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**THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED TECHNIQUES AS  
“IN/JUSTICE THEATRE:”  
Workshop on Death Penalty Issues**

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This workshop specifically involves anti-death penalty and human rights activists, death row inmate family members, death row exonerates, victims of violence against the death penalty, legislators, lawyers, and other concerned citizens wanting to change legislation on death row policies within Texas and/or the United States.

Workshop Purpose

In collaboration with the Eye and Tooth Project, an Amnesty International Human Rights Theater group from Houston, we will conduct a Theater of the Oppressed workshop in Austin in spring 2006. Through collaboration and sharing of ideas and approaches, workshop facilitators may use in part or in entirety the plan below for the upcoming workshop. The workshop is mutable as facilitators finalize details and structure before early spring. The workshop will happen over a three-day period culminating to about twenty hours.<sup>1</sup> Workshop space may be limited to no more than twenty-five people.

To apply Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed theories and techniques is to make theater a vehicle for engaging in dialogue and “dynamizing” sensitive issues, including the death penalty. Issues of mourning, grief, hatred, hopelessness, and hundreds of other complicated emotions may come up.<sup>2</sup> In the initial moments of the

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<sup>1</sup> Four meals may be provided for the group. Participants will arrive around 2pm on the first day (Friday). We will have dinner together and reconvene at 9 am on Saturday. Lunch and dinner will happen on Saturday. Sunday we meet at 9am to close with a final lunch together. The sharing of food and conversation can help build group solidarity, friendship, and networking.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the very real emotional fragility of intensive reflection and self-referential format of Theater of the Oppressed, I suggest we invite therapists as active witnesses or as possible co-facilitators with the joker-facilitators. When interviewing a family member of a victim of violent crime, I mentioned

workshop, facilitators will announce that every participant has the right to engage in serious play, active attention, and self-care taking. Be aware of personal boundaries, but also be willing to take risks. By using theater skills, group facilitators can help participants unravel barriers, complexities, and other problems confronting their activist efforts.

### Target Groups

The campaign to abolish the death penalty is a global issue. For the spring workshop, facilitators of this workshop may inquire target groups if this workshop would be beneficial to their group in understanding, exploring, or addressing complexities about death penalty issues and activism. Such groups include, but are not limited to: Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty; Coalition to End the Death Penalty; National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty; Amnesty International and other human rights organizations; students against the death penalty; Texas Moratorium Network; teachers, counselors, educators; prison reform groups; victim survival groups; *Journey of Hope...from Violence to Healing: The Journey* “storytellers”; Interfaith communities united to end the death penalty; religious groups against the death penalty; legal aid affiliate groups; NAACP; ACLU: Death Penalty Action

### Workshop Objectives

Objectives for this workshop include the following<sup>3</sup>: to assess the needs, risks, and goals of anti-death penalty activism; to acknowledge ourselves as potent tools for

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potentially conducting a TO workshop for activists. Although he was interested in the idea, he warned me that to bring up specific histories, or even to open up the vaults of memory, some people run the risk of relapse into posttraumatic stress syndrome. I have taken this advice very seriously and intend to gauge the energetic and emotional levels of participants. However, a licensed psychologist or counselor provides a professionally trained, insightful perspective and protection.

<sup>3</sup> These objectives are stated in the Eye and Tooth’s workshop outline, which I feel more accurately describes activist needs today than a list of objectives I could only theorize are useful.

social change; to expand the scope of abolitionist networking efforts; to develop strategies for delivering public message on death penalty; to assist sympathetic legislators with direct moratorium efforts; and deepen spiritual, legal and philosophical content on public dialogue about Capital Punishment.

Amnesty International's statement on the death penalty frames the social relevance and importance of abolishing the practice. "Amnesty International does not seek to excuse the perpetrators of violent crime. However, it believes the death penalty is wrong in all cases. This is a punishment that is an affront to human dignity and a part of a culture of violence rather than a solution to it. The death penalty as punishment does not deter crime more effectively than other punishments; it denies the possibility of rehabilitation and reconciliation, carries the risk of irreversible error as well as inconsistent and discriminatory application, and consumes resources that could be used to fight violent crime and assist those affected by it. In addition, in the USA capital justice system is marked by arbitrariness, discrimination and error."<sup>4</sup>

#### Statistics on Death Penalty

Statistics are powerful tools that inform public audiences through less antagonistic, yet rationally cogent tactics. Statistics and sociological studies provide illustrative data that indicate varying degrees of morality and decency through numbers or graphs that, through their scrutinized data, suggest cruelty, racial injustice and class discrimination are ideologies historically rooted in death penalty sentencing. Activists in the workshop will most likely already be aware of statistical data, but informing ourselves on a regular basis with current issues demonstrates that at every moment, death row cases need our attention. This is more of a metaphysical awareness, a way of

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<sup>4</sup> From the Amnesty International website: <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/deathpenalty-index-eng..>

concretizing the inchoate—numbers—into actual bodies. The prominently displayed statistics in the workshop space, along with more detailed handouts for workshop participants to take with them to distribute as they wish after the completion of the workshop, can be incorporated into public forum performances. We could discuss the usefulness of these numbers and edit the handouts with what the group feels would help win support for abolitionist efforts.

The numbers can link up with actual faces and bodies. An important agenda in activism is influencing public audiences that death row prisoners are human beings not the sensationalized monsters represented in the media. Sister Helen Prejean, known for her acclaimed book *Dead Man Walking*, says in a lecture<sup>5</sup> that in this country, there seems to be an unspoken belief that if convicted as guilty, the accused loses his human rights and dignity. Another agenda to think about during the workshop could be methods of strategy on how to dramatize humanizing a prisoner for a live “spect-actor” audience.

Numbers can be overwhelming; therefore, we will also be working on ways to sustain our personal and emotional health. Activism can be draining and thankless, what can we do as activists united in the workshop to help one another through rough times? How can we build strong support systems?

Before the workshop begins, after we have entered the space and formed a circle, we may broadcast the statistics to the group as a way of directly plunging into the purpose of the workshop. If we understand that time is a powerful element in death penalty issues, actual lives, not cold statistics, literally ticking away before the gurney, then it behooves us to validate and remember the heart of the workshop: justice and

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<sup>5</sup> The lecture for the 39<sup>th</sup> annual conference for the American Association of Pastoral Counselors can be heard online at <http://www.moratoriumcampaign.org/>.

dialogue. Paul Heritage, who uses Theater of the Oppressed in prison populations writes, “The essence of Forum [theater with spectators as actors] lies in the dialogic relationship between stage and audience constructed through the use of the space, the performance style, and the conduct of the actors and the Joker. The theatrical goal is to achieve a common purpose with the audience as solutions are sought and rehearsed in a shared, safe space” (30).

### Some statistics for display<sup>6</sup>

- 999 executions have taken place since 1972
- 818 by lethal injection, 152 electrocutions (last one in 2004), 11 by gassing (last in 1999), 3 by hanging (in WA and Delaware, last in 1996), 2 by firing squad (in Utah, last in 1996)
- Texas and Virginia are highest ranking execution states. More than 1/3 in Texas.
- 152 executions under former Gov. GW Bush, 111 under Rick Perry, 3 Federal Executions since GW Bush resumed after 40 years
- Statistics
- Since 1973, the US has released more than 121 people from death row due to evidence of wrongful convictions. Are there more innocents behind bars?
- 2.5 million people incarcerated in US today
- Each execution costs \$1.5 million.

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## **DAY ONE**

Preparing for the weekend, Introductions, Activation

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### Honoring Sacred Space (5 minutes)

The space will be considered sacred. Facilitator draws a large line on the floor with chalk or tape. Participants must cross the line to enter the actual playing space. We line up along the edge of the drawn line. I encourage everyone to look around at the space, to take everything in they see, and focusing not on the specifics in the room, but rather to assess the general environment they will be working intimately within for the

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<sup>6</sup> The statistics listed taken from the December newsletter of Citizens United Against the Death Penalty.

next three days. They can reflect on their expectations, their hopes, and take mental notes of how they feel at this moment. I also encourage them to contemplate their day, then to slowly let the events of the day dissipate once they cross the line.

We take in a group breath, and when participants feel they are ready to work, they may then cross the line. The space is safe place to take risks, to “rehearse for revolution,”<sup>7</sup> to challenge their inhibitions to express themselves before a group in order to get to some of the harder issues that may be hidden or unspoken doing anti-death penalty work. Each time participants enter this space, they are encouraged to remove their shoes, relax their expectations, trust themselves and respect and honor personal boundaries. If they need to leave the space for any reason, they are asked to take a moment to acknowledge the invisible barrier they are crossing into the mundane world, and when returning, into the sacred space.

#### Hopes and Fears Journal (5 minutes)

As participants enter the workshop playing space, they are asked by joker(s)/facilitator(s)<sup>8</sup> to write their hopes and fears about this workshop down on a communal notebook. This notebook will be on hand throughout the workshop. Participants may bring photographs, images, two-dimensional objects, or anything else that articulates their role and/or reason for engaging in community as a social activist. They may paste, cut, crumple, draw, or manipulate this notebook as they see fit, as long as the work of others is not harmed, erased or destroyed. This notebook becomes a

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<sup>7</sup> To understand the theoretical underpinnings for rehearsing for revolution, see Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

<sup>8</sup> Although Boal refers to a “joker” in his Theater of the Oppressed, for the purposes of clarity for a group unfamiliar with Boal, I will use “facilitator” as the person or people that energetically guide the group through the exercises and games.

symbolic object that materially defines the group as a diverse community working together for a specific cause.

#### The Group Circle (5 minutes)

Facilitator encourages everyone to form a circle and look around to see who is here. The facilitator explains that our voices and bodies carry enormous power. Our job these three days is to figure out effective ways of using them in order to bring us closer to abolishing the death penalty. Participants speak their name and offer group a piece of information about themselves that nobody in the group would know.

#### Introduction and Acknowledgement of Each Other (5 minutes)

##### *Community Handshake*

Participants break from the circle and walk around the space. They choose their own stride and speed. After a brief moment of walking around the space, facilitator asks participants to shake the hand of the each person whose eyes they meet. Try to shake everyone hand in the room.

#### Circle Games for Group Play (20 minutes)

##### *Tying the Knot and Unwrapping*

We form a circle again. We try to get ourselves in a knot without letting go of each other's hands. All levels and body positions are acceptable. We try to make the knot as complicated as possible. We then try to untie ourselves without breaking hands.

##### *Gesture/Sound around the Circle*

In a circle, one person makes a sound and a movement simultaneously facing the person on their left. The person on the left tries to mimic the sound and movement. As the

sound and movement moves to the next person and around the circle, the original sound and movement may change. Try this several times around to warm-up the body.

*Clapping around the Circle with Eyes Closed*

To experiment with how much in synchronicity the group may be, we spread a clap around the circle. With eyes closed, one person claps. The person on the right claps and the next person to her claps. This exercise is also about listening and getting a sense of the rhythm formed by individual claps around the circle. Facilitator stops the rhythm and throws a complication into the game. With eyes closed again, we run the same clap sequence, but facilitator starts another that will go a different direction around the circle. Every time a clap is heard coming from the person sitting next to you, you must clap.

SOCIOMETRY (25 minutes)

Getting to know each other in the room through sociograms provides the group with information about their identities, opinions, insights, and most prevalent concerns. While we are making sociograms, participants should try to respond spontaneously and intuitively. Facilitators encourage others to notice each other in the exercise but not in competition or judgment, if possible. Photographs will be taken throughout the rest of the workshop of sociograms, images, and forum scenes as data resource.

*Placing hands on shoulders*

The facilitator asks the following questions. Participants place a hand gently on the shoulder of somebody in the group that best represents the answer to the question.

- Who in the group do you know well? Who would you like to know better?
- Who can express most accurately the group's needs and wants?
- Who has the most experience with activism in this room?

- Who do you admire for their political, social or other activist achievements?
- Who do you think has the most potential to speak out publicly against the death penalty?
- Who holds the most power in this space right now?
- Who holds the most power when he or she is outside of this space?
- Who has overcome unbearable challenges and successes?
- Who do you feel understands this issue best?
- Who is most supportive to your cause in this space?

### SOCIAL BAROMETER

#### *Atomization*

All bodies begin in a huddle in the center of the room. After each statement is read, participants withdraw apart from the central nucleus if they disagree or feel disassociated with the statement or move closer to the center if the statement rings true for them.

- I feel secure with the justice system in the US.
- I am convinced we will defeat death penalty legislation in the US.
- My work is connected more with human rights issues than innocence issues.
- My work involves innocence claims more than human rights issues.
- I feel the death penalty is morally unjust.
- I have mixed feelings about the death penalty.
- I feel alone when working on death penalty activism.
- I feel well supported doing death penalty work

- I am feeling hopeless about changing legislation on the death penalty.
- I have lost a loved one to violent crime.
- I am hopeful about ending the death penalty in America.
- I have no concern or direct involvement with the death penalty.
- I have a loved one on death row.
- I know somebody who was a victim of violent crime.
- I know somebody in prison.
- I have been in prison at one point in my life.
- I am on correctional probation at this time.
- I am energized by confronting justice issues.

#### ACTION SPECTOGRAM

##### *Spectrum*

Participants form a spectrum of high to low responses by standing on an imaginary linear plane drawn in the space. The scale is on 1-10 scale with 10 being “disagree most” and 1 being “most agreeable.” Statements that participants agree wholeheartedly stand nearer to the 1 end, while disagreeing would be located at the 10 end of the spectrum.

- I work best in large groups.
- I am most comfortable working independently.
- I have little investment in political issues.
- Death Penalty is a useful form of legal punishment for crime.

- Violent crime offenses require stricter punishment.
- Prisoners on death row deserve to be there.
- Families should have the right to decide on whether perpetrators receive the death penalty.
- I am spiritually against any state sanctioned capital punishment.
- Prisons in the United States are functioning at their optimal best.
- Lawyers require more incentives for pro bono death penalty defense.
- Organizing public attention around socioeconomic problems is key to abolitionist activism.
- I am afraid of doing activist work in public environments.
- Humanizing death row inmates is essential for abolitionist efforts.

*Break*

Play and Laughter (10 minutes)

*Carnival in Rio*

Essential to keep group morale and energy up, we will begin the next serious play part of the day with an energizing exercise from *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* that Augusto Boal calls “Carnival in Rio” (98).

Form small groups of three to four actors. In each group, individuals count down one to three (or four, if needed). The one person makes a sound and gesture. The other members mimic the sound and gesture of One. Facilitator calls out for Two’s to make a sound and gesture. The same mimicking happens. Once all three have created their sound and gesture, the group returns to each person’s original sound and gesture. This

cacophony of sound and gesture continues until the facilitator announces, “Unify!” The groups must then decide, without words, to unify into one sound and gesture. They are encouraged to move about the space in these groups. After some moments, facilitator suggests that if a person wants to leave one group for another, he may do so but has to unify with the group he joins. The exercise may grow in sound and movement. The facilitator will stop the exercise if it does not dwindle down naturally in order to move to the next segment.

#### IMAGING: PHASE ONE (45 minutes)

##### *Self Sculpting*

Facilitator asks participants to think of one word to describe the death penalty. In a circle, backs towards away from each other, participants self-sculpt an image of that word. We turn to face each other. One person makes the sculpture before the group and while in frozen pose, says the word. Each person does this around the circle.

##### *Partner sculpting*

Participants pair up. Using the same or different word associated with death penalty issues, one person sculpts another into that position, and then places herself into the image. Partners switch out. We go around the circle again as in the previous exercise.

##### *Group sculpting “fishbowl”*

Participants gather in groups of 3-5 people. They are asked to group sculpt their worst fear about the death penalty. Each person in the smaller groups makes an image and places herself within it. She also includes a title to the image. All in the group have an opportunity to make an image and then speak the title. After the groups rehearse moving

through the images at least once, we come back together in a larger group and show our images. After this first section on imaging, participants may take notes or contribute to the communal journal. Discussion is kept to a minimum.

#### FORUM: PHASE ONE (45 minutes)

Smaller groups join together again. Facilitators ask that each person in the group recall a struggle encountered while dealing with death penalty issues. The groups will then sculpt each experience into an image. After all images shared, participants have the option of verbally sharing the stories. The stories need not necessarily be actual experiences from personal history, but could be an incident inspired by a story they have heard. Groups can look for recurring themes in their stories and decide which image to focus on and evolve into a forum piece to show the larger group. For the forum piece, participants must choose a clear protagonist, antagonist and an ally in the situation, if any.

Once we regroup, we engage in short forum theater presentation whereby the spect-actors have the option of stopping the action by calling “freeze” when they feel an alternative approach to solving the protagonist’s problem is feasible.

We spend ending moments of afternoon reflecting, dialoging, and exchanging ideas.

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## DAY TWO

### **The body, power relationships, storytelling, and preparing forum theater**

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In day two, the emphasis is on the body, exploring power in relationship dynamics and storytelling. By the end of day two, we will have created a forum piece that we can further explore in day three.

Warm –up exercise with body movement (20 minutes)

*The Machine*

Facilitators ask participants to think of a movement and sound which can be repeated that focuses on capital punishment. A volunteer enters the center of the circle and activates the sound and movement in a rhythmic pattern. The speed is more slow than fast. Each participant adds to the machine with a different movement and sound. Some participants may choose to stand outside the machine and observe. The facilitator speeds up or slows down the machine. We will then make another machine with a focus on justice.

*The Vampire of Strausberg*

This exercise underscores concepts of exclusion and power. Facilitator explains the process of the game before beginning. Participants need to have eyes closed. One person is designated as the “vampire” who must “bite” other participants by lightly squeezing the back of the shoulders. The vampire needs to walk the space with arms out and reaching. Those not vampires walk with arms crossed around chest. If one person feels the vampire’s squeeze, then they become a vampire. When that happens, they must let out a scream. If two vampires meet, they become human again and let out a loud sigh.

Group check in (lengthy, but useful for facilitators) (30-45 minutes)

The check-in will be framed organically around general questions, such as “How are you doing? What do you feel is working for you? What do you feel is not working for you? Can you describe a moment that sticks out for you from the workshop thus

far?" If severe problems appear, facilitator/jokers may need to do an emergency restructuring of the format of the workshop, but the goal for today is to focus on power dynamics, the body as instrument of information distribution and storytelling as potent mode for message delivery on the death penalty. We will give each person some time to speak without interruption in circle.

Creating, Imaging and Playing with Characters 2 hour 30 minutes

*Child's Dream-what I wanted to be when I grew up*

Half the participants write their name on pieces of paper describing a person, hero, or mythical figure they admired and dreamt of being when they were children. The other half other half of the group witnesses. The first group moves around the space, putting on the characteristics of that person they wrote down. They may not speak but use only their bodies and facial expressions. After a few minutes, facilitators ask them to find a partner and may engage in dialogue without giving away who they might be. They change partners another time and do the same thing. They change partners again. The facilitators then read the names of the participant's one at a time. Participants describe the characteristics that person was doing without guessing the name he wrote down on the page. Describe *how* they were behaving (brave, haughty, strong, sweet, elegant, and so forth.) This exercise not only gets people in touch with their childhood dreams, but also warms them up to creating character with a personality that they have already had some history exploring. We may take a few moments to discuss this exercise.

IMAGING: PHASE THREE

*Group Sculpting*

In groups of three, sculpt one of the following words in each group, as in day one's exercise. The sculptor chooses which word, but does not need to reveal to the group the word until we gather back into a larger circle and display the images in "fishbowl" fashion. Every person in the smaller group has an opportunity to sculpt.

The words are decency, humanity, morality, revenge, punishment, ambivalence and redemption. As the group examines these images, facilitator requests more input from the spect-actors. Are there clear protagonists in these images? If so, what does he/she want? We can also play with "bubble over the head" in which while characters are frozen, someone can stand above them and speak what that person might be thinking.

### *Rashomon*

In this exercise, we will examine different perspectives thematically associated with the death penalty. Facilitator will ask which word image from the previous exercise felt like a closely lived personal experience to somebody. That person is invited to repeat the image that word with the same or different actors. Facilitator asks who each person is in the scene. Is there an antagonist? What does the protagonist want? The central actor must be protagonist in this first situation. They are then asked to improvise dialogue. Facilitators stop the exercise and inquire the audience what they saw happening in the scene. Then the protagonist switches to the antagonist or as performed according to her perspective. After this scene, facilitators inquire participants again what they witnessed. What changed? What stayed the same? This format continues until all characters in the scene have an opportunity to become protagonists. The point of discovery here is to gain insight from different perspectives, each with their individual desires, needs and goals.

### *Image Storytelling*

Playwright Jean Claude Van Itallie created this storytelling exercise as a character development tool for writers. The objective is to recognize that inspiration for story can come from what we already have within us. This is an improvisational exercise with a few ground rules:

- recall a memory; it does not need to be a significant moment, but it may be
- close your eyes and take a step forward
- begin with words, “My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am born in \_\_\_\_\_” (filling in the blanks with your information).
- describe in detail what you see and what you are doing, using ONLY in present tense.
- Never use “AND” while describing the moment. Whenever “and” is spoken, facilitator will say, “no ands,” and the storyteller will need to start the sentence over again.
- Jump ahead to today, and begin again with “My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am born in \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Proceed to describe today moment until the story comes to what feels like a good stopping point. In general, stories tend to close naturally at a point near five minutes.

After each person has spoken their short narrative before the larger group, they partner up into pairs.

Share image story with a partner who then records the story onto paper. The transcriber can say, “Pause,” if the storyteller is speaking too fast for the person to capture. After both partners share, they review the dictated stories, being sure to correct

any major pieces of information not captured during the initial recitation. Try not to make any significant edits. Do not alter the story, as the objective is more about myth making and the development of character than honest representation. These characters of ourselves can be insightful and poignant to participants who do not have opportunities to see an “image” of themselves and their struggles as read through the voice of another.

Each person reads their dictated story to the larger group, using expressive gestures or movements. We take these stories as gems of personal experience and as a way of honoring of each person’s unique journey in the struggle of life and expression. We put this work aside. The stories springboard us into the next set of Boalian exercises on image making.

*Break for lunch*

Rainbow of Desire and Storytelling with Images (2 hours)

IMAGING: PHASE TWO (warming up to storytelling)

The following exercises are from Boal’s *Rainbow of Desire* which focuses more explicitly on personal introspection and the psychological or emotional content of oppressive issues.

*Image and Counter Image*

The group pairs up into partners called pilots and co-pilots. Pilots will be sharing the story, while co-pilots listen and interrogate, asking for more detail in the story. The pilot will then fill in the detail without getting off track from the story. Both of the partner’s eyes can be closed. When the stories have been told (approximately 30 minutes for in-depth storytelling), the group joins together. Facilitators inquire whether the co-pilot felt

satisfied with the vividness of images in the story. The co-pilot must be able to almost feel the same sensations and expressions as the pilot did in the story.

Next, the pairs face opposite directions. They construct an image of oppression, using other members of the group. The pilot constructs the image of the story he had told. This image is a “poetic elaboration; truth, not superficiality” (*Rainbow of Desire*, 89). After the images are created, the protagonist places himself into the image, and the co-pilot mirrors the protagonist in the story in her image.

The rest of the group examines the similarities and differences of these images. Take note of space, posture, facial expressions, and distance. We will avoid telling others the basis of the images in this stage.

To dynamize the images, the protagonist may modify her image up to three times. The co-pilot will do the same image construction but will be focusing on what the pilot could wish and change in her story. Some discussion around these wishes happens.

Participants return to original image and in slow motion shift into the three wishes, except now the other characters in the scene try to block the protagonist’s desires or help them if they feel the character they are portraying would do such things. In this way, we can discover allies or more antagonists. After complete, another exchange of ideas takes place.

Finally, the co-pilot and pilot swap and enter the other’s scene. We repeat the dynamizations again. We see if different truths opened up for the pilot in the exchange. Was it more accurate? Less “realistic?” And why?.

*Multiple Images of Happiness*

Participants self-sculpt into what happiness looks like for them. Make multiple images of this working alone and in groups. What position is preferred over others and why? Does one person's image ring true for another? Does the happiness of one person include the oppression of another?

*24 hour day cycle*

Facilitators lead participants through a physically descriptive cycle of a typical day.

*24 hour day real/ideal*

Same process as above, but now imagine their ideal world if they have every utopian desire they wanted.

We will take some time to discuss how this process felt. We may, if the group feels comfortable, work this cycle imaging ourselves either as someone incarcerated or on death row. What assumptions are we making? What revelations might we have by placing ourselves as "criminals" behind bars? Some death row inmates are locked in their cells 23 hours out of the day. What information does this provide for our work as activists?

The final moments of class will continue around discussion. The communal journal will be passed around for participants to write an emotion, idea, insight, or thought.

*Break for dinner and goodnight.*

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**DAY THREE**  
**Finalizing forum scenes**

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Warm-up

*Gravity games*

Participants play with gravity games. In pairs, they hold hands facing each other and pull on each other's weight. Try to vary the levels. This should become an effortless exchange.

### *Zip-Zap-Zop*

In a circle, everyone repeats the words "zip, zap, zop" several times together. Facilitator then demonstrates that she has a bolt of lightening in her hands. Send the bolt out to another person in the group, fully using body and voice, while saying, "zip." Eye contact must be made with that person before sending the bolt. That person receives the bolt using their whole body and passes it along to someone else saying, "zap," then that person passes the bolt with a "zop." This game is excellent for establishing focus and energizing the group

### More extensive Forum Theater

Reflecting upon all the image and storytelling work we did yesterday, participants break into two groups. Each person in the group spends time to summarize highlights from yesterday. They listen for central ideas or themes that have popped up. One person in the group records some of these themes. Try to find at least five different themes that are touched upon from each person's experiences yesterday.

Take a vote on which theme out of the five is one we would like to spend the most time working on. Make an image of that theme or issue with various people acting as sculptors. Take a moment to discuss a basic scenario or story. Who is the protagonist and oppressor? What does each person want? What actions need to take place in order for characters to get what they want? What other choices or possibilities might there be for characters to achieve their goals or desires? Improvise a scene. It can take place in

several locations if needed to develop storyline. Someone must be a designated joker and not participate in the scene, but rather engage the spect-actors in the audience. Rehearse the forum scene at least once. We gather back into a large group and show our scenes. We watch the scenes in their entirety, and then joker asks the audience questions about the scene. Who is the protagonist? What did she want? Did she get it? Why not? And whatever questions the joker feels engages the audience with the struggles in the scene.

Now, we rerun the scenes, but this time allowing participants to freeze and replace the protagonist in the scene. We may vary these interventions by using “Stop! Think!” in which, one at a time, characters speak the uncensored dialogue running in their heads. Another intervention is “octopus hands” in which one at a time, spect-actors rise, place their hand on a character's shoulder and speak for them.

These forum scenes will become the actual scenes performed by those available and willing to perform for a public presentation in the near future.

From the forum scenes, we have a joker-led discussion on the issues, problems, feelings, or challenges presented by the forum sequences. Several participants simultaneously write onto a large scroll some of the words spoken. Observing our group notes, we separate comments and ideas into thematic categories. Participants then have an opportunity to brainstorm strategies of creating legislative theater from these issues through direct action efforts. Deciding on the next protest, letter writing campaign, lecture series or other activist tactics are some ways of implementing our “Justice Theater” inspirations into dynamic political action. Groups can aim for completion dates for the action or settle on a date for the next meeting to coordinate.

We close the workshop by joining hands in circle. We thank each other for our hard work. The end of the workshop does need not become, as Michael Rohd writes, a “happy ending.” We have made discoveries, confirmed suspicions, shared common experiences, and built trust. We feast together and say our goodbyes for the day.

Facilitators of the workshop schedule a time and place to process the structure of the workshop, identifying the moments that worked, were useful or needed some more clarification. This post-workshop processing is important for any future workshops the group may hold for other communities working as anti-death penalty activists.

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