

Dismantling Structural Inequality in Your Cinema



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CHAPTER



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With thanks to consultants
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Toki Allison and Hana Lewis
(Film Hub Wales)

01

THE WILL

TO CHANGE

Preface

I write this preface near the end of 2020, a turbulent year in which the lack of basic access to amenities, fair treatment and even safety for some have only just been understood by those that do not experience it on a daily basis. There has been a marked shift as of spring this year in how we talk about diversity, in particular the language that is acceptable to use if we are serious about equal access and justice for all.

COVID-19 and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has reminded us that racism isn't merely microaggressions, but at its core, "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."¹ As such, this toolkit may not use language you are used to seeing in these types of documents, but please stick with it. It will not be offering tips to increase representation or perpetuate myths of diversity, but instead create the ground for care, responsibility and an intolerance for harm to be the basis of your cinema.

¹ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*

What this toolkit is

This toolkit is, foremostly, a practical guide for improving the experiences of POC² audiences, staff and filmmakers - and other intersections including gender, sexuality, disability, income and class.

Whilst the harm and discrimination POC face in the arts both as workers and audiences is firmly rooted within institutional and systemic injustice, preventing immediate harm is the key priority - and that begins with immediate, though not as radical, reform. This goes beyond representation, and towards creating a space built for all people rather than for primarily white audiences. Whether your cinema is in a rural part of the UK, or in a densely populated city, ethnically diverse³ audiences are there and it is your cinema's role to serve them.



The second function of this toolkit is to create lasting change for future generations, and sustain your organisation in a meaningful way (one which is framed around serving communities and not merely securing funding). To do this, you must play your role in preventing harm on an institutional and systemic level. In addition to immediately actionable tools, this toolkit will encourage inner, reflective and dialogue-based work towards undoing systemic injustice. This work will be longer term, and may at times feel personal, however confronting these uncomfortable spaces from positions of privilege is fundamental to creating wider change. Treat the provocations as actionable on a personal level within your roles and workplaces, because the results will be structural change that will not allow harm to exist within your organisations.

Who this is for

It is important that this toolkit is offered to all staff members in your cinema or film organisation; from trustees and managers to programmers and front-of-house staff. Whilst some will find responsibility placed on them to action certain aspects, others will be empowered by the conversations around equity this toolkit may enable.

² POC: people of colour. This toolkit focuses on POC and intersections of experience between race, disability, gender and sexuality, income and class. However, this toolkit, which is about structural inequality, will inevitably benefit all audiences and workers.

³ A note on the use of terms in this toolkit: as touched upon in the terminology section of this toolkit, there isn't necessarily a correct term that everyone is comfortable with using or seeing. For the purpose of this toolkit, I will be using POC and ethnically diverse/ diverse as I feel these are the clearest ways of identifying systemic marginalisation for me, and in this case.

I implore you to talk widely within your organisation about the implications of this toolkit, in an environment in which hierarchies are cut away. Pay all staff equally to feed into this dialogue, and you will see what emerges on this new ground.

Whilst this toolkit has been written in the locale of South Wales, it is aimed towards independent cinemas, festivals, film-based organisations and digital film spaces across the UK - responding to regional differences in audiences, access to funding, rurality and lived experience.

What can be achieved with this toolkit

I hope that once this toolkit is worked through, you will come away with an understanding that increasing diversity and access is not a means of sustaining your organisation, but of sustaining and resourcing the communities that cinema serves. This document further hopes to provide an opportunity to reflect on your organisation's intentions, and how to realign those back to serving all audiences and filmmakers.

Immediate implications will be a reimagining and dismantling of old ways of working, and implementing new models of equity within your organisation and for those who enter your space (whether physical or digital). This is necessary work as a cultural space. It is always possible if there is the will to change, from staff make-up to programming practices, organisational hierarchies to an equalisation of pay; but if there isn't a will to change, there must be a divestment of power and transference of funding to the communities your organisation is failing to serve. This toolkit will help you confront these different potentials for change.

This is difficult work because it calls for challenging your positionality, your personal and emotional responses, your attachment to a workplace, your unconscious and conscious biases, your own stability, your lived experiences, and the harmful structures you may benefit from. Then, it calls for a letting go. Inequity is not any one person's fault but it is our collective responsibility to understand and undo it. And finally, it calls for a real commitment to doing the work.

November 2020



STORIES

“The misnomer that Black films don’t sell is often based on criteria that looks at films as if they have an equal footing in the first place. From marketing and advertising budgets to the amount of cinemas that will preview or spotlight a film on opening weekend, visibility is constricted before we even get to audience engagement. And then the primary audience for Black films are often late bookers, and late bookings can understandably make event programmers/cinemas nervous.

At Caramel Film Club we have seen this when hosting events which include ‘I Am Not Your Negro’, ‘Get Out’, ‘Black Panther’ to ‘Girls Trip’ (notably ranging from documentary, to sci-fi, to horror, to comedy) welcoming hundreds of cinema goers to sold out screenings. Because of our roots as a ‘meet-up’ our audiences are often individuals that come to an event solo with the desire to watch films in a friendly and welcoming space which pivots on a consistent ‘host’ who knows them or they can identify. Hours of unseen labour go into relationship building with such audience members.”

-Caramel Film Club

“Ethnic minorities prefer to buy from brands they feel meaningfully represent their culture. At present film organisations and cinemas don’t show an inclusive approach to their advertising efforts and do not engage ethnic-owned media platforms when advertising new film releases. A big change in how film organisations partner with and market to ethnic audiences need to occur if they wish to reach new diverse customers and to future proof their operations.”

- Indi Deol, Director of DESIblitz Magazine.

"In my time getting started, I heard of waves of initiatives that came and went (especially when there was a major socio-political incident e.g. the 80s race riots) but it was all tokenistic and performative. There was never enough money to invest in Black organisations long term and no freedom to fail - I remember enquiring to partner with a well-known arthouse chain to screen films but there was hesitancy/ resistance because previous Black organisations had failed to bring in significant audience numbers. I don't think that my white counterparts were judged on the achievements of their race.

There were less than a handful of BAME operatives working key positions and they usually pulled up the drawbridge behind them with gatekeepers everywhere. Like with other creative sectors, the bulk of funding went to white-led organisations that would take on Black freelancers for pittance. We are not given a seat at the table and brought on at the last minute to projects or campaigns which we could have enhanced with our cultural insight from the beginning. We are constantly ripped off, commodified and devalued.

Nowadays, I see a lot of fear all round. The fear of saying the wrong thing, of rocking the boat, of not being your authentic self while working in film. I see white organisations under pressure to keep old traditions and afraid to upset their core audiences, especially in the regions and nations. Black British content is treated as second-class in this country and it has taken streaming platforms and US recognition to open doors and make any progress. Until we own our work and our buildings, we shall bounce between initiatives, bump our heads against glass ceilings, depend on Black-friendly agencies and allies for small victories while continuing to feel unsafe and insecure."

- Anonymous



"I think film organisations do not want to encourage diverse audiences because many still harbour a fear of the Other. Organisations and cinemas need to challenge their own racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and disability phobia. Many organisations think it is too much effort to invest financially or deal directly with the discomfort of change. Many will tell you they look forward to working with you and then sabotage your efforts to create and maintain a successful partnership. A lot of it comes down to the cognitive dissonance and the tactics used to fake inclusivity.

I think the emotional labour needed to continue working in this industry is the one that remains unseen."

- Anonymous

“Amongst other approaches, our attempts at addressing ethnic diversity have also focused on recruitment and looking to change the make-up of an almost exclusively white organisation. One particular such position has been the new promoter scheme in conjunction with Film Hub Scotland. This is a 5-month post on a 2-day a week contract at the living wage for a programmer/ curator marginalised due to race, gender, sexuality, age, class, and disability to curate, develop and deliver a programme of 3 events/ screenings in conjunction with the CCA programme team.

The pressing question in relation to such job offers seems to be how do they lead to something more secure, long term and concrete? For structural change to occur and to change the make-up of the organisation, recruitment in such a way is ultimately unsustainable.”

- CCA Glasgow

“At Broadway we do a lot of enhancement activities around films which appeal to diverse audiences. For this, it’s essential to have programmers who are very committed and engaged in this area so the quality of the event is high and there’s an understanding of the targeted audience. Some Q&As can generate heated debate, so this needs to be anticipated and managed effectively so that filmmakers who are brave enough to face audiences in person to engage with them on these delicate issues find it a worthwhile experience. For instance, Director Roberto Minervini attended a Q&A following a preview of his documentary, *What You Gonna Do When the World’s on Fire*, a portrait of African-Americans in New Orleans struggling to maintain their unique cultural identity and to find social justice. The film provoked a lively discussion during the post-screening Q&A, with the director being asked some challenging questions regarding his relationship to the film’s subject in terms of race and class, as a white European filmmaker presenting a story about the lives of an African-American community in the US South. The audience was very engaged and curious; it highlighted the importance of these additional live elements – such as Q&As, panels etc - to contextualise, and to interrogate a film beyond what is seen on screen.”

- Broadway Cinema, Nottingham

"I am privileged in many ways and I get a lot of diversity wrong: looking down the history of my mistakes, unconscious bias and recruiting in my own image is a painful practice and I still feel as though I am in the early phase of self-development and systemic change in my organisation and our industry.

It has been hard to alter the age-old practices of our festival, not least because we have always used volunteers to do the vast majority of the work and of course this can exclude huge swathes of people. Happily our team is now the most diverse it has ever been and we are looking for ways to fund and train diverse young programmers.

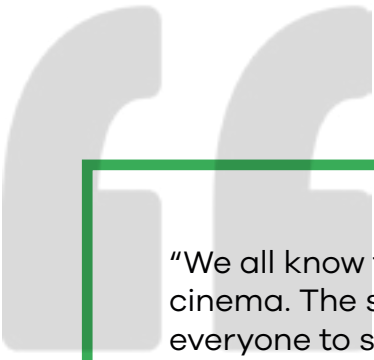
The biggest issue however is our audiences. We have a wonderful, dedicated audience who love the festival, come back each year and buy multiple tickets: but they are not particularly diverse. This is partly because of the area we are in (98% white and a World Heritage Site which means there is dreadful disability access) and partly, I think because of the perception of who film festivals are for and who is welcome.

My hope is that by screening and promoting films by and about Black women, women from the Global South, LGBTQ+ films and films by women from disadvantaged backgrounds that we are part of systemic change across the world to a more equitable, inclusive and kind culture.

*- Film Bath, home of the F-Rating,
a film classification to highlight films
directed and/or written by women.
The 'F' is for feminist, and the rating is
overtly intersectional.*

Over the past decade at Hyde Park we've tried to work more regularly with external organisations, groups and individuals to begin to open out our programme. Between 2018 and 2019 this included a collaboration with a Black led film club which led to a few fantastic screening events with panel discussions. All were brilliantly attended by majority Black audiences. Our cinema is large, 275 seats and the energy and atmosphere when it is busy is amazing and it is a joy to see it in that state. Seeing these wonderful events in action highlighted the stark whiteness of our team and our core audience. This was something it was easy for me to normally not prioritise, instead focusing on ways in which we were well serving other marginalised groups. It was also glaring how unbalanced our existing approach to these kind of collaborative event was. It was entirely designed with academia/academics and funded organisations in mind."

- Hyde Park Picture House



“We all know that South Asians audiences love films and going to the cinema. The statistics for the big Bollywood blockbusters are there for everyone to see. However, there are cinemas that a majority of South Asian audiences feel unwelcome in. These places are seen as high culture or elite venues often located in parts of a town or city that South Asian communities feel are not for people like them. Before we tackle the hurdle of getting audiences to these cinemas, it is important to get gatekeepers at venues to understand the issues and embrace the changes that they need to make, to open their spaces to under-represented communities. To excite and reach out to diverse audiences, the marketing techniques that are employed have to be different. Finally, the cost of researching and securing independent South Asian films is significantly higher. Funding bodies cannot apply the same rationale to judge value for money.

I have been part of a company that produces a South Asian film festival. This is a small organisation and what funders, sponsors and cinemas don't see is that to curate the 10 day festival that presents over 30 feature films, takes a year of research, networking, careful negotiation and legacy work. Most filmmakers who present their rich vibrant stories are making their first or second films. As they prepare to part with their baby, they begin to learn about the value of film festivals and start to experience how audiences respond to their films. These experiences enrich everyone – the filmmakers future work, the lives of the audiences and the discussion to evolve society. I distinctly remember a venue manager saying this at the end of a film “I can't believe the audiences are in the foyer discussing the film they just saw”. That's the magic of programming films that diverse communities want to and need to see.”

- *Phizzical*

Implications

Distrust partially stems from the lack of lived experience within an organisation, and this manifests with good reason; these stories from film programmers and workers exemplify the assumptions that are made about ethnically diverse audiences, and the existence of an assumed expertise in how to reach them. This seems to be a major barrier that imposes itself unconsciously, making it difficult on an individual level to break this down.

How can we challenge our preconceptions about what a certain audience wants when generalisations benefit, and are ingrained into the priorities of, a service-providing organisation?

Throughout these experiences, the common thread is the unsustainability of efforts towards greater diversity. Some have observed the inconsistent commitments to diversity, often at the whims of what funding applications require, trends, and what ethnically diverse films are currently palatable and popular with white audiences. Others give an honest reflection on how, despite having the resources to make headway into reforms such as hiring agents-for-change and revising programming practices, there is still a lingering question of, 'how lasting will the effects be?'

Underlying all of these experiences is a frustration at the lack of prioritisation. Even as we gain fluencies and confidence in screening more diverse and challenging film, there is a struggle in transferring this to how we communicate our organisations' commitments to inclusion internally (within our structure and workplace) and externally (in marketing and outreach). There must be a shift around who we deem our core audience to be, to fully comprehend how so many people are excluded.

REFLECTION

Cinema's role in systemic injustice

Cinema has always been an unflinching, confronting space for fearless and unifying works of art; and the universality of film lies in the acts of watching, of togetherness, of imagining dream-like and life-like possibilities, of radical thought shared through a mainstream medium capable of inciting change. How universal is your cinema?

To move towards a universal cinema experience, which may be a more honest synonym for diverse, we have to understand that unavoidably, the public-funded arts institution exists within a system that perpetuates violence. Its structural and hierarchical nature lends itself to enabling harm towards marginalised people, and is intrinsically interlinked with discrimination in other systems such as education and criminal justice. People of colour, queer, disabled, neurodivergent, low-income, working class people and all the intersections in between are serially disadvantaged within every aspect of society whilst others are privileged, and this is systemic injustice.

Systemic injustice⁴ is the reason for low perceived engagement with cinema - something much bigger than how rural a cinema's location is, or how well-funded the programmes are. It is about power dynamics, the same dynamics weaponised by the West when it colonises countries and passes capitalist laws. It is, inherently, a deeply historical and violent structure built to benefit from the exclusion of others, which manifests today as varying degrees of societally accepted harm. Systemic racism has over hundreds of years created the condition in which POC are less able to access cultural capital, higher education, fair treatment in public spaces, protection, healthcare and representation - meaning they are less likely to engage with spaces that perpetuate this, such as hospitals, universities and cultural spaces like white-led cinemas, galleries, museums, libraries, public parks and heritage sites etc.

A rural cinema in the UK receives less ethnically diverse audiences because British POC have historically had to work jobs in industrial cities, systemically relegated to poverty, and generations later may not want to move elsewhere due to the discrimination now faced in predominantly white areas. The British POC population that do live in rural areas might not attend cultural venues because of lack of representation, caused by the organisation's own assumptions of low interest and cultural capital. And cultural capital is not afforded to all POC by the system that seeks to exclude.

⁴ Systemic injustice derives from, and is often used synonymously with systemic racism, first used by Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (1967) - "Racism [...] takes two, closely related forms: [...] We call these individual racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt acts by individuals, which cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property. [...] The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life. The second type originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first type."

Independent cinemas and arts organisations must better understand the systemic injustice faced by systemically marginalised people, to more truthfully inform their perceptions of engagement. Simply, it is much bigger, more deeply rooted, historic and traumatic than is possible to understand without lived experience.

A universal cinema seeks equity for all. It is a conduit for challenging art, and challenges in everything it does. It acknowledges the systemic injustices at play, and acknowledges the part it plays also. It understands that the care and prevention of harm of systemically marginalised people must be prioritised over guilt, the fear of change and the unfamiliar. It does the necessary work that should have been done before COVID-19, before the 2020 resurgence of Black Lives Matter, before the Equality Act 2010, well before now - and it does so unflinchingly, confronting the uncomfortable spaces to open them up for all.

A necessary pause, before the necessary work

It is important to pause. Please take the time to reflect on the toolkit so far, which, although may come off as condescending to some, is earnest, and necessary.

Articulate to yourself why this is necessary work, from your own perspective, completely detached from your job role - if we are to combat systemic injustice, we have to think outside of it as much as possible.

It is important to pause because it shows a level of willingness to do the work, and respect for the lived experiences we do not fully understand.



Provocations

Below and on the following page are some provocations. To move forward from the pause, it will be necessary to talk about these with your workplace. Show commitment to moving forward and laying out more equal ground by creating an equitable dialogue around these questions in your workplace. Include the entire team from trustees down to the lowest paid staff member or volunteer, and work through the provocations within professionally facilitated spaces - brave space⁵ for all-white organisations, and for those with some POC employees a space in which the rules and facilitation are set out by them (if they choose to participate).

Make your first effort in shifting the structures that always felt so immovable by paying all staff members equally for this dialogue session, acknowledging the additional labour, discomfort and trauma POC staff may experience in a majority-white setting through support such as well-being check-ins and even a consultant's fee; and lay no expectations on them to attend or share if they do not want to.

Be conscious of other colleagues that may feel uncomfortable and/or burdened during this conversation (i.e. LGBTQI+, disabled, neurodivergent, low-income, refugee and asylum seeker staff). To move forward, it is necessary to open up the space to things that work culture does not usually allow for - such as honesty, care and the acknowledgement of systemic disadvantages.

Experience:

- Do you have lived experience of systemic injustice? Is it possible to empathise?
- In your allyship, how much of that work is spent listening?
- Have you ever felt unqualified or lacking in lived experience to do your job/ a certain work task, and still did it?
- How capable are you of implementing this toolkit?

⁵ A brave space is, "where we accept the likelihood that we will be uncomfortable when investigating issues of race, privilege, and oppression and our roles within them. We recognize that this works because we meet as a racially-caucused group, as asking people of color to be "brave" in multi-racial dialogues can be problematic." Further information and suggested guidelines from AWARE-LA here: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/581e9e06ff7c509a5ca2fe32/t/58f25fa937c58130853337df/1492279209799/04+AWARE-LA+Brave+Space+Guidelines+and+History.pdf>

Intentions:

- Does your organisation represent the audiences you want to reach at all organisational levels?
- Why is your organisation trying to access ethnically diverse audiences; is securing funding one of the factors?
- How has funding to 'diversify' your organisation come about? Could these resources/funding be redirected to POC-led organisations who are already doing the work equitably?
- Who are you held accountable to for not following a diversity strategic plan?

Consultation:

- Who are you consulting outside of this toolkit?
- Are your POC staff doing diversity work for your organisation despite it not being part of their job role? Are they compensated?
- How do you compensate those who share their lived experience in feedback forms and advisory groups?
- When you conduct a consultation or feedback session, how often do you have the consultant follow up with your organisation's progress?
- At what point does an organisation 'fail' at creating an accessible and safe environment?

Commitment:

- Is your organisation willing to commit to dismantling organisational structures, workplace culture, programming and budget allocation to prioritise this work?

02

COMMITMENTS

Terminology

Personhood, and the fluidity of identity terminology

When we use terminology such as POC, we need to ask ourselves what our intentions are. When self-identifying, it is down to personal choice as to which term you may wish to use (if any), and which contexts you feel it is necessary if at all. When using terms to identify others and 'market' towards them, however, it becomes problematic. This is because terminology is loaded with political and traumatic origins - sometimes they are reclamations of derogatory words such as 'queer'; 'racially minoritised people' acknowledges white supremacy's role in othering; and 'people of the global majority' seeks a frame outside of whiteness. Sometimes terms are used to create visibility for oft ignored people and their uniquely severe marginalisation by legislation and institutions, such as 'BIPOC'⁶. No matter the origin, these terms are used out of necessity (it would be preferable not to be labeled at all!) and were never intended for co-option and appropriation by non-representative organisations seeking to access them as audiences.

⁶ BIPOC: Black, indigeneous and people of colour

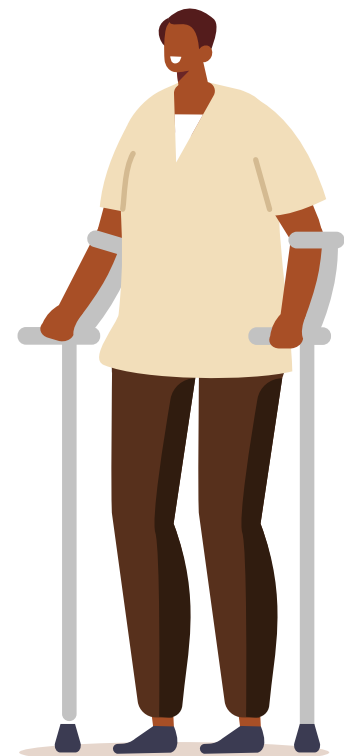
A Black-led cinema that shapes their programming around POC audiences does not need to write 'we welcome those from BAME⁷ backgrounds' in their marketing materials, for instance, because they gain access to that audience through the meaningful, visible representation within their organisation instead. When terminology is not required, it is better not to use it because cinemas must respect people's personhood which they do not lose just because they have 'marginal identities'.

A white-led cinema, on the other hand, may think using the term BAME is necessary in order to signpost a particular screening for POC; however, is this the term that people of colour today identify with? The white-led cinema cannot know without lived experience.

Rather than focusing on using the appropriate 'label', the cinema should instead focus on signposting through meaningful action - hiring a film curator of colour, commissioning an accompanying POC-led Q+A or workshop, or (more long-term) hiring more ethnically diverse staff throughout every level of the organisation for long-lasting, meaningful and visible representation.

Moreover, being open about your organisation's current white-led (or cis, able-bodied, middle class led) team in public 'diversity statements' will serve to gain more trust with audiences in the long-term. It shows an understanding of performative modes of access, and a reflexivity around why your organisation isn't able to currently access all audiences.

There are some instances in which terminology may be necessary, such as when conducting held-space screenings or events. In this case, it would be assumed that a person with that particular characteristic will be 'holding' the space, and will have the lived experience to advise on terminology. If you are to draw on their lived experience to advise on this, they must be additionally paid and treated as a consultant also. Remember, when hiring a marginalised person (whether permanent or freelance), it is not their job to gain access to audiences for you, or have their personal networks drawn from.



⁷ BAME: Black, asian and minority ethnic. Sometimes lengthened to BAMER, to include refugees

More generally, however, it is difficult to recommend terminologies because of their fluid nature. QTIPOC⁸ and POC have had to build the terminology to talk about oppression over time, and it's within their rights to be able to change it and to see it used on the terms they define. For instance, queer Black communities have only had about 50 years to establish the language⁹ to define themselves to institutional bodies and see themselves referred to in protective legislation.

Language moves so quickly for many marginalised groups because it has only recently become safe to have conversations about how they are spoken about. In addition to this, context defines which terms people use. For example, It is more appropriate to use the term BIPOC in countries with indigenous people of colour such as North and South America or Oceania. In Britain, the use of the term Black and NBPOC is now being used in preference to BAME, to draw attention to the importance of understanding Black people's lived experience as unique from NBPOC, and an awareness that anti-blackness occurs in NBPOC¹⁰ communities too.

Finally, do not expect QTIPOC / POC, LGBTQI+¹¹, disabled, neurodivergent or working class staff to advise on terminology. If they are not paid for diversity consultancy, and it is not in their agreed role, do not extract from their lived experiences. It is your organisation's responsibility to become genuinely comfortable with using terminology throughout the entire team (which can happen through equitable and sustained consultations and conversations, and diverse hiring with representative wages).

Why this toolkit will not recommend terms

What does it mean to recommend, in an institutional setting, names and labels to call groups of people? The fluidity of language around terms and the preferences for them means that this toolkit will not recommend any particular terms. Usage changes in different contexts and when used by different people, and whilst it might be possible for the toolkit to recommend which terms would be 'safe bets', offering recommendations can be harmful in and of itself. It would be masking a lack of knowledge, giving institutions access to audiences they are not capable of working with without causing harm, whilst devaluing lived experience and encouraging performative action.

The recommendation instead is to base choice of language on informed consultation - ask your audiences how they know something is aimed at them (you will find that the answer will most likely be, 'seeing outreach staff that share lived experiences with me', and not the use of a certain acronym) and seek professional and long-term consultation. There are Equity, Inclusivity and Diversity consultants who are able to work with your organisation to develop a comfort and reflexivity in language, and can recommend terms on that basis if they see commitments to lasting change.

⁸ QTIPOC: Queer, trans*, intersex people of colour

⁹ This is in reference to the Stonewall uprising of 1969, one of the first instances in which queer African American's oppression and resistance was acknowledged worldwide

¹⁰ Black and NBPOC: Black and non-black people of colour

¹¹ LGBTQI+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* including transgender and transsexual / two-spirit, queer / questioning, intersex and + (+ encompasses communities such as pansexual, agender, gender queer, bigender, gender variant, pangender and others)

PROGRAMMING

The following sections will offer recommendations in two 'categories'. The first, **immediate commitment**: practical guidance for improving the experiences of and preventing harm and discrimination towards POC audiences, staff and filmmakers - and other intersections. The second, commitments to **create lasting change**: for future generations, and to sustain your organisation in a meaningful way - playing your role in preventing harm on an institutional and systemic level.

Give POC ownership over independent cinema

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Ask audiences what they want to see, with an involvement in film selection

Ethnically diverse communities aren't just audiences - they are future programmers and have tools to facilitate things independently. Empowering them on an individual level enables them to feel more represented, and means 'there are no POC programmers in my area' is no longer an excuse!

It is your organisation's job to make cinema more accessible, to create training opportunities and routes into permanent roles that are well funded, supported and have long term career development

Be aware that providing these opportunities will also incur consultation from your participants, and benefit your organisation with visible diversity when it might not be deserved - make sure they are compensated

When POC are able to make and curate their own films without needing to go through white-led organisations to facilitate this, then diversity doesn't become a trend

CREATING LASTING CHANGE



Be well researched, well versed and take an interest in ethnically diverse films; otherwise you need to be honest about not being the right person to be programming

**IMMEDIATE
COMMITMENTS**

Hire POC programmers with a variety of lived experience including intersections with disability, income etc. (and pay them appropriately for the expertise your organisation would otherwise lack)

Reach out to ethnically diverse film collectives, film festivals and filmmakers to consult, recommend and programme/collaborate with you

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Be willing to pay for independent films by POC - mobilise/extend your budget to support independent POC filmmakers financially, by providing them access to audiences and opportunities in your region

Create a cooperative structure where all knowledge isn't held with single people, but across the whole team who are respected for their individual fluencies of film, expertise and lived experience. Blur the lines of whose jobs entitle or exclude them contributing to other departments. Have managers and programmers work in front-of-house sometimes. Fluidity in roles (with of course pay equity that considers the additional labour incurred by POC and other marginalised people) can begin to approach the dismantling of systemic injustices within the institutional frame.

Challenge audiences with film choices

**IMMEDIATE
COMMITMENTS**

Do not make assumptions about your audiences' fluencies in film genres and themes

Programme related content including Q+A's, reading groups, workshops etc. to increase engagement and provide extra resources for the audience (pay POC and local people to lead these, further giving ownership over cinema)

**CREATING
LASTING CHANGE**

Engagement and learning programmers are often white, cis middle class people attempting to 'engage' with local, ethnically diverse communities - creating the ground for exploitation and a hierarchy in the relationship. It is integral for an engagement officer to have lived experience, but also to not carry this burden of access on their backs. An engagement team with a diversity of lived experience will increase their ability to build meaningful and equitable relationships with audiences.

Reflect on your usual programming and its accessibility

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Conduct a retrospective look at what normally gets screened, and who these are for. Do you have screenings in your regular programming that are accessible for refugees, for example? Identify the gaps, and look to rectify this as a priority

Similarly, do you have the budget but fail to program with the accessibility of disabled people and intersections in mind? Rectify this immediately

Screenings of problematic films/filmmakers can exclude POC from wanting to support your organisation and enter your space - did you unknowingly (or knowingly) screen or programme something offensive / racist? Address this in the present to move forward and gain trust

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Grassroots models of cinema such as local film clubs and online screenings are examples of truly reflexive programming that reflects what audiences want to see. Your organisation might find it difficult to engage ethnically diverse local audiences, yet an underfunded and under-resourced local group can reach their locality meaningfully - this is because they have access for ethnically diverse audiences at their core and not as an afterthought. Flip your programming - make it for those audiences, and not for the white audience by default



MARKETING

Make sure your marketing reaches as many people as possible, even if it's slightly inconvenient or out of your comfort zone

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Use non-digital and in-person forms of marketing such as flyers, and advertise opportunities on local bulletin-boards, newspapers, well-known job sites, with job centres and even through local radio. Not everyone accesses information the same way as you, or has the same access to the internet

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

White audiences are the majority target audience, whilst ethnically diverse audiences are always second - however, white audiences already have the fluency to attend any type of screening; so it is important to flip this

Apply the same marketing strategies you would use to reach a marginalised group to how you market your usual 'white audience targeted' programming



Be respectful to the audiences you want to access

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Be mindful of language. In addition to terminology covered previously, be respectful - do not be insulting by using cultural cues that do not belong to you just to gain access, such as the use of AAVE (African American Vernacular English), MLE (Multicultural London English), 'drag slang'¹², or eye dialect¹³ for foreign accents

Demonstrate an intolerance to harmful practice on your social media - if you see problematic behaviour from another film organisation or partner, challenge it publicly - silence is complicity, and allows harm to perpetuate

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Marketing materials can be harmful as they are public facing, so meaningful consultation and ethnically diverse hiring in this department is imperative. Do not overlook the harm that can be caused by uninformed messaging

Use marketing as an opportunity to commission responses and talks from POC local artists, such as social media take-overs, review writing and response art; begin to build into your organisation a practice of handing over resources

Share your social media access as a resource; offer your accounts with substantial reach to filmmakers, practitioners and grassroots organisations for online residencies and 'takeovers'. Social media is not just a marketing tool, but a valuable way to promote deserving creators and organisers

¹² Drag slang is vernacular popularised in the mainstream by television show Ru Paul's Drag Race and film Paris is Burning (1990) primarily. It is deeply rooted in the history of oppression and resistance of the African American queer community, however its appropriation by white queer and non-queer people has become commonplace and criticised.

¹³ Eye dialect: coined by George Philip Krapp to refer to using nonstandard spelling that implies a pronunciation of the given word that is actually standard; the spelling indicates that speech overall is dialectal, foreign, or uneducated.

OUTREACH

Understand the difference between Outreach and Marketing

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Different to Marketing, Outreach is about building relationships, inviting audiences into a space, and understanding why they may or may not wish to enter

Outreaching to new audiences must be done in a sensitive and equitable way; it goes beyond 'not offending', and towards long term commitment to serve each audience you outreach to

When hiring POC in an outreach position, be aware of the additional labour and stress that will be put onto a single ethnically diverse hire. Whether intentional or not, work culture in majority-white spaces will apply pressure on this employee to 'fix' or 'keep up' public image and be the gatekeeper to communities of colour - even if they do not actually have access to those communities personally, or do not feel it is safe for those audiences to enter your space

Hire a diverse outreach team, and give them autonomy (management of budgets) and resources (i.e. representative pay and an appropriately large budget to work with)

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

The best form of outreach to all audiences is to have representative, diverse staff that are valued and treated well. Beyond use of language, diverse-looking media content and intentions; audiences (as well as potential partners and job applicants) will know a cinema is there to serve them equitably when they see that reflected throughout the organisation's core

Do not do it on your own - work together equitably

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Collaborate with POC-led grassroots organisations to share resources and audiences equitably

Be honest about your organisation's own positionality and available resources when 'reaching out' to these organisations (that are doing the work you are unable to do despite being vastly more underfunded and under-resourced!)

Ask them what their terms are for collaboration, allow them to set out contracts or amend yours, ask what they need to keep doing their work and share how you can help facilitate that. Only then will their audiences begin to trust your organisation

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Contracts with grassroots and community groups will look different, and must have clauses to protect them from extraction - such as full wages if they terminate the contract after experiencing harmful behaviour or feel undervalued and disrespected; higher pay for their inevitable consultation work and emotional labour; access costs and expenses; and the ability to hold your organisation accountable if needed (i.e. direct access to your board or funders)

There is a difference between collaboration (short term) and partnership (long term). Always have the intention to build partnerships, and if a group does not wish to go beyond a one-off collaboration, that is not an excuse to stop supporting them. Accept feedback and criticism, make good use of it, and continue to offer them your resources.

Collaborations and partnerships primarily benefit white-led organisations who need to 'widen their reach and access' to ethnically diverse audiences - however, the relationships do not need to be extractive. This work can become part of your regular programme if done long term, equitably and fairly. Continually support and prioritise the groups and communities you gained access to beyond the screening they were targeted for

AUDIENCES AND ACCESSIBILITY

Integrate access into the core of your space (whether physical or digital)

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Make all screenings as accessible as possible by default, and implement this as best practice in all programming. Trigger warnings, content warnings, closed captioning, audio description, relaxed screenings, digital screenings, providing creches and (non-tokenistic!) varied dietary options in cafes should always be considered when budgeting

Acknowledge digital poverty when screening digital content, and offer access and tech support including paying for internet top-ups, employee time to give tutorials on using online platforms etc., and investing in technologies that enable better remote access to films

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Do not stop programming digitally after social distancing restrictions are lifted; offer digital screenings as alternatives to those who can't attend physical screenings as best practice; always stream Q+As and programme community-led digital events

Integrate access into the core of your space (whether physical or digital)

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Economic access is extremely important. All screenings and events should have sliding scale fees where audiences can self-identify their current economic position anonymously and pay what they can; and solidarity rates and free tickets should always be offered to asylum seekers and those unwaged or on low-income

If your current budget does not allow for this but you are committed to changing payment structures immediately, allow 'pay-it-forward' tickets to be purchased

Never turn anyone away if they cannot pay, and do not require proof of eligibility for discounted or free tickets

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Budget for this, fundraise for this; and be clear to your funders that your model now prioritises access and increasing cinema's reach in a meaningful way. You will find that accessible tickets won't affect your turnover, as these are audience members who may not have been able to purchase full price tickets anyway

Be reflexive towards experiences of cinema you may not have

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Be willing to change how your venue works for different audiences, who have different experiences of cinema to you. If a community you consult with expresses they prefer relaxed screenings in which food and talking is allowed, program this for them

Think about intersectional experiences of and access to cinema - does a white BSL interpreter have the vocabulary to interpret a Q+A in which panelists of colour use anti-colonial phrases? Would they know the anti-racist versions of traditional signs being developed by Black d/Deaf communities around the world? Are there blind and partially-sighted audiences who would find audio description in another language more accessible?

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Do not assume that audiences know to 'ask' for these things - consult widely, make feedback forms easy to find and fill out with optional anonymity, provide substantial incentives for simple feedback, respond to the concerns and keep audiences updated on how their feedback is being addressed, and generally create a more approachable environment in which audiences will feel comfortable asking for what they need from you



Have a practical fluency to prevent immediate harm

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Equality, Inclusion and Diversity training for white staff is a necessity. Whilst unconscious bias training doesn't tackle inner prejudices like anti-racism training can, it is important for front-of-house staff to gain basic practical fluency in speaking to POC to prevent immediate harm. This should be in addition to Disability Awareness types of training

Hire more POC people front-of-house (including managers!). It is okay to take positive action¹⁴, as public-facing staff with lived experience are less likely to cause harm to audiences with their shared experience. Just make sure you look after them with regular well-being check-ins, conversations about their wages vs their actual labour, training they would like to progress in their career, and tell them about grievance processes.

Be honest about the fact that disabled, POC and LGBTQI+ front-of-house staff can serve your organisation in increasing perceived diversity of the entire organisation. For visibly disabled, non white-passing and/or non-cis passing staff members within a majority able-bodied, white and cis organisation, they can be exploited as an unrepresentative 'face' of your team

Prove you value their lived experiences, and are aware of the systemic injustices that disadvantage them by taking action - close the Ethnicity Pay Gap and ask them what they need to feel equally respected

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Commit to long term Equality, Inclusion and Diversity training; hire consultants that will help you devise an equality strategic plan, and will hold you accountable to it over years through repeat visits, refresher courses and reviews

¹⁴ Positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 'mean that it is not unlawful discrimination to take special measures aimed at alleviating disadvantage or under-representation experienced by those with any of these characteristics'. (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85014/positive-action-recruitment.pdf) In fact, it is encouraged as one of the most direct and successful ways in which an organisation can create more equitable opportunities, complying with the 'Public Sector Equality Duty' of the Equality Act 2010. This can be as simple as adding 'we encourage applicants from ethnically diverse backgrounds to apply to this job', and justification can be as informal as a photograph from a public event which shows a majority white audience. Don't be afraid to use positive action! An example of positive discrimination might be an organisation appointing someone from an underrepresented group into a role without considering whether they have the right skills for the post, which would be purely tokenistic.

Have a practical fluency to prevent immediate harm

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Be completely transparent about intentions. Your organisation should publish its equality strategic plan and clear, goal-oriented commitments - 'we commit to being more equitable' is not a transparent commitment - 'we commit to hiring x amount of managers of colour by the end of the year' or 'we commit to reallocating x% of our total budgets towards diverse programming for the next funding period' is better as your organisation can be held accountable to these

Be completely transparent about the past. Your organisation should also open itself up to be held accountable by publishing past plans and internal reports. Allow audiences to see for themselves a true picture of your organisation, and rightly hold it accountable. This action would show meaningful commitment to acknowledging positionality and accepting criticism to move forward

Take positive action in programming and hiring based on your organisation's data collection. If, year in year out, a certain community is excluded, rectify this

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Decision making hierarchies need to begin to be dismantled, looking towards a more cooperative model and work culture with equity built in

Undergo consultation with every intention of this being the last time your organisation will ever need to. This means long-term investment for long-lasting change; and a willingness to commit to this

Make space in your budget for in-depth consultation, even if it means sacrificing a programme to hire a consultant with regular check ups that can help set immediate and long term goals, and hold you accountable to these. Improving practice and working culture in order to prevent harm needs to be prioritised

It is best practice to find this budget in your already-allocated funding. If you apply for additional funding, think about the resources you are taking up to improve and to learn about equity - which could instead go to under-resourced organisations that are already doing the work

Learn through equitable secondment schemes with other organisations, and reflect the imbalance of learning and teaching labour (particularly if a POC is taking part) by increasing salaries, and offering check-ins with someone who is impartial and external to your organisations

EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

Equitably collect representative audience feedback

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Seek feedback that prioritises audiences' experiences and safety, and not organisational quotas

Have evaluation and feedback sessions/forms conducted by POC so audiences feel more comfortable in their expression e.g. hire an external facilitator. This will encourage an environment for audiences to make more actionable suggestions

Use appropriate and reflexive methods based on access requirements, and what people are comfortable with i.e. dialogue sessions for some, simpler feedback forms for others, and options for in person / phone / video chats, and creative responses

Provide an incentive for in-depth feedback that benefits the audience significantly, such as free tickets, being paid a consultant's fee for a feedback session, being included on well-paid advisory group (and paying for refreshments, travel, childcare and access costs as the bare minimum)

If a complaint is made about the organisation, every member of staff should hear it - transparency will improve communication around these difficult areas, and help dismantle the systems that prevent transformative justice¹⁵

Set out meaningful recourse after a complaint, recorded clearly in policy. Give audiences access to trustees and even funders through contact details on your website, so they can hold you accountable for not following up issues

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Speak to funders, together with other cinemas, and ask for funder reports and evaluations to change from quota-oriented to qualitative feedback oriented. Speak to funders openly about how these reporting requirements influence tokenistic audience feedback forms, and demand this change to protect audiences from harm/exclusion

¹⁵ The Equality Act 2010 legally obligates workplaces to enact preventative measures for harm and discriminatory behaviour towards diverse people. It is then the responsibility of your organisation (as a service provider and/or public-serving organisation) to demonstrate a serious commitment to the eradication of this behaviour, dismantling the environments that they can exist in.

Conduct regular and varied internal evaluation, and form actions based on this

IMMEDIATE COMMITMENTS

Hire a facilitator if a QTIPOC/POC staff member requests it to have conversations with managers (for example, for a conversation about their inequitable treatment in the workplace)

Devise safe anonymous grievance systems for staff, which should be processed by an external facilitator with lived experience

Undergo board and governance auditing (offer pay to diverse trustees who have valuable lived experience to share, but are unable to do this work with no compensation. For some, trustee roles become essentially free consultation otherwise). 'Boards usually go unpaid' is not an excuse to change how things work in your organisation

Let all your staff meet and have open lines of communication with one another, including with trustees - empower all staff to have a say in decisions, make recommendations in board meetings, and insist on action towards equity if it is being ignored by others in higher positions

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Speak to funders, together with other cinemas, and ask for funder reports and evaluations to change from quota-oriented to qualitative feedback oriented. Speak to funders openly about how these reporting requirements influence tokenistic audience feedback forms, and demand this change to protect audiences from harm/ exclusion



03

DOING THE

WORK

Conclusion

As this toolkit comes to a conclusion, there are some fairly provocative things to consider. Is your organisation representative? Does it allow for all voices at every level? Is it worth public funding to reform your organisation, or should you hand resources over to groups that are already doing the work? Think deeply about this. Preventing harm and supporting groups already capable of sharing diverse and universal cinema in a meaningful way should be the priority of the sector, and not the sustainability of single organisations.

Are you willing to do the work?

A toolkit will increase your awareness of what work needs to be done, but it cannot make you any more qualified or capable of implementing it. Hire long-term consultants - not advisory groups or boards, but those qualified to work through everything from unconscious bias for public-facing staff, to white supremacy's manifestation in work culture; anti-racism, to dismantling structural inequality in cinema.

Create a network with other cinemas/film organisations and funders, specifically for doing this work together and supporting one another in it. A sector wide commitment to lasting change is necessary to begin trust-building. Begin the reparative work now. Give resources to POC audiences and cinema workers to create their own network with autonomous power to challenge, and shape the sector they want to work in.

Any and all change must, at its core, be structural, systemic and sector wide.

The work is dismantling historic, powerful and violent structures; not reforming a single workplace. It is decolonisation, not diversification. It is anti-racism, not inclusion.

Cinema has always been an unflinching, confronting space for fearless and unifying works of art; and is, emphatically, fertile ground for radical action for equity for all.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The work begins with a dialogue within your workplace. The role of this toolkit is not to replace a meaningful consultation programme, but to exemplify how equitable practice is not a secret. The basic and immediately necessary strategies are all in here, ready to implement - and, as this toolkit has mentioned throughout, must be implemented in an informed way.

Resources

Rather than linking to resources, this toolkit posits that the reader must do the work and seek out resources. As such, this section will include links to consultants instead to begin that long term work, and practical guides to prevent immediate harm and discrimination towards all audiences.

Consultants

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Further Reading

At an organisational level, a reading list on racism and allyship is not enough. This further reading list is, instead, here so you can learn more about the impact of structural inequality and systemic injustice in the UK and globally - and understand how cinema and the arts can and does perpetuate these harmful structures, despite them seeming so far removed.

Structural Inequality

Angela Davis, [Are Prisons Obsolete?](#)

Alex S. Vitale, [The End of Policing](#)

Cedric Robinson, [Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition](#)

Kwame Nkrumah, [Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism](#)

Sylvia Wynter, ["No Humans Involved:" An Open Letter to My Colleagues](#)

Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, [Black Power](#)

Richard Appignanesi, [Beyond Cultural Diversity: The Case for Creativity](#)

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, [Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California](#)

Jemma Desai, [This Work Isn't for Us](#)

Because we Must, [Decolonization Means Prison Abolition](#)

Gaurav Jashnani, RJ Maccani, and Alan Greig, [What Does It Feel Like When Change Finally Comes: Male Supremacy, Accountability and Transformative Justice](#)

Sara Ahmed, [Declarations of whiteness: The non-performativity of anti-racism](#)

SA Tate, [Whiteness and institutional racism: Hiding behind \(un\) conscious bias](#)

Structural Inequality (intersectional)

C. Riley Snorton, [Black on Both Sides](#)

J. Halberstam, [The Queer Art of Failure](#)

Kimberle Crenshaw, [Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics](#)

Ryan Conrad, [Against Equality, Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion](#)

Cinema

Naomi Obeng, [Racism in the UK Film Industry](#)

Arthur Jafa & Tina Campt, [Love is the Message, the Plan is Death](#)

So Mayer, [A Nazi Word for a Nazi Thing](#)



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