



Transnational Youth Initiative



**VULCANICA
MUNTE**
Take the initiative



Workshop Description

Mindfulness Exchange in Italy “GO Alive”

Title:	THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED- FORUM THEATRE
Objectives:	<p><i>“Within this fathom-long body, lies the world of suffering, its cause, and its liberation”</i> <i>Gautama</i> <i>Buddha</i></p> <p>All oppression involves the body—the body holds and reflects the experience of its oppression. Fear, anxiety, and oppression bleed their way into the habits of our human expression, trapping, binding, and shutting down our natural spontaneity and aliveness, making us mechanized, divided, and imbalanced in our bodies and our minds and isolated, aggressive, or confused in our relationships and interactions. The original form of mindfulness—the mind’s capacity to observe itself, reflect, and transform—is theatre. This workshop will explore the rich, deep, powerful practices of mindfulness, dishabituation, and embodiment within the technique of Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, in the aim of transforming and finding liberation through somatic and energetic awareness in the personal, interpersonal, and political dimensions.</p> <p>Augusto Boal, in his experiments to create a people’s theatre” in Brazil in the 1980’s, stumbled upon a democratized model of theatre that turns the stage into a forum where audience and actors can act out strategies for the overcoming of oppression. In the Theatre of the Oppressed’(Boal, 2000, 2002) the audience are not spectators but spect-actors, who intervene in the play performed by taking on the role of the protagonist and enacting what they would do in the situation depicted; showing to the other spect-actors how they would deal the antagonists. Theater is emphasized not as a spectacle but as an embodied language designed to: 1) analyse and discuss problems of oppression and power; and 2) explore group solutions to these problems.</p> <p>In giving permission to breach the fourth wall between actors and audience something very interesting happens to the consciousness of audiences.</p>

	<p>In this way, participants can develop mindfulness by observing themselves in action; thus we can amend, adjust and alter our actions to have different impact and to change our world.</p> <p>One of the main techniques in the Theatre of the Oppressed is called Forum Theatre. A play is performed depicting an unresolved oppression and is re-performed with an invitation to anyone in the audience; to intervene and replace the actor playing the person whom they identify as being the oppressed person (the protagonist) in the original play, and show what they would do to resolve such a situation.</p> <p>In particular, the Forum theatre is a problem-solving technique in which an unresolved scene of oppression is presented. It is then replayed with the audience invited to stop the action, replace the character they feel is oppressed, struggling, or lacking power, and improvise alternative solutions. This structure, probably the most famous in T.O.'s "arsenal", can be used to explore past and current situations, or as a "rehearsal for the future".</p>
Duration :	60 minutes
Materials needed:	Objects to improvise scenes and roles
Step by step instruction:	<p>A. Choose scenarios, and pen a script. You can also ask participants to choose a story for which it seems particularly difficult to imagine creative and productive approaches or resolutions. Take ten minutes or so to produce a skit that dramatizes the story. Generative scenarios should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● relevant to participants' lives, ● specific and discrete so that moments (1) manifest oppression and (2) can be reflected on in roughly an hour, ● open to different interpretations and alternative interventions, and ● written to dramatize interaction patterns. <p>B. Walk through the action once. The Spect-Actors should perform the story/skit once all the way through. Spect-Actors choose roles and then re-create the scenario as it is understood by the group. After watching and participating in the action, the group may stop to reflect or may move onto the next step, wherein Spect-Actors begin to alter the scenario, trying different interventions.</p> <p>C. Alter the action. The second time through the performance (i.e., starting over in "replay" mode), any Spect-Actor may stop the action. After calling halt, a Spect-Actor steps into a role and changes the script in any way they choose. Other Spect-Actors must adapt, enacting a different course of action.</p> <p>D. Process what happened, and name observed intervention strategies. After observing and participating in the altered scene, the group reflects together on what worked (and what didn't); who was assumed to have responsibility and agency to make change (and why); and what alternate interventions might be tried. In the case of the sample scenario, the group would want to process who made interventions and who continued the conversation as scripted, as reflecting on agency, power, and privilege are essential to making change.</p>

	<p>E. Repeat with newly altered action and with new collaborative processing. As time allows, replay the scenario multiple times with different agents making change and trying alternatives. With each repeat, again ask “wicked questions,” or those questions the group most needs to reckon with. And continue to name and track interventions toward developing a repertoire of tactical and strategic moves.</p>
<p>Additional Suggestions:</p>	<p>Theatre of the oppressed involves other techniques to enhance awareness and to encourage to find solution to what is oppressing us and the reality, in general. You can find explanation of other techniques here: http://www.mandalaforchange.com/site/applied-theatre/theatre-of-the-oppressed/</p> <p>You can also find examples of activities (even shorter) in this interesting manual for educators about Theatre of the oppressed: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=cie_capstones</p>
<p>Other comments:</p>	<p>Explaining video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcLcXeXJVDU</p> <p>Slides instructions: https://www.slideshare.net/openstagetheater/guide-to-forum-theater</p>
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