

## **Theatre of the Oppressed NYC Report Back: May 10 Legislative Theatre Event**

### **1. Number of Attendees**

1. Audience Members: 136
2. Policy Advisors: 7
  1. Sarita Covington, Artists Co-Creating Racial Equity, PISAB
  2. Kevin Hansen, Co-Founder, PolicyAtlas.org
  3. Elizabeth Hamby, Assistant Director of Public Housing and Health, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the New York City Housing Authority
  4. Melissa Aase, Executive Director, University Settlement
  5. Hatuey Ramos-Fermín, Director of Programs and Community Engagement, The Laundromat Project
  6. Matthew Shapiro, Senior Attorney, The Street Vendor Project, Urban Justice Center
  7. Daryl J. Cochrane, MPA, Director, Manhattan Community Service Center, New York City Commission on Human Rights
3. Council Member: 1
  1. Council Member Stephen Levin
4. Advocacy Fair Partners: 16
  1. Ali Forney Center
  2. Apicha Community Health Center
  3. ARTs East New York
  4. Community Board 11
  5. Dancify That!
  6. The Fortune Society
  7. ACRE
  8. The Fortune Society
  9. Riders Alliance NY
  10. Global Action Project
  11. Riders Alliance NY
  12. Resilience Advocacy Project
  13. Fourth Arts Block
  14. NYC DOHMH Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Tobacco Control
  15. NYC Office of Labor Policy and Standards
  16. ID NYC

### **2. Key Recommendations**

The three recommendations from the event to give New Yorkers equal access to arts and increase cultural equity are:

1. Remove criminal penalties for unlicensed vending and removing the cap on licenses for non-veteran vendors (3 votes against)

#### *Concerns and Dissent*

- A. Veteran vendors only have this one thing-specifically being able to sell without a license. It should be exclusive to the veterans. Suggestion-can we do something else for the veterans or just support them better in general?
- B. Limiting the number of licenses given to corporations to ensure this change services its intended audience--require the person with the license to be the one that is working.

2. Know Your Rights hotline for artists, additionally using libraries and other community centers for KYR communication (22 votes against)

*Concerns and Dissent*

- A. Who will staff the hotline?
  - B. How is this different than 311? This would be redundant.
  - C. How would this information target communities of color and emerging artists?
  - D. Using the libraries as hubs for disseminating this information would be useful.
  - E. Note- the nays increased after this discussion.
3. City government directing more money to borough arts councils and neighborhoods that can be given to individual people, as well as increase assistance to neighborhoods of color and low-income artists (7 votes against)

*Concerns and Dissent*

- A. "What works for you in Manhattan doesn't work for us in the Bronx". If the money goes to things that are already in existence, then it will only or mostly benefit communities that are privileged enough to have arts in them already. Funding should be reserved specifically for making new Arts programs and/or Arts programs in historically disadvantaged and minority communities.
  - B. The length of time that the cultural plan has been opened a comet from the community has been very short.
  - C. The plan should target specifically low-income communities of color.
3. **Story of the Play: "Show Within A Show"**
    - "Places!" All the actors, and even the TONYC staff artists, are "late" to the show, because of various circumstances: police stopping them, Medicaid appointments, shelter security, other survival jobs, etc. Even though they love the Theatre Troupe, they can rarely make it on time - even to a big performance!
    - Supermarket scene - one actor has just managed to get a job in a supermarket. Very oppressive environment - harassed and bullied by supervisor. She sings in a church choir and is offered a solo, but then supervisor changes her work schedule without asking, and threatens to fire her if she protests, so she cannot perform with the choir or sing the solo.
    - Park scene - several actors make crafts, i.e. selling baskets. They are selling their crafts in the park when cops come - their items are taken and they get big fines. Meanwhile white painters are allowed to continue painting, no fines at all.
    - Actor wants to try to make it in the professional theatre world. The only way she knows to get feedback and get in front of casting directors are these classes where you pay to take a workshop with a casting director. They save money to do it, and it turns out to be a scam - no opportunities, etc. This scene is about access to information about free culture and training.
    - End of play - the jokers arrive just in time to help wrap up the show.