paired partner) into what their interpretation of that word.

I would strongly recommend getting someone to play this role of the volunteer **beforehand**. At an earlier time, explain this activity to that person and if he feels comfortable, run a demo, so that both of you know what to do.

They will get roughly a minute for each word.

- Ask them to touch and/or mirror what the clay is supposed to freeze into.
- Insist on SILENCE.
- Call out words from a list - (Suggestions: *Joy, homework, fear, anger, hate, discrimination, privilege, racism, terrorism. Bully...*)
- Give the sculptors an alert after 40 seconds.
- After a minute, ask them to switch. Now, the clay becomes the new sculptor and does his/her interpretation of the word.
- Again a 40 second alert and then switching of roles.

I have done this activity – both as a facilitator and as a participant. It has never ceased to amaze me. Perhaps it brings forth a different way of expression – which is unique and powerful. What is really important here is the sincerity with which the participants approach the activity, so try and introduce it at a time when you feel that the participants are ready (high energy and enthusiasm helps). And yes, silence is critical. So, if you find some participants bursting into a giggle, indicate politely that their laughter could be disturbing the group.

- Call out the next word from the list.
- This time, after the clay is sculpted, ask the sculptors to move around the room, see and absorb the images which the other sculptors have made. Give them a few seconds, then ask them to return.
- The partners switch. The clay unfreezes, uses the same word and later gets to move around the room.
- After all the words have been called out, return to the big circle and sit in silence for a few minutes.

Debrief Questions:

1. How did that feel?

2. What images really stood out for you?
3. What did you feel when you heard the word and then what happened?
4. Which other words do you think we could have used? (once someone says a word, give 15 seconds for participants to silently visualize how they would have sculpted the image).
5. How did that visualization feel?

Main Activity – Group Sculpt

Rationale

Sculpting more models. Getting comfortable with playing the clay and the sculptor.

Process

- Everyone moves around the room to fill the space.
- As they move, ask them to group themselves based on the color of their shirt (won't work if they are wearing uniforms) or the color of their eyes.
- They spread out again and fill the space. Now they regroup based on distance of home from school.
- Spread out again. Now they SILENTLY regroup based on their birth month. Try and get group sizes of 4. Combine two or three groups into one or split them if required. *The main idea is to get them up, keep them moving a few times and then get into fresh groups.*
- This time, they sculpt more than one human clay at a time. One person in each group is designated as the sculptor and she would sculpt the remaining members in her group to create a tableau. She gets the same time, roughly a minute. Then, she can walk around and see the other sculptures before returning to her group.
- The group unfreezes and a new sculptor takes the word and provides his interpretation. This goes on till each member has got at least one opportunity to sculpt.

Variation

(Boal 2002, p.138)

- Once the sculptor(A) has finished her tableau, she would indicate to one of the clay (say, B) to step out.
- Then A would take B's place and freeze in the same position.
- The new sculptor, B would step back, see the tableau and change any or all the human clay to show her version.
- Then she would indicate to another human clay (say, C) to step out and the process continues..
- They continue doing this till everyone had an opportunity to sculpt.

This process therefore becomes more like a dialogue between different sculptors.

Debrief Questions:

1. How did that feel?
2. Did an increase in the number of clay change your way of working?
3. What happened when you walked around the room? What did you see?

Main Activity – Self Sculpt with sound and motion

Rationale

This would add the sound and motion to the images that the participants have sculpted. Also allows them to relate to others and form connections.

Process

- Everyone finds a space in the room.
- Explain that this is a reflective activity and they have to stay with their emotions during this activity. Laughter would not allow them to go deeper and experience this.
- Explain that you would call out a word and they would self-sculpt themselves and freeze into an image.
- Call out “Poor”. After they freeze, ask them to add any repetitive motion to this image (say, moving their hands up and down). The image is dynamic now.

- Now, ask them to add a sound to this dynamic image.
- Wait for 10-20 seconds as they do their dynamic image with sound. Let it sink in.
- Finally, ask them to replace this sound with a word or a phrase. They keep repeating the motion and the word(s).

Let me explain this activity citing my own example.

At the mention of “poor”, I squatted on the floor to make my image. To dynamize it, I added rocking movement and then the sound of a cold sigh. As a phrase, I chose “No hope”. I kept repeating it.

I still remember the goosebumps I had as I began to enact this image with the words. The words took me to another world. I felt as if I had no money, no opportunity and no hope. It felt so desolate and lonely.

People around me had different words. Someone made the image of a having a baby in their arms and saying “I will take care of you” and it was a very intense experience for me to listen to him speak.

This activity comes with very high emotional overtones, so be prepared about how you would handle it gently if someone begins to cry.

- Wait for another 10-20 seconds
- Ask them to shake off their bodies and stop.
- Now, give them a new word - “Discrimination” and let them self-sculpt and freeze in an image.
- This time, ask them to look around and find other participant(s) in the room who they feel are depicting the word similarly.
- Then they slowly (keeping their image as unbroken as possible), gravitate towards those whose images they feel are similar.
- Now, ask them to add a repeated motion to their images **and** relate their action to another member in the group.

- They add the sound...then the word.
- They should not be too loud – just enough for their group members to hear them. They do this for a minute.
- Ask them to shake off their bodies and stop.
- Everyone finds a new space.
- The next word is “Teasing”. Repeat instructions as earlier.

This is a serious activity and laughter may not allow the participants to feel their word interpretations. Other words that could be used here are : *Wealth, Gender roles, Religion, Bully, Homework, Punishment* and so on.

If there is not enough time, you can skip a part of this activity, but **do not skip the debriefing.**

Debrief Questions:

1. How do you feel?
2. Where did this activity take you?
3. How did adding the motion and sound work?
4. What other words do you think we could use here? (No right or wrong answers)

Closure Activity

Choose any from Annexure 2.

Session 6

Warm Up Activity

Choose any from Annexure 1

Main Activity – Noises

(Boal, 2002, p 116)

Rationale

Introducing sound – going beyond seeing. Building more trust.

Process

- Everyone gets into pairs.
- One person would be the *guide* and the other, the *blind partner*.
- The *guide* shall make a short sound (**no words**) which the *blind* partner would remember.
- Now, the *guide* will start moving and the *blind partner* would follow the sound.
- The moment the *blind partner* is in danger of colliding with another person or obstruction, the *guide* would stop making the noise as a cue to the *blind partner* to STOP. Hence, **the guide is totally responsible for the safety of their partner.**
- The *guide* should also try to move as farther away from the *blind partner*, keeping the same voice volume, so that the partner can work on sorting out through the other sounds and move accordingly.
- After 10 minutes, switch roles and play again.

Main Activity- Blind Car

Rationale

Increasing Sensitivity to Touch. Building Trust.

Process

- Everyone gets into pairs.
- One is a car and the other a driver.

- The driver stands behind the car and uses his finger to guide the car. A strong push means go faster and a light touch means to slow down. If the driver removes the finger, the car must stop.
- To turn right, the driver touches the finger on the right shoulder and so on.
- The driver is fully responsible for the safety of the car. This is a SILENT game.
- You can also put pairs of chairs in the room which can act as gates through which the cars must pass.
- After 10 minutes, switch roles and play again.

This might seem difficult to do, or even unsafe to some people. BUT it is relatively easy and SAFE. What I like about TO, is that it forces us to challenge the notion that when left to themselves, people will harm each other or people would get hurt in case we do not give specific rules for Safety.

For me, as a participant, the moment I had to play the role of the guide or the driver, I assumed responsibility for the safety of my partner. My speed slowed down and I made sure that he did not bump into someone.

People are responsible. You just have to trust them.

Debrief Questions:

1. What are your reactions to the two games we played?
2. What did you notice about yourself when you were playing?
3. What did you notice about your partner?
4. What worked for you? What did not?
5. What do you think about trust in pairs?

Main Activity – Group Sculpt

Rationale

Sculpting more models and getting more experience in working together. Acknowledging that

how others see us could be different from how we see ourselves.

Process

- Ask everyone to find a space.
- Then they freeze themselves in a pose which reflects how they see themselves in this session so far.
- Once they have done so, ask them to come together and arrange themselves as a group sculpture keeping their pose. We now have a group sculpture.
- Now pick one of the participants and ask her to unfreeze, step back, see the tableau and change any of the clay images which to her reflects the session. She then picks someone else and re-freezes into the group.
- This person unfreezes does the same thing. She steps back, makes any changes, picks another person in the group tableau to unfreeze and refreezes back into the tableau.
- *It is not necessary to make changes.*
- This goes on till everyone has had an opportunity to sculpt.
- Once everyone has had the opportunity, allow the participants to unfreeze and sit in a circle.

Debrief Questions:

1. What happened just now?
2. What made you feel comfortable doing what you did? What made you uncomfortable?
3. What questions would you have from each other?

Closure Activity

Choose any one from Annexure 2.

Session 7

Warm Up Activity

Choose any from Annexure 1.

Main Activity – Group images

Rationale

Going deeper into image analysis. More practice with group sculptures.

Process

- Everyone gets into groups of 4 or 5. One of them is the sculptor and the others are clay.
- Explain that each group would be making only one group image and there might be no switching and one of the group tableaux might be shared with all the participants.
- Give them the word “Religious discrimination” and about 2 minutes to make their group tableau.
- Once the images are frozen, ask the clay to remember their position. Unfreeze. Relax.
- Request one group to share their tableau.
- Everyone stands in a circle around it. Ask people to walk around and observe the sculpture. Give them a minute.
- “What do you see?” -

Explain that here you are asking for only descriptions – for e.g. statements like :

- One image has his left hand higher than the other
- The clay on the right is sitting and we cannot see her face.

This is very difficult for most people. So, if someone does mention a statement which is interpretive, gently request them to stick to a description and hold on to their interpretive thought for later. If the group is not clear of the difference, jump in and make a few descriptive statements.

The sculptor for that image has to be silent throughout.

is

- The clay on the left has her eyes closed....
- Request participants to just describe. No interpretations. No giving meaning to the image. So statements like the following are NOT acceptable at this point:
 - The clay on the right is angry.
 - It seems that these clay know each other.
 - The clay on the left is happy.
- After the descriptions seem to run out, move into interpretations.
- Repeat often: “There are no right or wrong interpretations”.
- When someone gives an interpretation, and it is not clear how they arrived at it, ask them to explain more. The tone here is **not** “Why do you think this clay image is angry?” but rather, “ Can you explain to us how you arrived at that?” or “What in the image makes you feel that way?”.
- Probe. Draw out explanations.
- If participants are stuck and unable to describe, dont judge them.
- Some questions useful to raise at this point are:
 - So, who are these characters?
 - What is their story?
 - Do we see a protagonist here?
 - What can we do about this oppression?
- Put your hand above each clay model and ask the group to imagine it to be a thought bubble (like in a cartoon!). Ask, “So, what is the bubble saying?” *Again, all interpretations are valid.*
- If you have time, go through other groups' tableaus.

Main Activity: Image in Transition

Rationale

Build different but related images and start thinking of Action.

Process

- Depending on the time available, you can repeat the first phase of the activity above (Group Images) and create one **new** tableau per group – and choose one such tableau to proceed.
- Or you can use one of the tableaux that was created in the earlier activity.
- In either case, seek permission of the group for using their tableau.
- Ask the whole group to come around this particular tableau that you have chosen. At this point, we have one tableau in which the images are frozen symbolizing some kind of oppression – and the remaining participants standing around it.
- Explain how this is one image of oppression.
- Now explain that this image must be transformed to a state where there is no oppression.
- This transformation would be done by making FIVE changes to each frozen clay. So if you want to make clay A, a frozen clay participant who is standing, sit down, that would count as ONE change. Or if you want clay B, someone whose arms are down, to raise her arms, then that would be one change too.
- At this point invite any ONE person from the group to go to a frozen clay and make ONE change.
- After that change, ask if someone else in the group would like to make ONE change to some other frozen clay. :
- Make sure that if clay A has been changed once, we do not make the second change to it, till all the other clay participants have been changed once too. Going ahead with the same logic, if clay C has been changed twice by the group, then we do not make the third change to C till all the other clay participants have been changed twice too. *Keeping track is crucial.*
- Ensure that different people in the group get a chance to make these changes. Request the

people in the group that if they have already made a change to the tableau. they should give others, who have not yet done so, the opportunity to make a change to the clay participants.

- After TWO changes have been made to all clay participants.
 - Ask the frozen tableau to go back to their ORIGINAL state.
 - Ask them to all move slowly into their positions at the end of the FIRST change. Let the group observe for a few seconds.
 - Now ask them to move slowly to their positions at the end of the SECOND change. This would seem like a slow motion progression. An evolution in progress.
 - Insist on SILENCE.
- Now continue to make more changes. The participants in the group step in one-by-one and make a change to one of the frozen clay participants.
- After 4 changes have been made to every clay participant, ask the clay pieces to go back to their original state and move slowly showing the first change, then the second, third and the fourth.
- Now ask the group to do the FINAL change.
- After the fifth change, let the group observe the new tableau for a few moments. Then ask the clay participants to do the slow motion movement from the first to the fifth change. (You may softly say 1, 2 ...to keep them on track and in sync).

Debrief Questions:

1. How did it feel like?
2. What did we notice?
3. How did you feel when you were being changed? (*for the clay participants*)
4. What does it say about the group process that we followed?
5. Can we build on this to counter oppression? How?
6. Where can we use this kind of technique?

The questions here, are becoming more about the process of transition than interpreting

whether the group arrived at the right tableau in the end.

Stay clear of asking people why they made a particular change to a clay. This is not a time for evaluation.

Closure Activity

The next session is about Living newspapers. You might ask participants to get newspapers from home. Then do a closure with any activity from Annexure 2.

Session 8

Warm Up Activity

Choose any from Annexure 1

Main Activity -Machine

(Boal, 2002, p.94)

Rationale

A game of finding connections and rhythm. Heightens sound and motion awareness

Process

- One participant goes in the center and imagines himself to be a part in a big complex machine. He does a repetitive motion and creates the sound which goes with it. Everyone watches.
- Another participant goes in and connects herself to the first, in a way that shows a connection between the two parts of the machine they are portraying.
- Then another participant joins them and the machine gets bigger till everyone is playing a part and vocalizing a sound with their motion.
- Participants can join in whichever part of the machine they feel.
- Go to the first participant and ask him to increase his rhythm.
- This should speed up the machine.
- After a few moments, ask him to slow it down and the ripples pass through the entire machine.
- Ask him to slow down more and more till he stops.

Variation

Use themes for these machines. Make a love machine, a hate machine or any word which the participants would like to play with and show.

When I did this activity as a participant, we made a machine of Hate. And then a machine of Love. The energy that these machines created was unbelievable. We were totally recharged.

The tricky part, I felt, was to get started. The first person who goes in is taking a risk. Once he is in the center, it is usually easier for the other people to take the plunge too. That is what happened with our group on both occasions.

So, encourage people to go right in and be the first to start the machine.

Main Activity : The Living Newspaper

Rationale

Explores the subtle conditioning of the daily news stories. Explains how systemic oppression can work. Also, a good preparation for the upcoming forum theatre performance.

Process

It might be useful to get some newspapers from the school library before you begin.

- Let some participants skim the newspapers and highlight stories which they found interesting.
- Ask participants about the news stories they hear and have a short 4-5 minute discussion.
- Now, everyone gets into **groups of four** and share stories which they found interesting.
- After a few minutes, explain that now they have to choose one of the stories and enact it. They can enact the whole story or just a part. They can choose to use dialogues or just mime.
- Don't allow much discussion, instead gently push them to start trying out the stories by enacting them. For instance, while one person in the group explains the news story that she liked, the others could just start enacting it.
- A group which cannot decide on a story because it is divided is not allowed to enact it. It has to be a common group decision and everyone must feel that it is coming from within rather than a pressure to conform to the other group members. This is crucial.

- Designate one area in the space as the stage.
 - Let the groups perform one by one. It is their interpretation of the story.
 - After they perform, applaud their effort.
 - Then ask the audience about what was the main idea of the story. They can guess or just tell what do they think the story was about.
 - Now ask the performing group about the story:
 - Which story did they choose? Why?
 - What did they want to highlight?
 - What worked for them? What did not?
- These questions are important so that the participants get to know what are the elements of a story and how does the audience perceive them. They would start arriving at a slightly better intuitive understanding of elements of a theatrical performance.

It is important to focus on what works and how it may be improved.
- Give your feedback about what worked and focus on the **excitement** and **fun of presenting**.
 - Remind them, that the heart of the performance is them and their story. So, **enjoying the process** and **doing what feels right** is important.
 - After everyone has performed, explain how Living Newspapers began in the 1930s and was used to disseminate news to the people ,especially those who could not read and write and were therefore marginalized. You may ask:
 - Where does news come from?
 - Who decides what news should be published?
 - Who writes the articles and from which power perspective? Do the people who are written about have a chance to say if the perspective given in the newspaper is correct?
 - If possible, make copies of the article on Living Newspapers in Annexure 3 and distribute to the participants. The idea here is to explain about how the newspaper is a medium of

oppression too because it stereotypes and reinforces values forced by those in power.

Closure Activity

Choose any from Annexure 2.

Session 9

Warm Up Activity

Choose any from Annexure 1.

Session 9 and 10 are perhaps the most tight sessions in terms of time and activities. The activities are rigorous and you would have to be a bit “pushy” to get the groups to perform even though they feel they are under-prepared.

You can think about giving some readings or suggesting youtube videos as homework at the end of Session 8 to jump-start the process.

Main Activity -Forum theatre 1a

Rationale

Explaining what forum theatre is, how is it enacted, role of **spect-actors** and brainstorming for ideas

Process

- Ask participants to reflect on all the sessions so far. They can use their diaries to talk about their journey. Do this for 10 minutes at least.
- Now explain *forum theatre* using an example. You can use the example provided earlier in this manual in the introduction. Or use your experience and readings (Annexure 3) to create one. Boal (2002) provides many examples of forum theatre.
- Ask them what differences do they find between this kind of theatre and the usual theatre that they have experienced. Key things to draw out are:
 - The local nature of the problem or oppression
 - Short length of the play
 - Presence and role of the Joker to provoke and engage the audience

- Breaking the fourth wall and inviting the audience to change the play so that they transform into **Spect-actors**
- Multiple enactments of the play using different strategies suggested by the spect-actors
- Now everyone gets into groups of 3-4 and brainstorms themes and ideas for a short forum theatre performance. They get 20 minutes and the idea must relate closely to them.
- In the really unlikely event that they are stuck and cannot come up with any topic, you can suggest – *Excessive homework, Physical punishment, Bullying, Teasing, Stress due to grading, Gender stereotyping or favoritism by school authorities* . They can use these ideas only if they have experienced it.
- The groups have to think of how they could go about enacting the oppression. Encourage them to draw the scenes or write up a description.
- Keep moving from one group to another to see how they are doing. Do this for 20 minutes.
- Get the groups back into one big circle and request them to share their drawings or description.
- As they do so, write up the descriptions on newsprint and suggest a **name** for each play.

Main Activity -Forum theatre 1b

Rationale

Brief enactment of the various 2-3 minute plays by sub-groups. Feedback. Role of the joker.

Process

- Write the ideas for plays described in Forum theatre 1a on 20 inch X 10 inch papers. Stick these papers on the walls, at least 3 m apart from each other.
- Everyone gets into a circle.
- Ask participants to go and stand near the ideas which appeal most to them. Explain that

you are expecting them to direct and enact that idea before the school community.

Suggest a team size between 5-8 people.

- In case there are more than 8 people in a team, you might negotiate with some members to join other smaller teams. Or you may use a lottery to decide which person would have to shift to another group.
- After the formation of these groups, everyone returns to the big circle.
- Explain that it is time for them to choose 2 Jokers. These Jokers would facilitate the Forum theatre performance.
- Request people to volunteer to play the Joker.
- Use an anonymous ballot to decide which participants would play the Jokers. Participants can vote for any two people.
- Once the Jokers are chosen, the newly formed groups get together to detail out how they would enact the play. They get 30 minutes to discuss.
- Sit with the jokers and go through their roles. They have to :
 - Introduce themselves to the audience
 - Welcome the audience
 - Describe **their** journey of TO – one or two instances per Joker
 - Describe the forum theatre format to the audience
 - Explain how various ideas were brainstormed and would be enacted by small teams
 - Introduce each team before their performance and depart from the stage
 - After the performance, re-enter the stage and ask the audience for their reactions
 - Keep encouraging the spect-actors to Stop the play and come to the stage
 - Encourage dialogue in the audience members
 - Move on to the next performance
- Indicate that you would be present throughout the performance to support them.
- Encourage the Jokers to spend time together planning how they would facilitate the

forum theatre performances.

- During this time that you spend with the Jokers, the other groups continue to plan their short plays. Give them a half-time and then a 5 minute time remaining alert.
- Encourage the groups to come and ask you any clarifications.
- At the end of 30 minutes, everyone gets into a big circle.
- Groups present their short performances
- Then the performing group has a short dialogue about what they really wanted to showcase and whether the oppression was clear.
- The rest of the group provides their feedback.
- You may also provide your feedback. You may choose to do it later in one-to-one sessions with the groups.

Closure Activity

Choose any from Annexure 2.

During the workshop I attended, I played the role of the Joker with another participant. Although it was wonderful to be selected to play this key role, I felt quite un-prepared and nervous. I felt that there was almost no time to practice.

Your participants might feel the same.

What matters is how you show confidence and trust in their ability. Remind them that they have been doing TO activities for over 12 hours now and YOU feel that they are ready.

It is important to listen to their fears and performance anxiety but not let those fears get them stuck. They need support, encouragement and confidence from you in THEIR ability. Don't worry, they will create Magic.

Session 10

Warm Up Activity- Check In

See Annexure 1.

Main Activity – Acting Games

(inspired by Stanislavsky methods)

- Everyone gets into a circle
- Now explain that you would do some acting games in preparation for the Forum theatre performances.
- Give the following instructions:
 - “Without looking, count the change in your pocket”
 - “Mentally calculate a math problem (say 1234×657)”
 - “Study the physical make up of your fingers. Look out for what makes them different from those of others - nails, marks, skin texture”
 - “Try to silently suggest an idea to your neighbor”
 - “Imagine that you are eating soup. Eat soup as if a great tragedy has happened. Eat it as if you won a lottery”
 - “Imagine that you have a ball in your hand. Notice the roundness of the ball. Throw it in the air and then catch it. Press it and experience how it resists.”
- Now everyone will walk around the room and call out the wrong name of what they see. For instance, when someone sees the curtain, she says book; when someone sees the carpet, she says sky; when someone sees the blackboard, he says curtain and so on. (*It often makes us see things afresh*)
- Keep doing this for 5 minutes.
- Regroup and ask for reflections.

Main Activity -Forum theatre 2

Rationale

Rehearsal for performance and a deeper understanding of the role of the joker.

Process

- Everyone gets into their small groups and spends 10 minutes going over their performance.
- The Jokers too discuss how they would introduce each performing group.

For me, spending time with the other Joker, was extremely useful. We got to know each other's way to reacting to the audience. We divided our tasks and talked about how we will present different groups and jump in to facilitate.

*I would strongly recommend **you** encouraging the groups to spend time outside the session. It does not have to be spent on rehearsals. Even if they meet and play together, it would build camaraderie.*

- Do an end-to-end rehearsal of the whole performance.

Debrief Questions:

How did it go?

Any last minute improvements or changes?

Closure Activity

Buzz. While the participants buzz, express your gratitude and optimism. Remind them of the time and day of the performance and ensure that everyone is there at least 30 minutes before the performance begins.

Final Performance Day

- Be at the performance area at least an hour before the time.
- Ensure that the stage area is clear. Ensure that props (if they are used) are available.
- Ensure that there is enough ventilation, the temperature is comfortable and there is enough seating.
- Welcome the community as it begins to come to the event.

Warm up Activity

- Do a check on how the group is feeling. Some anxiety is expected and even welcome.
- When everyone from the group has reached, get into a circle and hold hands.
- Everyone closes their eyes , takes a deep breath in, holds it for a few seconds and then breathes out. They do this breathing exercise 4-5 times.
- Ask the group to visualize themselves on the stage and everything going perfectly. Make a positive image.
- Take a collective deep breath again. Exhale.
- Everyone gets into their groups

Main Activity - Performance

Be there. Ensure that Jokers can see you all the time. You might need to cue them to move on or to encourage spect-actors to come to stage. Sometimes, people need that push to come to stage. Smile, if things go great. Smile, even if they don't.

Closure Activity

Choose any from Annexure 2. But this time involve the whole audience if possible.

Way forward – How to keep the practice alive

- Encourage the participants to keep in touch – if they are from different schools / grades, pass around a paper (say in Session 9) to capture their contact details, make copies and distribute one to each. Include your name and details too.
- Remind them that the power to bring change is always with them.
- Guide them on further TO resources.
- If someone shows an interest in making a project on TO methods or linking TO to their curriculum, follow up and help as much as you can.
- Create opportunities to meet. If possible, mail them when you are coming to the same city or locality and meet outside to talk about TO.
- Get the school community involved. Do workshops with parents of the students or school staff.
- Be positive even if you do not see any change in participant behavior after the workshop. It takes time for people to act in new ways.

Invisible theatre – a brief introduction and ethical issues

During my workshop, we spent a few sessions on discussing Invisible theatre which finally culminated in Invisible theatre performances around the campus.

Let me take the case of one of the groups who did a short performance on Sexism. This is my rendition of what they did, the actual details would slightly differ.

They (a group of four) went to a cafe. A (a male) and B (a female, acting as his girlfriend) went in first while C and D (the other group members) came in after 5 minutes. A spilled a glass of water and ordered B to get paper tissues and wipe the water from the floor. Although the waiter in the cafe offered to clean up, A refused and said something to the effect that B will do what he will command her – and that it was B's job anyways to clean up as she was the woman.

At this point, C who was seated on the next table, objected to this sexist behavior. Since A was loud enough, most people in the cafe knew what was happening. A asked C to mind his own business. Now D who was seated on another table, got into the act and began to provoke the customers in the cafe to act.

Some of them also took a stand against A and he was forced to leave the cafe' with B.

This led to a lengthy discussion in the cafe on how sexism is still ingrained and how we need to stand up to it.

Although this seems like a case of “happy ending”, to me, it would be simplistic to justify it that way. The audience were unaware people caught into a performance without any idea that this was a set-up.

What if they did get to know that this was an act? How will that make them feel?

What if they decide not to stand-up, in future, when they see an injustice thinking that it might be a set-up?

Also, what happens, when this triggers a strong emotional response in someone? Would C and D be skillful enough to handle such a situation?

For me, therefore, Invisible theatre is tricky. I do see its value (the ends) but somehow the method (the means) make me wary of its usage. I leave the decision to include an Invisible theatre to You. For me, at present, it is a no-go.

Annexure 1 – Warm Up Activities

Amoeba Tag

This is another tag game. One of the participants is chosen as the amoeba. An amoeba is a single-cell life form with the characteristic. It moves slowly towards its food, engulfs it and then carries on. So, this participant has to move slowly – just like an amoeba and whoever she touches, joins her and the amoeba expands. It works better if the participant menacingly shouts “amoeebaaa” as she moves to give the impression of a predator. As the number of participants who get caught increases, the amoeba becomes bigger and is usually more difficult to escape from.

Lines of four

(requires a music player with loud speakers)

Excellent after a long deep session of dialogue and debrief. This is an instant energy charger.

Everyone moves around the space and gets into lines of four. The person in the front is the leader. He or she will listen to the music and make a dance step which the people behind him will mimic and follow. As soon as you change the music, he or she will move to the end of the line and the next person in line is the new leader. Change the music every 10-15 seconds. Play for at least 5 minutes.

Going within

(Borrowed from Authentic Movement: credited to Daphne Lowell)

Requires empty space – enough for participants to move around comfortably. 8-10 minutes.

SILENCE is a must.

Ask participants to walk around (2 minutes). Then ask them to stop and lie down such that they have enough space around them to stretch their limbs or roll a couple of times without getting into each other's way. Ask them to go within and lie silently for a couple of minutes. Go through these instructions slowly.

“Raise your arms as if you are stretching towards the ceiling..feel the energy in your arms, your fingers....now slowly relax your shoulders in such a way that the arms remain up but you can

hold this posture.....now slowly bring your arms down and cross them across your chest...CLOSE YOUR EYES....deep breath in.....exhale...another deep breath...exhale.....Go within yourself and feel the sensations, the different nerves within your body.....Try and listen to what it says....Experience areas where there is pressure....Just notice them...how they move as you shift.

Shift to another position, whatever your body feels like moving into...maybe more comfortable, maybe more stretched...whatever feels right...Follow your intuition...Notice where your head is.....shift your head a bit and let your body follow as the position of the head changes....feel the gravity. (Repeat instructions in this paragraph –feel free to modify them or add to them so that most participants go through at least 3-4 postures).

Experiment with stillness if you feel like. If the body feels like moving, move it....if your thoughts wander..gently bring them back to your body.

Now slowly come out of this and start getting up at your own pace...be gentle and let your body decide when to get up on your feet....”

(I find this an excellent warm up to bring participants fully to a space)

Check in

This is a quick activity to highlight (in a fun kinesthetic way) how everyone is feeling .

Get the group in a circle. Give the following instruction:

“ Now we will do a quick Check In. I want you to show how you are feeling right now. You can use your body or any sounds – but no words.”

It could be useful that when you do this the first time, you volunteer to be the first one to show how you are feeling. Be honest and dont think too much. Once you have shown your movement and/or sound, encourage the person on your left or right to go next and then go around the circle. There is no evaluation. Encourage laughter.

When you do the check in the next time, you can ask someone else to begin if they feel like.

More Theatre warm-up activities at <http://www.creativedrama.com/theatre.htm>

Annexure 2 – Closure Activities

The Magic Box

(Inspired by Becca Greene-Vanhorn, Hampshire College)

- Everyone stands in a circle.
- Silently, everyone thinks of two experiences that stood out to them from today's lesson.
- Have everyone pull those two experiences from where the memories of them hang in the air.
- Participants should hold their experiences between their palms.
- There is a big imaginary box in the middle of the circle in which everyone will put their two experiences. They hold their palms up to their lips, take a deep breath, and blow their experiences into the box.
- Everyone takes another deep breath and blows on the box really hard to push in the sides of the box. They do this three or four times.
- Once they have shrunk the box (imagine!), everyone rubs their palms together, and they use the magic in our fingers to make the box levitate.
- Everyone takes a deep breath and blows on it one more time to smash the box against the ceiling.
- The box breaks into a million tiny pieces that float down silently – like snowflakes.
- Let everyone close their eyes and soak in the experience, smile and quietly exit the room.

Buzz

Everyone stands in a circle- holding hands. They make a buzzing sound, similar to that of a bee. Their left palm is facing up and their right palm is facing down -as if they are receiving this energy from the person on the left, letting it pass through them, charging them up and then sharing it with the person on the right through their right hand. While they do so, you talk about what was done during the session and thank everyone for participating fully in the session. Give encouragement and stress the team spirit (TO can be hard for the participants,

they fully need this!!). Say that at the count of 3, they will release their powerful energy by freeing their hands, throwing their arms up and saying ZAP. Count to 3 and “ZAP”.

Check in

This is the same quick activity as in the Annexure on Warm Ups to highlight (in a fun kinesthetic way) how everyone is feeling . To repeat:

Get the group in a circle. Give the following instruction:

“ Ok..so before we leave..let us do a quick Check In. I want you to show how you are feeling right now. You can use your body or any sounds – but no words.”

It could be useful that when you do this the first time, you volunteer to be the first one to show how you are feeling. Be honest and dont think too much. Once you have shown your movement and/or sound, encourage the person on your left or right to go next and then go around the circle. There is no evaluation- encourage laughter.

Pass the gift

Everyone gets into a circle. You use your hands to mime a flower and pass it on to the person on your left. The recipient of the imaginary flower can either pass it on to the next person or transform the gift into something else. All this is done SILENTLY. End with applause.

Annexure 3- Useful Resources

Books

1. **Theatre of the Oppressed** by Augusto Boal – *a theoretical introduction to the practice. Provides the historical underpinnings of different kinds of theatre.*
2. **Rainbow of desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy** by Augusto Boal – *looks at internalized oppression (Cop in the Head). A wonderful read on individual liberation.*
3. **Games for actors and non-actors** by Augusto Boal – *a storehouse of games and activities. An essential companion to this Manual.*
4. **An Actor Prepares** by Constantin Stanislavsky – *the book is a "mock diary" of an actor describing a series of exercises and rehearsals in which he participates. He details his own emotional and intellectual reactions to each effort, and how his superficial tricks and mannerisms begin to disappear as he increasingly gives over his conscious ego to a faith in the creative power of his subconscious. Wonderfully easy to read and apply.*
5. **Free Play** by Stephen Nachmanovitch – *A book on creativity like none other. Very inspirational. I recommend it to come up with adaptations of TO games.*
6. **Zen of Groups** by Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey, and Bill Taylor – *If there is a book which helps you understand group dynamics and also showcase various techniques to understand and monitor group energy, this is it. Also read **The Art of Facilitation** by the same authors.*

Articles

1. **From Freire to Boal** by Hernan Flores – *a meeting with Boal where he explains the Freirian philosophy as inspiration for TO.*
2. **Democratic Process and the Theater of the Oppressed** by Marie-Claire Picher - *describes the methodology of the Theater of the Oppressed with examples.*
3. **Theatre for Learning** by Bertolt Brech and Edith Anderson – *Explains epic theatre and didactic theatre.*
4. **The Cop in the Head: Three Hypotheses** by Augusto Boal and Susana Epstein

5. **Interactive Theater and Self-Efficacy** by Suzanne Burgoyne, Peggy Placier, Mallory Thomas, Sharon Welch, Clyde Ruffin, Lisa Y. Flores, Elif Celebi, Noor Azizan-Gardner, and Marilyn Miller - *advantages and drawbacks of using interactive theater for faculty development on multicultural issues.*
6. **Invisible theatre, ethics, and the adult educator** by Bonnie Borstow – *Answers questions like : What are invisible theatre's claims to ethicality? How valid are the claims? Are the claims and practices compatible with adult education principles? And how might invisible theatre be conducted more ethically?*
7. **Living Newspaper Theatre and Therapy** by John W. Casson - *historical development of Living Newspapers and the therapeutic value of this technique.*

Websites

<http://www.janasanskriti.org/> -TO in India

<http://brechtforum.org/> -Workshops and more

www.theatreoftheoppressed.org –international organization for TO

<http://www.toplab.org/> -A laboratory on TO

<http://prezi.com/10dgc4d3pmhp/theatre-of-the-oppressed/> -my presentation on TO

References

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