



Session Toolkit

REFRAMING PERSPECTIVES

Approaching your discipline with equity
and justice embedded in your work



OTTAWA ARTS
COUNCIL | CONSEIL DES
ARTS D'OTTAWA

SESSION OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred on many challenges for artists. It also created some new opportunities for artists to produce, create, and innovate during a time of social challenges.

The following toolkit summarizes **Sharon Nyangweso's** video session lending her expertise in approaching your discipline with equity and justice embedded in the output of your work but also as a central theme.



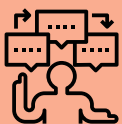
Approaching equity and justice with creativity and hope



Why training isn't the solution you think it is



The tactical parts of equity and injustice



Conclusion

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Approaching equity and justice with creativity and hope

“An artist's duty is to reflect the times” - Nina Simone

As an artist, you can create work that takes a snapshot of the moment you exist in, which also creates a version of the future that feels most potent to you that the rest of us can either aspire to or fight against. For this reason, it is so critical that you approach our shared task of building a more equitable and just world with hope and creativity.

TIP #1 Be an active participant in not just what you create, but the conditions that have informed what you create. Here you want to explore Who are you? and here we mean your identity. Ask yourself what kind of a world does your art create for you, for the people who share your identity? And for those who don't? Asking these questions becomes a key part of identifying your positionality and how your positionality in the world both informs your work and the kind of world you're witnessing.

Your art is part of cultural conversation and it can either be just or unjust. As artists, you have the unique opportunity not only to imagine and create a world for the future, but you are not beholden to logic, reality or reason.

TIP #2 The following are some prompt questions to help you approach your art making in a reflective method:

- What ideas about the world, society and community can you completely overturn, fight against or even demolish?**
- What limits about the world am I placing on myself for imagining the most hope filled world and what can I create without those limits?**
- What story do I want to tell about the world that we live in?**
- What story do I want to tell about the world that we could live in?**



Why training isn't the solution you think it is

The art ecosystem that includes administrators, curators, nonprofits, and more and is often faced with the huge question of who gets to define, create and celebrate art. We're all doing the best we can to respond, but often, how we respond falls short and is ineffective.

Why is EDI training not the solution you think it is? The Ask always revolves around the desire to educate those who exist in the art ecosystem, especially decision makers. Although this is not 100% incorrect. It is a painfully simplified explanation lacking in nuance and critical analysis. Once again, we must always start from the point of systematic problems, require systematic solutions.

The trouble with knowledge building and traditional EDI training is that it centers the individual and their personal behaviour. In reality, unconscious bias, racist policies, and stereotypes are made possible not by one individual person's lapse in judgment, but by hundreds of years of colonialism, anti black racism, oppression, and white supremacy.

TIP #3 Begin by asking yourself the following prompts if you are considering EDI training for your collective, studio, or organization:

- What are you responding to?**
- What challenges exist in your group/organization that you're trying to solve?**
- Are you responding to an incident where an individual caused harm? And if so, was the harm serious enough to warrant accountability rather than training?**
- Who is this training for? Will they be helped or harmed by participating?**
- Who was asked for this training? Was the request from people who aren't facing the harm of unconscious bias? Or was it requested by marginalized people?**

These questions will allow you to better identify what exactly is the equity problem you're trying to solve for and how can you effectively solve this challenge, rather than assume systemic inequities exist as a result of individual bad behaviour.



Conclusion

Wherever you exist in the arts ecosystem, whether you're an artist, someone who supports artists, someone who builds this very ecosystem, or a mix of all these, the following are tools you can use to tackle some of these inequity challenges of today.

As an artist, you'll want to leverage your role as witness and fortune teller to build equity and justice through creativity and hope.

As a non artists within the art ecosystem, you'll be able to lean away from EDI training as a silver bullet and explore what inequities exist and how you can tangibly tackle them.

Resource link

Quakelab: <https://quakelab.ca/>