

PLAYING (WITH) HISTORY: TEACHING LEGACIES THROUGH THEATRE

**Materials for facilitating theatre games and staging history
through scenes about Judia Jackson Harris**

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Our Class: What is Community-Based Theatre?

Community-based theatre (CBT), also known as theatre for social change, is an interactive form of theatre used to foster dialogue, understanding, civic engagement, and community problem-solving. My approach to CBT is rooted in the practice, pedagogy, and thought of Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks, with an emphasis on Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" techniques. Students in my split-level class at the University of Georgia begin the semester by studying and experimenting with these foundations of community-based theatre. We additionally combine these techniques with performing the archive, which involves getting close to original historical documents and expressing them creatively. This allows us to share and bring to life histories that are relevant today, still impacting our present, and to foreground inspiring, meaningful, and important stories that have not been widely recorded and shared in dominant accounts. At its core, my CBT involves making theatre from collaborations and dialogue. The course is a service-learning course, meaning that students apply course content by serving a partner organization, and building a theatre activity from an established need of that partner—identified in dialogue with me.

For our service-learning project in the Spring 2025 semester, my students gave two workshops, the first focused on games, and the second, on historical scenes, to 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders in the 21st-Century Afterschool program at J.J. Harris Elementary. Alongside our study and training in the practice of community-based theatre, we studied the history of the pioneering (but hardly known) namesake of their school, Judia Jackson Harris (1870-1960), an illustrious Black woman educator who ran a school for Black children (against threats from the KKK) here in Athens. The site of her former school is just down the road from the elementary school, but many people are unfamiliar with Judia Jackson Harris and the history of her school. We collaborated with my colleague Dr. Jane McPherson (School of Social Work) and realized this project under the auspices of her Complex Cloth project: Dr. McPherson has been doing original, community-engaged research into the history of Judia Jackson Harris, and my students drew from that pioneering research to devise original scenes. Dr. McPherson and I formulated this theatre project in dialogue with our community partners, specifically, J.J. Harris Principal Dr. Beverly Harper and the Director of the afterschool program, Ms. Alon Hammond. In addition to the wish to make Judia Jackson Harris's history present and alive today for the students, the school staff identified the need to help their students to present

themselves effectively, speak clearly, and get over the “stage fright” of everyday life. My students and I prepared our two workshops to meet those identified community needs. UGA students learned experientially, by applying course content in community-based theatre techniques and performing the archive. The workshops were stunning moments of community engagement and theatre-based learning that surpassed our expectations.

My students have prepared the materials below in order to make our workshop content accessible to other educators and school staff, in the hopes that the material will be shared more widely, and the experience reproduced for several groups of students.

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Techniques: What is Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed?

Augusto Boal was a Brazilian theatre artist who developed "Theatre of the Oppressed" (often referred to as TO), an array of community-based practices and techniques designed to activate and empower anyone experiencing oppression to struggle against that oppression. While he built the first phase of the TO project with the Brazilian working class (living under dictatorship) of the 1950s and 60s in mind, subsequent iterations of his work zoomed out to include communities facing less overt forms of oppression. Eventually, Boal came to refine his definition of *oppressed* to be almost synonymous with his concept of *spectator*. In other words, for Boal, one is oppressed if they are in a position where their only option is to receive and obey messages -- where they are unable to respond and act.

"A dialogue presupposes at least two interlocutors. The two interlocutors are two people, two human beings, and as such, two subjects ... at each moment of dialogue, one of the interlocutors is actor and the other, spectator. In the next moment, the actor becomes spectator and vice versa ...

The obscenity begins when dialogue is transformed into monologue, when one of the interlocutors becomes specialized in speaking and the other in listening, one specializes in sending messages and the other in receiving them and obeying them -- one is transformed into subject and the other into object.

This form of relationship, in which what appears to be a dialogue is in reality a monologue, exists everywhere, in all relations between humans ... This intransitive relationship is always authoritarian, inhibiting, and must be destroyed in whatever stratum of society it is found." (Boal 336-337)

In keeping with this notion of oppression, central to TO is the idea of the *spect-actor*. The spect-actor is a reversal of the oppressed spectator: not a passive object, but an active and *acting* subject. Through TO techniques and activities, the spect-actor works with other spect-actors to "rehearse for the revolution," moving together toward liberation from oppression. The many and varied forms TO has taken over the years (image theatre, forum theatre, the rainbow of desire,

newspaper theatre, invisible theatre, legislative theatre, etc.) all approach this goal differently. Some are more expressive and abstract, others focus more on problem-solving, and still others allow spect-actors to rehearse potential efforts against literal oppressive forces.

One key tool for creating a spect-actor is the *de-mechanization of the body*. This process is essential to all TO practices, regardless of focus and demographic. The (repetitive, often alienating) routines of everyday life mechanize our bodies. That is, they create divisions between the mind, the emotions, and the physical body. How often do you find yourself “going through the motions” of a task with your body while your mind is somewhere else entirely? It happens all the time! For Boal (and he’s definitely not alone here), this is a huge issue. Not only does it keep us from using our bodies (as well as our minds and emotions) to their full potential, it also keeps us subjugated in oppressive situations. As Boal puts it, “the whole body thinks - not just the brain” (49). In order to build our bodies’ thinking / feeling skills, we first have to unlearn the mechanized, detached movements we put our bodies through in everyday life so that we can learn how to reconnect our minds, bodies, and emotions. Many of the games and activities in the “arsenal of theatre of the oppressed” are designed to help participants do just this! While de-mechanization is carried out most explicitly in warm-ups, it should remain a key element throughout the TO process.

“In the body’s battle with the world, the senses suffer. And we start to feel very little of what we touch, to listen to very little of what we hear and to see very little of what we look at. We feel, listen and see according to our speciality; the body adapts itself to the job it has to do. This adaptation is at one and the same time atrophy and hypertrophy. In order for the body to be able to send out and receive all possible messages, it has to be reharmonised.” (Boal 49)

Another important facet of TO work is *the Joker*. For more information on that concept, [follow this link!](#)

One final thing to note about TO is that it emphasizes *the collective*. The spect-actor does not act alone -- they act with (and for) their fellow spect-actors! Liberation from oppression, for Boal, is a group effort! As such, most TO techniques feature team-building, collaboration, and collective problem-solving.

Works Cited

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Approach: How to Perform and Stage Archival Documents?

Working with historic documents, be it a memoir, a newspaper article, a photograph, or a petition, requires a good deal of additional research. Each artifact is like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle—it’s impossible to figure out the meaning of a document without reading it within its historical context. As we recognize one piece as a part of a bigger picture, we understand the “why” behind words or photos and keep sharing the story that matters. In many cases, this “why” is exactly what makes it to the final cut of the script. Below are some practical tips, generated through hands-on experience to guide anyone who wants to turn an archival document into something performable. Although the following examples of games and scenes were made within the framework of the Theatre of the Oppressed, these tips can be applied to any way of presenting a historic document.

Study Historical Context

As mentioned above, a document acquires its meaning in relation to a whole—Judia Jackson Harris’s story, in our case. We learned a lot from a lecture by Dr. Jane McPherson, who graciously guided us through Judia Jackson Harris’s biography and generously shared documents from her personal archive. Understanding how different events in her life are connected, we singled out a few that we thought were significant for uplifting her community: uniting farmers in Athens to work toward a common goal of buying land (Corn Club)—building the first school for Black children on the land they purchased—deciding to stay in the South during the Great Migration—being more than a community builder and a teacher. These concepts resonated with most of our group, so we decided to focus on them.

Dive Deeper

After the main ideas to work with are chosen, it’s time to dig deeper into a more specific context. For example, developing “Corn Club” scene required studying newspaper articles about Judia Jackson Harris’s accomplishments in accumulating land in the hands of Black farmers, as well as her own recollections of that period. The scene “Choice to Stay” presented some of Judia

Jackson Harris’s family members who left for the North during the Great Migration—we learned about this fact from Dr. McPherson’s lecture—but to emphasize her decision to stay we needed a better grasp of the reasons that forced many Black people to leave. *The Migration Series* by an African American painter Jacob Lawrence became the point of reference as he documented this period from oral histories via sixty panels with captions.

Consider the “Why”

With necessary context in mind, revisit the document and see what parts of it can more explicitly say why the story you’re telling matters. Sometimes it helps to highlight the phrases or sentences in the document to see what can be used to draft the scene. If there is not too much to utilize, it helps to focus on the “why” and say and/or act the way the characters in the scene would. See the “Choice to Stay” scene: the dialogue is improvised on the basis of what people who decided to move up North could say to a person who is still hesitant. In the game “Rainbow of Desire,” included in the scene, Judia Jackson Harris’s biography was used as an inspiration for the arguments for staying down South. Another example is the “Obstacles” scene: in addition to her biography, it includes facts we came across in newspaper articles that reported on various challenges Judia Jackson Harris faced while running her school and how she overcame those challenges.

A different way to engage with an archival document is to embody it: see “Corn Club Machine” game, in which participants are offered to imagine how the club would’ve functioned if it were one mechanism. This game requires participants to come up with a gesture that would interact with one of other participants’ thus showing them how interdependent all of the parts of the machine are. Although not a single word is spoken during the game (apart from the introduction), the “why” is generated in the bodies of the participants and articulated through a discussion after the game.

Consider Your Audience

One of the main challenges when it comes to staging an archival document is the need to adapt it for your audience. Many documents belong to formal style and were written to be read,

not recited from stage. With this in mind, it will be useless to read aloud a paragraph from a memoir to an audience—you'll lose their attention by the third sentence. If the audience listens to the text instead of reading it, the text needs to be adapted, and doubly so if the text isn't contemporary. When dealing with a document written in the first half of the 20th century, one must also consider the inevitable changes the language goes through over time. So, in the case of Judia Jackson Harris's memoir, there were three aspects for us to consider: written vs. spoken language, outdated vs. contemporary words, and adult vs. young participants.

As our target audience was elementary school students and for many of them English was their second language, the need to adapt the original text was inevitable. Surely, staging archival documents, you would want to use as much verbatim text as possible. But if the text doesn't explicitly articulate your "why" or is not meant to be read from stage, there's no point in trying to preserve it as it is: you know why the story you're telling matters, but your audience didn't do the same research as you did. So, there's a fine balance between using verbatim text and making all cuts and changes necessary to get straight to the point. Keeping in mind what exactly resonated with you (be it an overall message of a document, its narrative, or the actual words and phrases) will help to create the most meaningful piece out of it.

Work on the Text

I'll break down the creative process behind the "Cultivating Tenderness" scene below. Read the following passage from Judia Jackson Harris's memoir, generously shared by Dr. Jane McPherson from her personal archive.

Parents of the types among whom we worked here, were hard working people. They worked from sun up 'til sun down and often were in the fields by daylight. In such a situation they had little time to devote to the personal training of their children. I mean in developing the finer side of their lives. The tenderness that means a kiss, and an arm around the neck and other evidences of the delicate shades of feeling were foreign emotions. They rarely, very rarely existed between parents and their children.

Reading it aloud will help note the sentences or phrases that create any difficulty to read: does the sentence look too wordy or needs more context? Considering the message of this passage,

there are two main ideas: the observation that people do not have time to show tender feelings to their children and what tenderness means to the author. Now, thinking back to the intended audience, the former would look like a critique, while the latter would just provide a definition for tenderness. If the passage were to be used for a discussion among adult participants about common aspects of family dynamics when all adults have full-time jobs, for instance, it would be a whole different story. In our case, I focus solely on the definition and frame the scene accordingly, giving the facilitator a possibility to say whose understanding of tenderness is presented to the participant and why.

Next, I kept a short introduction to the instruction, that reveals motivation of the speaker: *Recognizing that there was not enough of such demonstration manifested, and knowing that such relationship would in the end, help to develop the well rounded child, I attempted to emphasize this side of the training.* This passage contained many words and phrases common for the early 20th century writing style, yet now they would seem too bulky and might pose difficulties for young participants. So, I simplified the language where possible and preserved the last part of the sentence to retain Judia Jackson Harris's own voice: *Knowing that such feelings would help to develop the well-rounded child, I attempted to emphasize this side of the training.* I have also adjusted the use of a hyphen in "well-rounded" according to contemporary rules of punctuation.

Finally, the instruction itself has experienced a couple of changes. The original sentence: *This afternoon when you return home I want you, before enquiring about dinner, to go to your mother and put your arm around her neck and tell her how happy you are to see her.* First, the word "enquire" felt like a more advanced vocabulary word for young participants. This word also sounds like a switch from the overall casual style, standing out as unexpectedly bookish for a contemporary speaker. Second, the instruction prompts the participant to go to their mother, which in some cases can become an impossible task. If the participant lives with their foster parents, a single-parent household, or with two fathers, their aunt, or grandparents, such a prompt would single them out. So, to make this instruction inclusive, I changed it into: *This afternoon when you return home, I want you, before asking about dinner, to go to [the adult who takes care of you] and put your arm around [their neck] and tell [them] how happy you are to see [them].*

Be Creative

No matter what changes the original document goes through to make it to the stage, letting oneself explore different creative ways of presenting it will help find the most meaningful and engaging way to perform that archival piece. As long as the scene or the game built off a document aligns with the goals, articulates the “why” in a way accessible to the audience, and respectfully represents the author of the piece, there’s nothing to limit your imagination!

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Topic: Who was Judia Jackson Harris?

This lesson plan is based on the collaboration between Judia Jackson Harris Elementary School and Dr. Emily Sahakian's Community-Base Theatre Class in the Spring 2025 Semester. Judia Jackson Harris will be our guiding example throughout this plan, but we encourage other schools to replicate this format to teach students about other important Black educators.

The following historical background on Judia Jackson Harris was summarized from Dr. Jane McPherson's article "Judia Jackson Harris," published in the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* on April 21st, 2025.

Judia Jackson Harris was a "Black educator, reformer, and community builder" from Georgia. She developed a lasting model for teacher training, education, and land ownership for Black families in rural Clarke County. While she is mainly remembered as an educator, her work supported broader goals like literacy and land ownership to uplift rural Black communities during the Jim Crow era.

Born in Athens, Georgia in 1870, Judia Jackson Harris was the youngest of eight children. Despite their parents being illiterate, Judia Jackson Harris and her siblings received schooling in Athens, learning to read and write. Judia Jackson Harris went on to receive a higher education alongside her sisters at Atlanta University. After graduating in 1894, she returned to Athens to teach. Later, Judia Jackson Harris became the principal of the East Athens School, but in 1903, she stepped down to open the Model and Training School in rural Clarke County. Much later in her life, in 1949, Judia Jackson Harris was awarded an honorary doctorate for her achievements.

In 1900, Judia Jackson Harris began organizing Black farmers near Helicon Springs. They formed the Mutual Benefit Association, also known as the Corn Club, to buy land, build homes, and open a school. Despite threats and fear of white retaliation, they purchased 41 acres by the end of that year. Over time, the group expanded to over 2,000 acres and added facilities like a sawmill and cotton gin. The community became known for its social programs, meetings, and educational events, garnering public praise from W. E. B. Du Bois.

Judia Jackson Harris opened the Model and Training School on her share of the land. The school received support from local and national funders and gained attention from leaders like Du Bois and George Washington Carver. It was the first of its kind in the South and enrolled over 300

students. It offered subjects like music, blacksmithing, sewing, and literature. Many graduates became teachers, and the school hosted summer training and agricultural fairs.

Despite her successes, Judia Jackson Harris faced serious threats from local white residents, including violence and intimidation from the Klan. She spoke out against the hate and got support from local white leaders. Her school building burned down in 1925 (due to electrical issues), but with help from the community and the Rosenwald Foundation, it was rebuilt and reopened in 1929. The school struggled with upkeep in later years and closed in 1956 when school systems merged.

Judia Jackson Harris retired in 1950 at age 80 but stayed nearby, living in the home across from the school she founded.

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Dr. McPherson's Text:

Judia Jackson Harris was a Black American educator, social reformer, and community builder who pioneered a model of teacher training, schooling, and cooperative land purchasing for Black Georgia farmers and their families that persisted in rural Clarke County for over half a century. Though she is largely remembered as an educator, her goals and achievements were broader: she used land ownership and literacy to promote the rights and status of rural Black citizens in Jim Crow Georgia.

Early Life and Education

Judia Jackson Harris was born in Athens, GA, to Alfred and Louisa Jackson in early 1870. She was the last of their eight children, and one of only two to be born after Emancipation. Though neither Jackson parent could read or write, all of Alfred and Louisa's children were literate, and three of their daughters—Camilla, Mary, and Judia—went on to become educators. Jackson Harris received her basic schooling in Athens (likely at the Knox Institute, where Camilla had been a teacher in the years after Emancipation) and then followed her older sister, Mary Jackson McCrorey (1867-1944), to Atlanta University. Jackson Harris graduated from Atlanta University's Normal Course in 1894, and continued her education with summer courses at other influential institutions, including Hampton Institute and Harvard University. In 1949, she was awarded an honorary doctorate in Literature when she gave the commencement address at Northwestern College in Washington, DC.

Early Career

While she was still a student in Athens, Jackson Harris joined her sister Mary Jackson McCrorey in taking on a rural schoolhouse in Clarke County during the summer, and she kept this up during her years at Atlanta University to help pay for her school fees (she also had a scholarship from a Congregational Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut). After graduating from Atlanta University in 1894, Jackson Harris accepted a post in Athens Public Schools that fall. With the exception of one year at Haines Institute in Augusta where Lucy Craft Laney and Mary Jackson McCrorey were both in leadership, Jackson Harris spent her early career teaching in Athens. During this period, Jackson Harris boarded with her sister Camilla Jackson Brydie, and likely helped nurture her nieces towards careers in education: Carrie Brydie (1878-1957) and

Mary Brydie Williams (1889-1972) both graduated from Atlanta University and became well-respected teachers in Kansas City, Missouri, and Elizabeth City, North Carolina, respectively. Jackson Harris was promoted to Principal of the East Athens School in 1902, and resigned that position in 1903 to open the Model and Training School in rural Clarke County.

Mutual Benefit Association

In August 1900, Jackson Harris began organizing Black farmers near Helicon Springs, a rural Clarke County community north of Athens, Georgia. Jackson Harris suggested that with focused effort the community could become a “model rural settlement,” and together, the farmers and Jackson Harris established the Mutual Benefit Association (also known as The Corn Club) for the purpose of “buying land, building and improving homes, and establishing a model school.” Though some sharecropping farmers were “frightened” by the possibility of white resistance to a group of Black farmers buying land in Jim Crow Georgia, the Association—then with 10 dues-paying members, including Jackson Harris herself—was able to put a deposit on their first 41 acres of land in December 1900. Over the next few decades, the Association purchased more than 2,000 acres, as well as a saw mill and cotton gin for community use. As it expanded, the Mutual Benefit Association became full “social settlement,” with “activities, clubs, friendly visits, lectures, mothers’ meetings, and industrial classes” among its many activities. W. E. B Du Bois included the Mutual Benefit Association as an exemplar of “co-operative business” in his 1907 report entitled, “Economic co-operation among Negro Americans.” After 20 years, nearly all the land in the community was owned by Black landowners, and the community had the highest percentage of Black property owners of any section in Clarke County.

Model and Training School

Jackson Harris opened the Model and Training School in 1903 on her share of the Mutual Benefit Association land (land she later deeded to the Clarke County School Board). To open the school, she had support from the General Education Board and the Peabody Fund and later, from the Slater Fund, Julius Rosenwald Fund, Clarke County Schools, and from many of Athens’ white community leaders, including David C. Barrow, Jr., who served as Chancellor of the University of Georgia from 1906 to 1925. National leaders in the Black community also

expressed support, including Du Bois, who visited the school, and George Washington Carver. The Model School combined with a Teacher Training Institute was the first of its kind in the south, and the school soon attracted an enrolment of over 300 students.

Music, theater, literature, blacksmithing, sewing, and manual training were all features of the Model School curriculum, and many graduates went on to become teachers. When school was not in session during the summer, teacher training was held for the County's Black teachers, and the school—together with the Mutual Benefit Association—attracted crowds with their annual agricultural fairs during which canned goods, livestock, and quilts were exhibited and prizes were won. Students presented yearly musical pageants, often at the Morton Theater in downtown Athens. Jackson Harris's model was emulated throughout the region.

Though Jackson Harris had supporters in Athens and in the north, the rural white community nearest the school was initially "uninterested or actually hostile toward this whole program of collective bargaining and potential educational development." In the early years, Jackson Harris encountered violent resistance and intimidation as she navigated the dangerous world of Jim Crow Georgia: her home was shot into at midnight; a dog with its throat cut was left on the school porch; and one afternoon, a man fired point blank into the door of the school. In the years following World War I, the threats and "night riders" of the Ku Klux Klan successfully terrorized many Black farmers off their land and local schools saw a drop in Black enrollment as Black citizens became part of Great Migration. Pushing back against this exodus, Jackson Harris convinced multiple prominent white Athenians to denounce the violence, and she published these denunciations alongside her own "Racial Creed" in 1925. As late as 1927, however, a notice was posted in Helicon Springs telling Black farmers living near the School "to leave at once or they would be punished" and some families did leave.

Around this same time in 1925, Jackson Harris experienced another great challenge in the form of fire: the school's main building burned down due to a defective flue. After the fire, the school operated out of Jackson Harris's home (located directly across the street from the school) while funds were raised for a new school. With the help of the Rosenwald Foundation and many others, the Model and Training School re-opened as a new brick Rosenwald School in 1929. During the 1930s and 1940s, the school persevered with community support, though it suffered from roof leaks, rotten porches, and other maintenance issues. In 1951, the County Health Department closed the school's lunchroom due to a lack of running water, and students who

were present during the final years remember that the school relied on outhouses. The school closed in 1956 when the Athens City and Clarke County school systems merged and its remaining students were bussed into Athens.

Marriage

In 1912, at the age of 42, Judia Jackson married Samuel F. Harris (1875-1935), Athens' most distinguished Black educator, best known for stewarding Athens High and Industrial School, Georgia's first four-year public high school for African-American students. After their marriage, they continued to lead their respective schools, and also collaborated on projects, including the Athens-based State Summer School for Colored Teachers⁵⁵ and the work of Interracial Cooperation.

Retirement and End of Life

In 1950—at the age of 80 years old, Jackson Harris retired from the newly renamed Judia Jackson Harris School, but she did not go far away! She lived in her home across the street from the school and remained a part of the community she helped to build. When asked to evaluate the impact of her life's work, she credited the collective, writing that “the major part of what has been accomplished has been done by group action.”

At the end of her life when she needed care, she moved in with a community family, but she still walked local children back to her old home to play the piano and visit with the cats. When she died in 1960, she left behind multiple nieces and nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews, only one of whom were still living in Clarke County. Ironically for a woman who dedicated her life to making Georgia a prosperous and peaceful home to its Black citizens, the majority of her own relatives left for New York, Chicago, Kansas City, and Washington, DC, during the Great Migration. Jackson Harris is buried in Athens at East Lawn Cemetery.

In 2009, in honor of Jackson Harris, Athens-Clarke County Schools opened the new J. J. Harris Elementary School less than one mile from where the Judia Jackson Harris School still stands at 2685 Danielsville Road. The old school was placed on Historic Athens's list of historic “places in peril” in 2020.

GAMES

Ground Rules

Workshops like the ones we lead require active engagement of the participants, so it's vital to set up the rules and expectations at the very beginning. With young participants in mind, we suggest introducing them with a phrase like this: "These rules will help us be productive and have fun!" This way we set up a positive attitude toward what follows. We recommend that the rules are projected on screen as well, to engage both auditory and visual perception. Also, stick with no more than 4 rules: this is the maximum number of things short-term memory can deposit!

These are the ground rules we used:

1. Always treat others with kindness and respect
 - a. Listen when someone else is talking
 - b. Respect others' space
2. Even if you are not participating, and choose to sit out, please give your classmates good energy and try not to distract them
3. Play within the parameters of your own body. Feel free to modify games based on your body, physical limitations and needs. If you need to sit down, you are welcome to. Take care of yourself
4. Finally, no ideas are bad ideas! Be confident and speak up even if you don't have the perfect answer.

As rules need some kind of wrapping up, we suggest finishing with something that reiterates the most important rule (or the first one):

"Thank you guys for listening- let's have a good time and be kind and respectful to one another."

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Note on Time

To keep time for all of the games, you must keep in mind the introduction to the games and the reflection time after each game. **TIME WILL CHANGE.** Have a rough time frame for each game that you believe will work for your group and adjust as necessary. Each game should only need 5-10 minutes, except Image Theatre, which took about 20 minutes. Keeping an eye on the groups to see how they are doing, listening to the groups, and adjusting the time for each game as necessary is vital. Having a strict plan sets up for difficulty.

Keep an eye on the groups and listen to the Joker. If their group is getting bored or distracted, maybe add elements to the game or begin to wrap it up. To make sure time is used well, be willing to adjust as necessary, making sure that the learning element is still featured rather than the feeling of being rushed.

Previously Used Time Frame for Judia Jackson Harris Workshops:

Time Frame Used on First Judia Jackson Harris Workshop #1:

Estimated Start Time: 3:15

1. Introduction
2. Count and Shake
 - Done by 3:30(aim for done by 3:20-3:25)
3. Name Game: MAX 10 minutes(aim for 5)
 - Done by 3:35-3:40
4. Ground Rules: MAX 15 minutes
 - Done by 3:45
5. Peruvian Ball Game: MAX 10 minutes
 - Done by 3:55
6. Step In: MAX 5 minutes
 - Done by 4:00
7. Columbian Hypnosis: MAX 15 minutes
 - Done by 4:15

8. Sevens/Internal Editor: MAX 10 minutes

-Done by 4:25

9. Sirens Song: MAX 10 minutes

-Done by 4:35

Transition by Dr. McPherson: 1-2 minutes

10. Demo Image Theatre: MAX 20 minutes

-Done by 4:55

11. Kudos: 5 minutes

-Done by 5:00

Time Frame Used on First Judia Jackson Harris Workshop #2:

Intro: 10-15 minutes (done by 3:25)

Historical Scenes: 45 minutes (done by 4:10)

- Rehearse: 15 minutes (done by 3:40)
- 10 minutes to perform each scene
 - Corn Club: Done by 3:50
 - Obstacles: Done by 4:00
 - Choice to Stay: Done by 4:10

Tenderness scene: 10 minutes (4:20)

Kudos: 5-10 minutes (4:30)

- This was the beginning time plan; once the workshop began, the start and end times were moved to keep on track with the allotted workshop period.

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2025

10-Count Shake Warm-Up

Introduction

The 10-count shake is a pre-game warm-up to get the participants eager and ready to play games, and ensure all their energy is out so they are able to focus on the workshop. The 10-count shake is a great way to get the children interested in what we are there to do, and give them a bit of an expectation of what the rest of the day will look like. It's a great way to get started and helps reinforce the sense of community we are trying to build!

Instructions

I started by telling the kids that we were going to get all our sillies out, all our energy out so we could be ready to focus and learn and have fun without any distractions. Let them know you are going to shake out each limb for 10 counts, then 9, then 8, all the way down to 1, and it will get faster and crazier as you countdown. Below there is a specified script!

Hi everyone, my name is ____ and I'm so excited to get to know you all and be here today!!! Before we start with the amazing games we have, let's get all our sillies out and get our bodies ready to learn so we have no distractions and can focus and get excited! Let's all get in a big circle so we can all do it together.

I'm going to count down from 10 and shake out each arm and leg for 10 counts, then 9 counts, then 8 counts, alllll the way down to 1. It's going to get faster and crazier each time so get ready..... And sometimes I forget what number comes next so will you all count super loud with me? *wait for them to respond* Hmmm that didn't sound super convincing, I said can you all count the loudest you've ever counted before??? *they will most likely scream*

Ok!!! Let's get started!!!! *countdown 10-1 for the right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg, and repeat all the way down to 1.

Other Considerations for Smooth Facilitation

Some of the kids will be shy and not want to participate, especially since it's the first time they'll be moving with us. When explaining the instructions show with your body too what it will look like. There's a lot less fear when there's a clear expectation and the kids know exactly what is expected of them.

A good way to ensure they all participate is by saying "sometimes I may forget what number comes next, so I need everyone to count loud and proud with me just in case I need help!" Kids always want to be loud and be heard, so even pretending you can't hear them and saying "LOUDER!", they'll scream the numbers at you and get silly!

Created by
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2025

Sevens/ Internal Editor (adapted from Hannah Eppling)

Introduction:

This is a game that has proven effective in helping participants demechanize their thought patterns and say whatever comes to mind. It can be played between 7 to 10 minutes and works best with the larger group. For best results, it's important to introduce the game in a way that helps participants understand its purpose and frees their minds from overthinking. Below is a sample introduction that can be used.

Do you sometimes feel like there's a tiny voice in your head which keeps saying to you... "don't say it out loud, it's weird, it's not funny enough"...? Yeah, me too. It happens to all of us. For our next game, we are going to ignore that tiny voice and say the first thing that comes to our mind when we are asked a question. It doesn't have to be smart, funny or even correct. Just say whatever that pops into your head first. Are you ready to play?

Instructions:

Everyone stands together in a circle, with the Joker in the middle.

The Joker asks simple questions, and each person takes their turn answering out loud.

After each person gives their answer, the whole group repeats that answer together, followed by a loud "Yes!" from the rest of the group.

Key Considerations:

For the Joker

Encourage participants not to overthink their answers and to respond as soon as it's their turn. They can even respond with a sound or gesture, every response is acceptable.

Questions should be simple and elicit single-word answers.

Questions can also be phrased in a way to invite participants to be creative and a little wacky "What's the latest new fun food to eat in the cafeteria?" or "Writing with pencils and pens is ok but all the cool kids these days are writing with this."

Sample Questions

What's something you eat? Name an animal that lives in water. What's something that's round? Name a color. What's something you can kick? Name something that's hot. What's something you can drink? Name something you see at school. Name something you wear on your feet. What's something you find in a kitchen? What's something you can write with? Name something you can throw. What's something you can find outside?

Follow up

How did it feel to have everyone say “yes” to your response/answer/idea? Was it easy or difficult to make things up on the spot?

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Colombian Hypnosis (adapted from Boal, p. 50)

Introduction:

Colombian hypnosis is a game that pokes fun at the leader and follower dynamics. In this game, two participants pair up and guide each other through movements that allow them to copy and follow as both the follower and the leader. (Game should last 5-10 minutes)

It is important that when playing this game, we remember our ground rules, keep each other's space in mind, and treat others with kindness and respect. This game is meant for the participants in the game to become one with their own body and learning to follow and respect the actions of the person to their opposite.

Instructions:

The Joker will divide the group into pairs; if odd number, the Joker can be paired with a participant

1. The pairs will decide who will be person A and person B. Once decided, person A will hold out their hand and person B will follow their hand in any way that person A guides it.
2. Person A will lead their hand however they feel, for example, person A can lead their hand in a circle, and person B will have to follow their hand, keeping their eyes on person A's hand and keeping about one foot of distance between their face and person A's hand.
3. Once a few minutes have passed, person A and person B switch, so person A now follows the hand movements of person B.
4. When the pairs begin to understand what the objectives/rules of the game are, introduce things to embody as the leader. For example, tell the person to act as if they were a teacher. This allows people to shift their mindset while keeping the objective of the game at the forefront of their mind.
- Other options for leading:
 - Dictator
 - Parent
 - Superhero

Reflection/Discussion:

Once the game has concluded, ask some reflection questions to see how people felt about the game. Get a feel from the group on how they felt and adjust the reflection/discussion period as needed.

Reflection Question Ideas:

- Did you prefer being the leader or follower? Why?
- How would you change the game?
- What was it like to embody certain people as the leader? And follower?
 - Could the follower tell what kind of person the leader was?

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Peruvian Ball Game (adapted from Boal, p. 96)

Introduction:

The Peruvian Ball Game is from Augusto Boal's book *Games for Actors and Non-actors*. This game allows participants a chance to think creatively, use their memories and listen to their fellow players. Participants create a ball of their choice. Players then move around repeating a movement and sound for their ball, paying close attention to not only their own, but also everyone else's. Players will go through rounds of exchanging balls and taking on that ball's movements until the final round where participants will find their original ball.

Instructions:

Each player will envision themselves possessing a ball. The ball can be a real ball such as a beach ball or it could be an imaginary ball of any kind. They begin moving around the space with their ball.

After the players spend some time moving about the space with their balls, the Joker of this game will instruct each player to find a partner. Players should continue repeating their ball movement, yet just in front of another player. Then, the leader should tell each player to swap balls with this partner. Now, each player should be in possession of their partner's ball. The player then tries to replicate the movement of this new ball.

The 'joker' then calls for the players to repeat the swap again with someone you haven't already swapped with. This can go on for one more round, depending on how many players.

Following the 3-4 exchanges of balls, the players should still be moving around the space with a ball. The leader of this game will then instruct the players to find their original ball.

Once you find the ball you think is yours, you tell the other person: I think you have my ball! Then you will exchange balls. They will receive the ball you had and then must find their own ball. We play until everyone finds their original ball. If there are people that have not found their ball after some time, the game can be called and an investigation can take place.

Considerations:

How to start - It is important for players to decide on a single repeatable sound and movement that accompanies this ball. Once they have found this, they continue to move around the space repeating both these things. Uniqueness should be encouraged, they will want their ball to be easily detectable.

The importance of memory - It is very important to let the players know how familiar they should be with the movement and sound of their ball. Make sure each player understands what their ball is and how exactly it moves. This exercise will encourage improvisational and imaginative sensibilities in many players. Although many may choose a common ball such as a basketball or beach ball, it is still important to remember the nature of this ball. Later in the game, they will be asked to find their original ball.

Listening and Interacting - This is a very important practice in listening and being present with your peers.

Repetition is key - Now with this new ball, players then repeat their movements around the space. They can study everyone else now with their new balls, yet not forgetting to remember how their current one moves.

Finding your original ball - The power of memory and active listening will now come into play with the players. This may take some time, but we must encourage players to pay close attention to each player's movements and sounds.

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Step-In Theatre Game

Introduction: *Learning through experiences*

In this game, participants feel involved and present as they show their opinions or beliefs. This game allows participants to draw from their own lives and find commonalities and differences with their peers. As Dr. Emily says, in order to work together as a community, we need to be able to acknowledge both what we share and our differences. This game allows us to experience that community in our bodies. It also builds up confidence to perform and play theatre games in a group setting. The collective feeling of this practice can be applied to many community-based theatre games, yet this one simplifies the intentions to a very accessible practice to many contexts.

Instructions:

Circling up

This game calls for a circle, so participants should arrange in a circle formation. No matter the size, it should be a circle with everyone facing in. This game can be played early on before other games as a way to get to know each participant and get out any disconnected feelings by learning things that you find relatable with your fellow participants.

Stepping in

The step in statements can look like anything. Usually to start, you could focus on more broad statements. Some of these could include: 'I like reading,' 'I love recess,' or 'I have a sister/brother.' After each statement is said, you should pause and let anyone else step in if that resonates with them. Slowly, the participants that started more reserved start to step up and tell you a bit about themselves and then in turn find others that agree/disagree with their statement. After participants have stepped in, we look around, noticing who is in and who is out, and then we all step back to the circle formation in unison.

Adapting the content:

The formula of this game provides a very easy structure to introduce a variety of topics. The Joker can pose a question and participants can step in with their own authentic answers to it. This game can gauge a participant's knowledge about a topic, measure the amount of experiences or exposure to something or ultimately teach through community.

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The Siren's Song (adapted from Boal, p. 125)

Introduction:

The Siren Song is a game about the ways we respond to oppression. It's meant to show us how pain is commonly shared and that we have similar experiences that can be expressed collectively.

Instructions:

The Joker asks the participants to close their eyes and assemble in the middle of the room. Each participant should think of an oppression that they have experienced or are currently experiencing. When they are ready, they should vocally express a scream or a sound that conveys that pain. The Joker then chooses four participants who express distinct sounds and asks them to each stand in one of the corners of the room and continue with their screams. After that, the Joker asks the remaining participants to listen to the four screams and choose to join one that they feel resembles their sound, pain, or memory.

Participants in each group should then recount to each other what their oppression was about.

Expected outcome:

It's almost certain that in each group the stories will be about the same type/theme of oppression.

Variation:

When deciding to play this game with the young participants, we worried that the discussion part might lead to complications:

1. The participants might overshare, consuming time that we didn't have.
2. They might share sensitive topics that we might not be equipped to handle.

We then decided to create a modified version.

The participants will move in the space and express their sounds whenever they are ready, however, after the participants are divided into four groups, instead of sharing their experiences,

they will decide on a collective physical gesture that expresses the sound that connected them. It was very important to have one of us, the facilitators, present in each group to help contain the game.

Introducing the game:

I also had to consider how to explain the goal of the game to such a young age group. This is what I said: "Hi everyone! Now we are going to play a game about a difficult emotion—pain. No one likes to feel pain, but we need to remember that all emotions are important and valid. I'm sure all of you have experienced being treated unfairly at least once; I know I have."

I wanted to create a positive framework for discussing pain with children without shying away from it. Initially, during the planning phase, I used the word "unjustly" but through group discussions, we decided to use "unfairly" instead. We believed it was a simpler term that is more commonly understood by this age group.

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Image Theater Game (adapted from Boal pp. 174-215)

Introduction

The image theater game, according to Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, aims to provide students with a visualization of a situation without use of spoken word, sculpting ideas with their bodies. These ideas can be any relevant theme that might be helpful for the students to understand, discuss or better develop (and can be originated by them) like their lives, feelings, experiences, oppressions. The point here is that images can express better feelings than words, while also sparking the creativity of students while they try to create and understand. For example, in the first workshop we asked students to create an image of their understanding of Judia Jackson Harris and the school, and the result was pictures like students representing the old and the new school, for example; students representing the company who built on her land.

Instructions

1. In small groups, students (or facilitator) decide on themes they would like to sculpt;
2. Students get together and create their image;
3. Facilitator can walk around and discuss with groups what they have prepared;
4. Or, each group can create their image at a time, while the other students go around and try to understand their images;
5. In the end, students who created the images can explain what was their initial proposal.

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Kudos (adapted from Hannah Eppling)

Introduction

“Kudos” are the perfect way to end the workshop and make every participant feel like a valued member of the community, and reinforce the bravery and work they have done. It is important to reward and acknowledge every participant equally. The kudos is a vital part of the workshop and really ‘seals the deal’!

Instructions

The closing Kudos was super effective when we used imaginary gold ‘kudos’ coins to give to each of the participants. An amazing tactic we used in our first workshop was to have a couple volunteers go on a “treasure hunt” and help carry a super heavy imaginary treasure chest with tons of gold coins in it.

Make sure you are intentional with your kudos, circle up and let the participants know how grateful you are for them and how brave and amazing they were for participating and trying something new. When we were split into small groups, it was nice to remember a golden moment each participant had and give them a kudos coin for a specific thing they did.

Going up to the treasure chest, take a gold coin and walk over to each participant. For example, one of mine was “Kudos to you Jeremiah for being such an amazing leader in the Colombian hypnosis game and trying it even though you didn’t want to at first. It was so amazing to watch you be a leader in our group!” People love to be recognized for things they have done, so make sure you are specific, intentional, and award everyone equally for their work, because they deserve it!

To enhance the experience: feel free to get super silly and cartoonish with the treasure chest. It was super effective to make the kudos larger than life, and the participants loved being rewarded with something that felt special.

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2025

SCENES

Obstacles

Introduction

Thanks to Dr. McPherson's presentation, and through our study of historical archives, we learned that Judia Jackson Harris faced five major challenges in building and maintaining her school. Below is a summary of these challenges and the actions she took to address them.

Historical Context

1. Financial and Funding Challenges

Solution: She started the Mutual Benefit Association and the Corn Club. She also secured financial support from several educational foundations, including the General Education Board, the Peabody Fund, the Slater Fund, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

2. The Great Migration of Black Communities

Solution: She worked to improve local education and support Black land ownership, helping families feel secure enough to stay.

3. Racist Threats (like gunshots at the school and the killing of a dog)

Solution: She built strong relationships with influential white leaders in Athens, including the president of the University of Georgia. She also published a public statement condemning racial violence, called the "Racial Creed."

4. A Fire at the School

Solution: She temporarily moved the school into her own home until a new building could be built.

5. Infrastructure and Maintenance Issues (leaky roof, no running water)

Solution: Eventually, the school merged with the Athens public school system to access better resources and facilities.

Creation Process and Goals

The goal of “The Obstacles” is to help students learn about this history in an interactive way. It also gives them a chance to practice problem-solving, teamwork, and thoughtful action.

Instruction

In the game, five students act as parts of the school—four pillars and one chimney. They use their bodies to build a structure.

Five other students play the “barriers.” One by one, each barrier comes forward and creatively represents one of the historical challenges. As the barrier enters, the school collapses.

The JOKER then invites the rest of the class to come up with a possible solution together. Once everyone agrees on a solution, the school is rebuilt.

This process repeats each time a new barrier appears and challenges the school.

The JOKER can also adapt the game to explore current issues facing the school or the students—not just historical ones—so that it stays relevant to their lives today.

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Corn Club Scene

Context

A key characteristic of Judia Jackson Harris' work was her focus on community building. Much like with opening her school, Judia Jackson Harris aimed to mobilize and empower the Black Community through united efforts. In 1900, Judia Jackson Harris stood in front of the black farmers of Clarke County to propose the Mutual Benefit Association, also known as the Corn Club. This club was created to encourage land ownership to acquire space for schools, homes, agriculture for the community. The Corn Club was a key component in cultivating Black independence after Emancipation.

Process and Inspiration

Upon learning about the Corn Club, I knew I wanted to write a scene about it. Just as this workshop aims to foster collaboration and dialogue amongst our participants, Judia Jackson Harris created the Corn Club to unite Black American efforts for empowerment.

In order to create this scene, a combination of primary and secondary sources were pulled. I used Dr. Jane McPherson's research along with Judia Jackson Harris's account of the event in her writing, "The Upbuilding of a Community" in *The Southern Workman*. These sources informed the key components of this script, like having the scene take place in an assembly where various farmers can express their support or concerns.

JOKER

Now let's all spin and time travel back to the early 1900s
(*join together*)

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

Thank you all for gathering here with me tonight. I believe we must talk about something very important. Something that will change our future.

At present, we must build and strengthen our community. If our community is not strong, each individual will have to deal with problems all by themselves.

We're here today to think about the problems or obstacles we might have to deal with in order to stay in Athens and make sure we can support ourselves and our families.

Let's begin

It's the early 1900s, What are some of the disadvantages Black Americans were born into?

(audience answers: "No access to school," "Some were born into Slavery," "Threats from white community," etc.)

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

Exactly! So we must work to overcome these obstacles! Can we do it alone?

(audience answers: no!)

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

So what should we do?

(audience answers: work together!, etc.)

JOKER

[Audience member 1]!

[AUDIENCE MEMBER 1]

We need to gather our resources and knowledge!

JOKER

Who knows how to read and write?

(a few audience members raise their hands)

JOKER

Who knows how to work the land?

(audience member 2 and a few others raise their hands)

[AUDIENCE MEMBER 2]

I can! Agriculture is important for the southern economy. If we had our own land, we could strengthen our community and build independence.

[AUDIENCE MEMBER 3]

But how can we do that? We don't have the money!

[AUDIENCE MEMBER 4]

Yeah! We work for the white people and by the time that we pay rent and our bills, we have nothing left.

[AUDIENCE MEMBER 5]

We can grow our own food at home and start saving money!

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

I think we should start a Movement! We can call it... Corn Club! With this, we can work together to buy land. With this land, we can grow crops. And by working hard and earning money, we can build and improve our homes. And one day soon, we can establish a school. Just as we have come together today, we must work together going forward.

EVERYONE
YEAH!

FORMAT

This scene requires six to seven students. Though a Joker is written into the scene, a student is welcome to play this role.

Allow the students to come up with their own names for the AUDIENCE MEMBER roles.

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...Follow this scene up with the Corn Club Machine game!

Corn Club Machine (adapted from Boal, p. 94)

Introduction

After learning about the Corn Club, participants can create a Corn Club Machine to embody the collective effort toward self-sufficiency that Judia Jackson Harris fostered in her community!

The game is designed to foster collaboration AND highlight how each individual is valuable to the group.

Instructions

1. [The Joker](#) will tell the participants that they are going to make a farming machine! The machine does not have to be realistic -- it can take any shape or serve any function the group dreams up!
2. The Joker will invite the first participant to make a simple, repeatable gesture that might be part of the Corn Club machine.
3. The Joker will then invite the next participant to add their simple, repeatable gesture to the first student's. Their contribution must, in some way, interact with the first piece of the machine!
4. This process will continue until every student has joined the machine.

Note: a reflection process following the activity is encouraged!

Variations

1. Add Sound!

- Students can also be invited to make a repeatable sound to accompany the gesture.
- Another option is to have them add in their sounds once all of the machine parts are in place. The joker can tap each student to activate their sounds!

2. All at once!

- Everyone makes their Corn Club gesture (+ sound) at the same time, and then the Joker fits the pieces together!

3. School Machine!

- Instead of a Corn Club machine, students might make a machine of Judia Jackson's school!
- They might also make a machine of their own JJ Harris Elementary School.

Historical Context

Judia Jackson's educational model was holistic, encompassing not only reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also economic knowledge and practical skill-building! Her awareness that communities need to develop skills in as many areas as possible extended beyond her work as a school teacher, as evidenced by her efforts to help organize tenant farmers into Land Clubs.

Creation Process

When devising this game, I was inspired by Judia Jackson's work helping her community build self-sufficiency. I wanted to highlight two important elements of this process:

1. Collaboration!
2. The value each individual has in / to the collective.

The machine game is also designed to *demechanize* the participants' bodies by asking them to come up with their own representational machine-like movements. These movements will help them process what they have learned by using their minds, emotions, and bodies in new and creative ways!

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Choice to Stay

Historical Context

The Great Migration began in the 1910s when many Black people, facing economic challenges and oppression in the South, began moving North as job openings increased during World War 1. Many of Judia Jackson Harris's family members and community members went North during this time.

Creative Process

Inspired by Jacob Lawrence's *The Migration Series*, this scene speculates how Judia Jackson Harris might have felt about her family leaving the South. The scene shows Judia Jackson Harris talking to two of her family members as she is faced with the decision of whether to stay in Athens or join them.

Key Consideration

The scene is in two parts with a game in between which is led by the Joker. The game, *Rainbow of Desire*, invites the audience to engage with the scene by sharing their thoughts on how they think Judia might have been feeling during this period.

CHARACTERS:

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

FAMILY MEMBER #1

FAMILY MEMBER #2

PART 1:

FAMILY MEMBER #1:

Judia, can you believe it? We're going North! There's more jobs for us!

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

I don't want to go.

FAMILY MEMBER #2:

Why not? The schools are better, you can get a job as a teacher up there.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

I know I could get a job, but what about the people who can't go there?

FAMILY MEMBER #1:

They can find their way one day.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

Not everyone can make it. There are families who don't have the money to move all of them.

What will their kids do?

FAMILY MEMBER #2:

I guess they will stay here in the same schools.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

But who will teach them? And when the teachers leave, who will teach new teachers?

FAMILY MEMBER #1:

Oh Judia, please don't tell me you're staying.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

How could I not?

FAMILY MEMBER #2:

You always talk about how hard it is to teach here. You don't even have enough books!

FAMILY MEMBER #1:

It's time for a new beginning, Judia. No more teaching in a place that does not want change.

You should come with us.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

I don't know.

FAMILY MEMBER #2:

Please, will you come with us?

(Actors freeze onstage.)

RAINBOW OF DESIRE:

With the actors frozen onstage, the Joker steps forward and invites the audience to guess what they think is happening in the scene. After a few responses are shared, the Joker then asks the audience to imagine what each character might be thinking; encouraging them to respond using a word, a phrase, or a simple sentence. For example, the Joker might ask, *“What do you think Judia Jackson Harris is thinking at this moment?”* or *“What might this family member be feeling right now?”*

Audience members are then invited to come on stage and say their thoughts out loud, spoken with emotion as a single “line” that can be repeated. Different aspects of the character’s internal thoughts and feelings are voiced one at a time and then together in unison. As the voices rise in a chorus of responses, the Joker acts like a conductor, gesturing for some to continue speaking, and signaling others to stop to create a chaotic soundscape.

This overlapping of thoughts is meant to vividly illustrate the confusion and mental noise that Judia Jackson Harris may have experienced. Once that effect is achieved, the Joker thanks the audience and asks them to return to their seats. When everyone is seated, the Joker unfreezes the actors, allowing the scene to move to the second part.

PART 2:**JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS**

I’m sorry, but I can’t come with you. I love you so much, and I am so happy for you that you will get to live this new life. But I can do something for the children and families who have to stay behind. I can help them live a new life too.

FAMILY MEMBER #1:

But we would miss you.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

I’m going to miss you too. But this is what I want to do.

FAMILY MEMBER #2:

(sighs)

It's dangerous to stay, Judia. You know what happens when people try to change things too fast.

JUDIA JACKSON HARRIS

(smiling, determined)

Change doesn't come fast. But it does come. And I want to be part of it. I am here to build up this community. I am needed here.

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Cultivating Tenderness

Historical Context

This scene came to life after we learned how Judia Jackson Harris cultivated tenderness in her students. In an excerpt from her unpublished memoir shared generously by Dr. Jane McPherson from her personal archives, Judia Jackson Harris recounted an anecdote which exemplified one of the values she strived to foster in her students and their families. After asking her students whether any of them displayed tender feelings to their family members, she noted that none of her students gave a positive answer. So, she came up with an instruction, telling students what to do and what to say once they come home. The next day she asked the same question, and a few hands went up. One of the students shared that they did just as she said and how their mother responded. Judia Jackson Harris also noted that she retold that story to the gathering at church that included many of her students' parents. While this whole extract is rich in detail and provides many points to discuss, for didactic reasons I decided to focus solely on the lesson she passed down to her students. Her belief in cultivating tenderness resonates nowadays as it did almost a century ago. In addition to this, learning different ways of expressing tender feelings toward one another can contribute to developing emotional intellect and strengthening the relationships the students form in school. This will ultimately lead to a stronger feeling of belonging and trust in the community.

Creation/Process

As the original excerpt included an instruction for the participants to interact with a specific family member ("go to your mother and put your arm around her neck and tell her how happy you are to see her"), I made changes to make the instruction more inclusive. Some participants may live in a single-parent household, or with two fathers, or grandparents, or aunts, etc., so I didn't want the instruction to focus on only one certain member of the family. As the goal of this scene is to cultivate tenderness toward people you live with (from families to communities), the change in the original instruction keeps it more open-ended. The language of the excerpt was also partially simplified to make instructions more accessible.

Tip

It's preferable to print the instructions out and distribute them to the participants before the activity, so that each has a piece of paper to read from. As they read it in small groups (4-5), they are more comfortable in their bodies and it's easier to keep their focus on the text in their personal space (as opposed to projecting the text on screen).

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Instructions

FACILITATOR:

for this scene, it is important to make sure participants understand what tenderness is. The following bold texts can be used as discourse to guide this activity.

We want to share a text with you that represents how cultivating tenderness was important for Judia Jackson Harris. Let's split into groups and read this excerpt from her memoir telling us what tenderness meant to her (size of groups will depend on quantity of participants and facilitators, but groups of maximum 4 or 5 should be enough. Additionally, participants can read aloud at once in their groups, or each participant can read a sentence.)

Tenderness means a kiss, and an arm around the neck and other delicate shades of feeling. Knowing that such feelings would help to develop the well-rounded child, I attempted to emphasize this side of the training. So, one morning after devotions in our school's chapel, I made the following request: "This afternoon when you return home, I want you, before asking about dinner, to go to [the adult who takes care of you] and put your arm around [their neck] and tell [them] how happy you are to see them. Tell [them] you have been thinking of [them] through the day and you hope things have gone well with them. Kiss [them] on the cheek." (read aloud in small groups)

Reflection/Discussion

How do you really understand tenderness? (question should be made to connect participants' previous ideas of tenderness with what Judia Jackson Harris presented in the text)

How else do you think we can show tenderness to others? (ask participants to discuss in their previous small groups)

[Additional task: after discussing, participants can play a sculpting game in small groups: with images of how they understand tenderness and how it is cultivated in their families and/or communities. The group decides on one image (sculpture) and makes it together]

The following is the final discussion, which should be open to all participants as a whole group, to see how they connect what they have learned:

Why do you think Judia Jackson Harris insisted on tenderness? How does tenderness help education?

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