TWIN CITY PLAYERS
Cultural Appropriation Policy
Approved May 18, 2021

TCP CULTURAL APPROPRIATION POLICY SUMMARY

TCP commits to:

- Promote artist, staff, and board awareness of cultural appropriation and why it is harmful.
- Establish a process for identifying, reporting, addressing, and communicating about incidents of cultural awareness at TCP.
- Provide open access to TCP's full cultural appropriation policy document.
- Address artists, staff or board members who exhibit patterns of harmful expression and/or a failure to follow reporting procedures through education, policy, or terminating employment.

TCP expects artists, employees, and board members to:
- Educate themselves about cultural expression and cultural appropriation.
- Follow TCP reporting procedures when they become aware of cultural appropriation.
- Follow TCP Reporting Procedures when others report to them cultural appropriation.
- Read and agree to these bullet points

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
I have read and understand TCP's Cultural Appropriation Policy Summary. I agree to follow TCP reporting procedures when I see potentially harmful artistic content, as well as when concerns about potentially harmful content are reported to me. I have access to TCP's full Cultural Appropriation Policy Document as well as access to TCP's reporting procedures.

GOALS

This document has the following goals

- To build a shared understanding of how art represents and appropriates culture
- To establish policy and process for addressing harmful cultural representation and appropriation

This policy, as drafted in April 2021, is intended as a starting point for learning together and holding each other accountable. This document should continue to develop with input and with the lessons learned from putting these procedures into practice.

This policy is NOT intended to shame or banish individual acts of cultural misappropriation. This document does lay out a process that, if needed, may result in course corrective action. But the goal here is conversation and not condemnation.

DEFINITIONS

The definitions below are intended to build shared vocabulary around this work.

- **Culture**: a set of common beliefs that hold people together. These common beliefs give rise to social practices, and social practices are imbued with meaning. (Cultural theorist Stuart Hall)
- **Cultural Content**: Refers to the symbolic meaning, artistic dimension and cultural values that originate from or express cultural identities. (UNESCO)
- **Cultural Expressions**: Those expressions that result from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies, and that have cultural content. (UNESCO)
- **Cultural Representation**: Cultural representation refers to the way we use language, discourse and images to produce meaning. "the use of photography in the construction of national identity and culture; the poetics and politics of exhibiting other cultures in ethnographic museums; fantasies of "the racialized other" in popular media, film and image; the construction of masculine identities in discourses of consumer culture and advertising; and the gendering of narratives in television soap operas." (American Psychological Association)
- **Cultural Oppression/ Cultural Imperialism**: Cultural Oppression is the intentional disadvantage of groups of people based on their identity while members of the dominant group receive an advantage - this can manifest based on cultural groups. "Imperialism" here refers to the creation and maintenance of unequal relationships between civilizations, favoring a more powerful civilization. Cultural imperialism involves the normalization of a dominant group's experience as universal. This phenomenon promotes and imposes cultural expectations of the dominant group on the less powerful or marginalized group. (National Equity Project, Beyond Intractability, Five Faces of Oppression)
- **Cultural Appropriation**: Cultural Appropriation happens when someone who is part of a dominant culture adopts aspects of a culture that had been oppressed by that dominant culture outside of its original cultural context. Cultural Appropriation is different from cultural exchange or cultural assimilation. Cultural exchange can only happen between equal cultures. Cultural assimilation happens when someone who is part of a less

dominant culture takes on aspects of a more dominant culture in order to survive conditions hostile to their less dominant culture.

NEED

With the definitions above, we can assume that cultural appropriation DOES and WILL happen at TCP. Art is cultural expression. Artists absorb culture in their training, and cultural content comes out in artistic expression. Because TCP sometimes shares stories across cultures, TCP artists frequently absorb and express techniques, ideas and stories from cultures other than their own. Human beings, and especially people who are part of dominant cultures, often do not see cultural appropriation when it happens. If we cannot always prevent harmful cultural appropriation from happening, TCP as a cultural organization has a responsibility to identify and address harmful appropriation of culture when we see it.

PROCESS

This policy relies on the following actions:
1. Identifying potentially harmful expression (the responsibility of each individual)
2. Reporting the concern (the responsibility of artists, employees, and board members)
3. Assessing the situation (the responsibility of board and staff leadership, though other help may be needed)
4. Taking action (the responsibility of board and staff leadership)
5. Following up

Identifying potentially harmful expression
People from dominant cultures are often unaware of harmful cultural representation or appropriation. Developing awareness of the impacts of dominant culture is a personal process. Artists, employees, and board members at TCP are likely to be spread across a spectrum of awareness. The following are suggestions for what questions a person might ask themselves and when they might ask these questions.

> Some questions to ask yourself:
> ● What cultural content is being presented and from what culture? In what ways is this an oppressed culture?
> ● Who is presenting the cultural content and what is their connection to the culture being represented?
> ● Who might be offended by the way the cultural content is being presented and why?
>
> When should you ask these questions? There are many points in the artistic process when a person might become aware that cultural appropriation might have occurred, and people in many roles (more than those listed below) who might become aware.
> ● In critical thinking about how to engage with the public in art making
> ● Earliest stages of project development
> ● Sharing ideas with a project team
> ● Writing a grant proposal

- Developing a project budget
- Hiring staff and artists for a project
- Rehearsals and readings
- Previews and performances
- Feedback processes

Reporting a concern

When a TCP artist, employee, or board member identifies potentially harmful cultural appropriation, TCP expects that person to communicate this with others. Depending on the situation, this may be an uncomfortable conversation to have. Comfort and safety in communication is important to identifying and addressing harmful cultural appropriation as early as possible in the process to avoid further harm. Below are suggestions on how to navigate potentially uncomfortable communication.

The simplest way to resolve a concern is often directly between the individuals involved. This does not always feel safe or appropriate, so TCP suggests considering reporting concerns to others in the following order. If the concerned person does not feel comfortable with reporting to the first person on the list, or is not satisfied with the outcome, then consider the second person on the list, then the third, et cetera.

1. The person directly responsible for the cultural representation or appropriation
2. The Business Manager
3. The Board Chair
4. Any other board member

Assessing the situation

Once a concern has been reported, the person receiving the report is responsible for assessing the concern and taking appropriate action. If a concern is reported to you in your role at TCP, your responsibilities include:

- Understanding the concern. You might start by discussing the questions listed above under "Identifying potentially harmful expression". Taking written notes will be helpful later in the process.
- Understanding whether the person reporting to you wants to remain anonymous. Make sure the person reporting understands that you will protect their anonymity if they wish, though protecting anonymity sometimes limits the kinds of actions that can be taken.
- Determining whether to address this yourself or to include others.
  - Maybe you are very familiar with the work and the people involved, and you feel confident asking for changes or making the changes yourself. If you address the concern on your own, assess whether the person who reported to you is satisfied with that outcome. Please still inform your direct supervisor/project, business manager, or board chair the decisions you make and the actions you take.
  - Maybe you are uncomfortable addressing the concern on your own, or you want support in determining who should take action and what action should be taken. Report the situation using the list of those to report to under Reporting a Concern previously mentioned. They will then be responsible for this same set of steps.

It may not be immediately clear who is qualified to assess the cultural content of a project, whether that content is problematic, and what actions should be taken. Here are some ideas for where that assessment work might be most appropriate:
- One on one conversation
- Conversation among members of a project team
- Conversation among board members and staff
- Conversation with people outside the organization
  - People outside the org who report concerns
  - Consultants representing the cultures being discussed

Some additional questions to ask:
- Whose project is this? (who developed it?, who will own the intellectual property?)
- Who is communicating cultural content (the writer, director, designer, performer)?
- Who is responsible for the cultural content of this work?
- Who is responsible for assessing the cultural content of this work?
- Who has been hurt and what damage has been done?
- Whose feedback do we need and how will we get their feedback?
- What are we willing/able to do/change based on what we learn?

Taking action on potentially harmful expression
The board of directors is responsible for approving organizational policy and is responsible for addressing the performance of those working on behalf of TCP.

While we cannot foresee every action that may be needed after harmful cultural expression has occurred, we can imagine that appropriate actions may include:
- Requesting changes to a project
- Terminating a project, terminating individual production team members or volunteers
- Changing organizational policy
- Following up with people affected by the situation.

Following Up
Once actions have been determined, or once actions have been taken, the person/group who made decisions and took action should do the following:

Document what happened so that we can carry forward the lessons learned. Board members and/or directors should submit a written report to the board chair.

Consider whether it is appropriate to communicate with:
- Individuals harmed by the cultural content
- Individuals who reported concerns (Reminder: did they wish to remain anonymous?)
- Artists or others asked to make changes
- Other artists, board and/or staff
- The general public

In any of these cases, it may be helpful to:
- Thank people for their participation in the process.
- Let them know what process was used and who assessed needed actions.
- Let them know what actions were taken/will be taken.
- Let them know what they can do according to our reporting procedures if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Finally, once all other steps are complete, it may be helpful to review how well this policy and these procedures served the situation, and whether updates are needed.

Examples
Below are some examples of how the process might work:

Example 1: An artist discusses an idea for a project with TCP staff. After the conversation, the staff member feels uncomfortable with some of the cultural content. Staff might feel comfortable communicating their concern directly with the artist who can consider changes. Other staff might be pulled in to recommend an appropriate team to review the work and give feedback to the artist.

Example 2: An artist hired to work on a project perceives cultural content in the project as problematic. They might bring their concern directly to the project's director. That lead artist might thank them for the feedback and make changes directly to the project. The concerned artist may feel more comfortable bringing their concern to the Business Manager or a board member. The staff or board member who receives this concern asks clarifying questions including whether the artist reporting their concern would like to remain anonymous. That staff or board member brings the concern to staff or board leadership (whomever they report to). Leaders assess the concern and make recommendations to the project leaders, who enact recommended changes. As possible, decision makers communicate their process, recommendations and outcomes to the concerned artist.

Example 3: One or more audience members express concern over the cultural content of a project. The board assesses whether or not it is useful or appropriate to follow up with the audience member(s) with clarifying questions. The board then assesses the concern and what changes would be necessary. If possible, the board works with the project leaders to enact recommended changes. The board replies to concerned audience member(s) thanking them for their feedback, explaining the process that was used to address their concerns, and what changes were made. If needed, a public statement is issued acknowledging the concern and describing outcomes. If needed, the board recommends changes to the project review process.

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AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

The most effective tool for addressing cultural appropriation is increasing awareness and supportively educating one another so that harmful appropriation is avoided altogether. Below are online resources identified as potentially helpful in understanding and avoiding cultural appropriation. These resources are not affiliated with Twin City Players and are included as additional research tools.

What's Wrong with Cultural Appropriation? These 9 Answers Reveal Its Harm
https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/cultural-appropriation-wrong/
1. It Trivializes Violent Historical Oppression
2. It Lets People Show Love for the Culture, But Remain Prejudiced Against Its People
3. It Makes Things 'Cool' for White People – But 'Too Ethnic' for People of Color
4. It Lets Privileged People Profit from Oppressed People's Labor
5. It Lets Some People Get Rewarded for Things the Creators Never Got Credit For
6. It Spreads Mass Lies About Marginalized Cultures
7. It Perpetuates Racist Stereotypes
8. White People Can Freely Do What People of Color Were Actively Punished for Doing
9. It Prioritizes the Feelings of Privileged People Over Justice for Marginalized People.

Hey, you got a little racism stuck in your teeth
Blog post by Vu Le in Nonprofit AF
https://nonprofitaf.com/2016/08/flossing-and-the-dental-hygiene-paradigm-of-race-discourse/

A Guide to Understanding and Avoiding Cultural Appropriation
https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-appropriation-and-why-iits-wrong-2834561
1. Why are you "borrowing" this? Is it out of a genuine interest? Is it something you feel called to do? Or, does it simply look appealing and you're following the trends?
2. What is the source? For material items such as artwork, was it made by someone from that culture? What does this item mean to them?
3. How respectful is this to the culture? What would someone from that group feel about it?

5 Simple Questions That'll Help You Avoid Unintentional Cultural Appropriation
https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/05/avoid-cultural-appropriation/
1. To What Ethnic/Racial/Cultural Group Does the Practice or Artifact Belong?
2. How Is the Group that the Practice or Artifact Belongs to Oppressed?
3. Do You Benefit from Doing This? How?
4. Why Might It Make Someone Uncomfortable?

5. What Makes It Possible for You to Engage with this Practice, Tradition, or Material?

How to Avoid Cultural Appropriation & Promote Cultural Awareness Instead
https://www.commisceo-global.com/blog/how-to-avoid-cultural-appropriation-promote-cultural-awareness-instead
1. Research the Culture
2. Avoid the Sacred
3. Don't Stereotype
4. Promote Diversity
5. Engage, Promote & Share Benefits

Systematic Oppression https://nationalequityproject.org/resources/featured-resources/lens-of-systemic-oppression
1. Explanation of the Lens of Systematic Oppression
2. List of questions to ask in order to use this perspective

Forms of Oppression:
https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/Forms_of_Oppression
1. Distributive Injustice
2. Procedural Injustice
3. Retributive Injustice
4. Moral Exclusion
5. Cultural Imperialism

Five Faces of Oppression
https://mrdevin.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/five-faces-of-oppression.pdf
1. Exploitation
2. Marginalization
3. Powerlessness
4. Culture of Silence
5. Cultural Imperialism