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## **TALC Editing Session 7/13/20 GROUP THREE NOTES**

### **Discussion notes appear at the end of this Doc**

Instructions:

Please read the following materials. They were compiled from 3 different documents as examples for our potential wording for a Declaration of Purpose in our MN Theater Standards (MNTS). There is a fair amount of repetition between them as the Chicago Theater Standards were templates for the other two documents. As you read through them, you can make comments on the side about your thoughts, good and bad, or suggestions for additional content you would like to see in the MNTS. To leave a comment, double click on text you wish to address and a comment bubble will appear. Click on the bubble and leave your comment.

You will have a group facilitator and note taker to guide you through the process on Monday, to help bring clarity and focus to what we are hoping to gain from this conversation. Thank you for taking the time to read and prepare for this conversation about the MNTS.

Graciously,  
The TALC Admin Circle and Editors

### **CHICAGO STANDARDS | DECLARATION:**

**\*\*Click [here](#) to view full document.**

Arts environments require risk, courage, vulnerability, and investment of our physical, emotional and intellectual selves. Chicago theatre has a history of authenticity and risk on our stages. We are proud of that legacy, and seek to nurture spaces with strong safety--nets – spaces that support great risk without compromising a visceral, authentic and intimate experience for artists and audiences.

When creative environments are unsafe, both the artist and the art can become compromised. Spaces that prize “raw,” “realistic,” “violent,” and otherwise high--risk

material can veer into unsafe territory if there are no procedures for prevention, communication, and, when necessary, response. Too often, artists have been afraid to respond to abusive or unsafe practices, particularly where there is a power differential between the people involved. Artists have been afraid that speaking out will ruin a show or harm their reputations, and artists subjected to extreme abuse sometimes leave the craft, cutting their careers short. We believe that even in the absence of high--risk material, having pathways for response to unsafe conditions and harassment help to maintain the integrity of the work, it's participants, and the organization.

This document seeks not to define artistry, prescribe how it is created, or stand as a legal document. It seeks rather to create awareness and systems that respect and protect the human in the art – to foster safe places to do dangerous things. It is the result of input from a wide and experienced group of theatre producers and artists. It is meant to be flexible and to accommodate as many types and styles of theatre, organizations of diverse structures, budgets, and environments as possible.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) of Illinois state law defines “workers” by wages and hours worked. Participants in small theatres often don’t meet the definition of “worker,” and therefore are not covered by the protections from harassment (including sexual, racial, and other abuses) provided in EEOC law. Actors who work under an AEA contract enjoy limited protections and opportunities for registering complaints, but only if the artist is a member of the union, and only if the issue is covered in the AEA rulebook. Moreover, certain kinds of conduct can be harmful even they are not technically unlawful. With this framework in mind, members of the Chicago theatre community joined forces to create a tool for self--governance. We seek to foster awareness of what artists should expect, and what companies can strive to provide in their spaces.

This document is the result of dozens of Chicago theatre participants meeting in round--table discussions for a year to produce a first draft, followed by over a year of pilot testing in 20 participating theatres. The result is the following **Chicago Theatre Standards**. This document outlines simple and largely cost-free practices and tools to prevent and respond to the everyday challenges in arts environments.

The overriding tenets of this document are: **communication, safety, respect, and accountability.**

The **Chicago Theatre Standards (CTS)** is voluntary, cost-free, and not subject to enforcement by any outside body. In adopting this document, organizations state their intentions through procedures designed to help them live by those intentions. Participants who work with organizations that adopt the CTS endorse these intentions by reading the document and following its procedures and protocols. All involved are encouraged to call attention to situations when these intentions are not

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being met by using the reporting channels herein. This is a free document, and it is available online at [notinourhouse.org](http://notinourhouse.org).

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### **CLEVELAND STANDARDS | “DECLARATION”:**

*\*\*The Cleveland Standards did not have a ‘declaration’ but instead listed an ‘executive summary’ and ‘purpose’ - so language below is lifted from different segments of the Cleveland Standards that relates to a declaration. They do have a mission statement, included here. To view the language in context within the entire standards or view it in its entirety, you can find it [here](#).*

#### “Executive Summary”

The CLEAn House Standards are created in the belief that theatres need to be safe places to do dangerous things.

The CLEAn House Standards are a voluntary tool for self-governance of northeast Ohio theatres that nurture communication, safety, respect, and accountability at all levels of production, regardless of theatre size, age, budget, or artistic mission.

We believe that theaters should be:

- Spaces free of harassment, including (but not limited to) harassment based on sex, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, religion, class, ethnicity, color, nationality, political belief, or ability;
- Nurturing environments that allow us to challenge ourselves, our audiences, and our communities; that support creative risks of mind and body; and that establish the freedom to create theatre that represents the full range of human experience.

To this end, the CLEAn House Standards offer best practices learned from the Chicago Theatre Standards, with a goal of making artists of all theatrical disciplines aware of their rights and responsibilities. These include a series of commitments to be made by participating theatres ranging from how auditions are announced and run, to rehearsal procedures for violent and intimate choreography, to anti-harassment procedures, and more - including recommendations for lines of communication and addressing problems as they arise.

We believe that there is enormous strength in banding together as one theatrical community, made up of many different artistic visions, and publicly committing to the well-being of the artists who currently call northeast Ohio home, as well as all those in the future who will wish to join us.

## **I. Purpose**

Arts environments require risk, courage, vulnerability, and investment of our physical, emotional and intellectual selves.

When creative environments are unsafe, both the artist and the art can become compromised. Spaces that prize “raw,” “violent,” and otherwise high-risk material can result in unsafe conditions if there are no procedures for prevention, communication, and when necessary, corrective action. We believe that even in the absence of high-risk material, having pathways for response to unsafe conditions and harassment help to maintain the integrity of the work, its participants, and the organization.

This document seeks to create awareness and systems that respect and protect the human in the art – to foster safe places to do dangerous things. It is the result of input from a large and experienced group of theatre producers and artists. It is meant to be flexible and to accommodate as many types and styles of theatre, organizations of diverse structures, budgets, and environments as possible.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination laws, but only some employees and some companies meet their definition of “workplace.” Participants in small theatres are often not covered by these laws. Actors who work under an Actors’ Equity Association (AEA) contract enjoy limited protections and opportunities for registering complaints, but only if the participant is a member of the union, and only if the issue is covered in the AEA rulebook. Moreover, certain kinds of conduct can be harmful even though they are not technically unlawful.

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We seek to foster awareness of what artists should expect, and what companies can strive to provide in their spaces.

The overriding tenets of this document are: respect, safety, communication, and accountability.

The CLEAn House Standards are voluntary, cost-free, and not subject to enforcement by any outside body, including TASC. Some theaters may already have stronger protections for artists than those outlined in the Standards, and this document should not replace those policies. This document is designed to give individual artists agency and information. In adopting this document, organizations state their intentions through procedures designed to help them live by those intentions. Participants who work with organizations that adopt the CHS endorse these intentions by reading the document and following its procedures and protocols. All involved are encouraged to call attention to situations when these intentions are not being met by using the reporting channels herein. This is a free document available online at [www.tasccl.org](http://www.tasccl.org).

### **CLEAn House Mission Statement:**

The CLEAn House Standards are a voluntary tool for self-governance that nurture communication, safety, respect, and accountability at all levels of theatrical production. Its mission is to create:

- **Spaces free of harassment**, including (but not limited to) harassment based on sex, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, religion, class, ethnicity, color, nationality, political belief, or ability;
  - **Nurturing environments** that allow us to challenge ourselves, our audiences, and our communities; that support creative risks of mind and body; and that establish the freedom to create theatre that represents the full range of human experience;
  - **A common understanding** of practices for theatre environments, including written, reproducible standards available at no cost; and by
  - **Peer support** through collaboration and community outreach using Theatre Artists for Social Change as a resource.
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## **NY INDEPENDENT THEATER HARASSMENT TOOLKIT | “DECLARATION”:**

*\*\*Note: this toolkit did not have a ‘declaration’ per se, so language below is lifted from different segments of the toolkit that relates to a declaration or mission of the document. To view the language in context within the toolkit or view it in its entirety, you can find it [here](#).*

We believe that all artists are entitled to a safe place to practice their craft free of harassment, abuse or retribution for reporting abuses. Furthermore, we believe all artists have a duty to abstain from harassment, be it sexual in nature or based in racial or gender bias. As individuals working in a collaborative art form, we are obligated to take seriously any charges of harassment while also taking steps to address the offending behavior.

### **Goals**

There are many established resources available for theater practitioners to use as a basis for physical safety standards. The Actors’ Equity Showcase Code is often used as the benchmark for establishing safety protocols, and we encourage every practitioner to be familiar with and adhere to the guidelines put forth in the code regardless of each participant’s union status. In the AEA Showcase, as well as in the other documents found below (Quick Guides), you will find helpful standards for safety such as: break times and maximum rehearsal hours, how to approach stage combat, availability of potable water, etc.

This tool kit is meant to address Harassment. It will provide resources for all practitioners to build greater transparency, accountability and agency in establishing open, creative environments where all artists can flourish without fear of harassment or retribution. Not all documents or statements found in this Tool Kit will fit every project or company, nor is it meant to be prescriptive as to how others must work. In it, you may find ideas for moving your own project or company forward, or use examples laid out below to build your own set of policies and practices.

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In addition to using this tool kit, we encourage all practitioners to get as much training as their time and budget allow. In the Quick Guides, you will find links to other organizations that offer a wealth of resources, guidelines, training programs and services that can help you create your own policies or assist you when in crisis.

It is our hope that the tools provided will be a useful platform for every artist to establish their own habits of communication and consent, working towards a harassment free environment. Only when all parties feel safe to fully participate in the creative process can a robust, vibrant theater exist.

### **What is Harassment?**

Discriminatory, offensive or unwelcome behavior all falls under the scope of harassment, including behavior that is repeated after a request has been made for the behavior to stop. Typically, harassment is splintered into the categories of sexual harassment, gender harassment, racial harassment or harassment based on a trait such as age, ability or status.

We recognize the intersectionality of our culture and that often an individual may become the target of harassment based on a combination of the above traits or others. Furthermore, we understand the common root of all harassment as a failure to behave in a way that respects the humanity of our co-workers, whether this be a momentary lapse brought on by the stress of production, the result of deeply ingrained biases or from malice. By creating strategies to actively build and exercise respect for all collaborators, we are able to create better art and safer workplaces.

# NOTES from Group #3

### **Group Three TALC Notes**

- OBSERVATION: What do you see in the document? What are the facts of these documents that stand out to you?
- **Chicago Standards**
  - Artists have been afraid to call out abuse in the past, a fear of speaking up
  - “Unsafe spaces” make it hard to do artistically excellent work
  - The document names the limits of the law and what protections exist
    - AEA and EEOC have limits to their power/reach

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- Actor-centric protections that don't extend to producers, directors, administrators, production staff, etc.
- Some AEA language is non-specific about "sexual harassment"
- Very Chicago-centric
- This document relies on voluntary participation and there isn't a third party "watchdog" who enforces things
- The document doesn't include specific traumas, such as mental health trauma
- The declaration does not address the pre-existing power dynamics in a room (director to actor, producer to designer, etc.)
- The document does not have a concise declaration of intent
- **CLEAn House**
  - There is a clear statement of values, explicit examples are offered
  - There is more inclusive language about design/production folks
  - This is an easier document to read than the others
    - Shorter
    - More concise
    - Less language
  - Unlike the Chicago document, this one names "Peer Support" as an important aspect of the document
    - **"Peer support** through collaboration and community outreach using Theatre Artists for Social Change as a resource."
    - For reference, Theatre Artists for Social Change is a group that was meeting regularly before the creation of this document.
    - Folks wanted more information about how TASC is involved and if they are still part of the process
    - A Question: What would peer support here look like?
- **New York Independent Harassment Toolkit**
  - "We believe" is a powerful collective statement
  - The "What Is Harassment?" section is useful in how it names that there are different experiences around harassment and that it names intersectionality
  - This statement feels less specific than the others and it points to pre-existing resources (AEA, EEOC, etc.)
    - Note that other folks have named that currently existing resources are not specific enough, and do not encompass non-actors
- **Future MN Doc**
  - We should name up front that this is a community declaration and that nobody is alone in the process of it.
  - The document we create needs to be flexible enough so that it makes sense for theaters and organizations of every size and every level of resources.



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- Can our document include more from the We See You White American Theater? That not only do we believe that everybody should live/work free from harassment, but also White Supremacy
  - It feels important to name those things in particular because while they can be contained within the idea of “harassment” they have their own particularities that are important to be aware of and ask for different solutions/actions.
- As opposed to the other documents, can our document also include work towards a new (non-capitalist?) system?
- In addition to naming the things that we should be free of and that folks have a right to be free of, can it also name the world that we want to build next?
  - We name the things we want to shed, *in order*, to reach a new world.
- It feels important to acknowledge (to a degree) the real events that spurred the need for MN’s own theater standard document.
  - It was mentioned that there are history documents in the other standards. Perhaps it’s useful to look at those and think about how they acknowledge history.
- How do we, or not, acknowledge all the other documents from other unions (IATSE, SDC, etc.) that exist in the world?
  - Maybe there is a separate section for “Resources” that links to other statements, definitions, Labor Dept. info, and more
- “We should speak how we want to do the work, not just what we want to do.”
- Is it possible for theaters that have signed onto this doc to include extra language in a contract for anybody it hires that indicates that both parties will uphold the standards?
- Is there a section with “recommended clauses” that other theaters could use as they build contracts?
- There is a desire for a very clear and very concise statement of intent.
  - General is the wrong word to use for the clear and concise statement but it should be encompassing
  - There should be a balance between concision and ensuring that there is explicit detail and definitions so that folks can’t “dodge”
  - Is there a way that the clear statement of intent can be inviting enough that folks unfamiliar with the specific details of theater can still grasp the intent and actions?

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- What is the “reading level” that the document should embrace? A lot of these standards get very “legal-ese” and that’s not always inclusive.
  - In addition, who is this document for? And how can that inform the language used?
  - For example, could this be a useful document for high school students?
  - There’s a desire for plainer language