



Prologue

Welcome to our final report!

We have been eager and excited to share this piece of our ‘Equity Mapping’—as a reflection back to us all, a mirror of where we’re at and how we got here.

Quick historical backdrop: Joe Goode Performance Group was established in 1986 to support the artistic work of Joe, a white, cis-male, gay choreographer. At the height of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, uplifting Joe’s voice was a radical act. Like many other organizations that formed during that time, we took on the traditional 501c3 model in order to seek resources, artistic opportunities, and “legitimacy.” The company toured across the nation and world sharing LGBTQ stories, building a reputation, a performing company, educational programs, and eventually, acquiring our own studio theater. Our mission has long been to “promote understanding, compassion, and tolerance.” Yet, as an organization, we have not explicitly centered anti-racism, disability justice, or trans rights.

As we are learning, being an equity-centered, anti-racist organization reaches far beyond history, mission, and intention. And so, we set out on a process of self-reflection, inquiry, and action that is ongoing.

Planting seeds: In spring 2019, JGPG received funding from the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation to map JGPG’s internal organizational structure and culture from a racial equity lens in order to articulate actionable changes we can make to more fully live up to our ideals. We sought out external consultant support to collaborate and explore with a team of JGPG staff—which has brought us to this current moment in our journey.



We want to express our deepest appreciation for the team of JGPG ambassadors from across the organization who brought their time, energy and immense wisdom to the Design Team: Amy Luckey (Board), Melissa Lewis (Program & Communications Manager), Michelle Reynolds (Executive Director), Nicole Maimon (Annex Artist Coordinator), Patricia West (Education Co-Coordinator & Dancer), and Wailana Simcock (Teaching Artist & Dancer). Sierra Don (Front of House) worked on this team for its very first chapter in 2019.

We also want to express an abundance of gratitude towards our full staff team and board for all of their time, investment and thoughtful responses to our extensive survey and focus groups, from which so much of our future learning stems.

To each of you reading, we hope this note serves as a warm and vulnerable invitation to respond, connect, and think more with us on where we're headed. We acknowledge that what is reflected in this report is one step in a full and expansive journey towards equity and anti-racism; this work remains ongoing, and it's work we must do together. We are envisioning more shared conversations, more education opportunities, more relationship building. We are learning, making mistakes, growing, practicing how to prevent and heal harm, and doing our best to listen deeply to each other – and are committed to our ongoing transformations as individuals and as an organization at the nexus of artistic legacy & new cultural activity.



*“The story I want to tell about this time:
That we started to practice what we teach others,
About the power in each person’s story.
That we directed this curiosity and time towards ourselves.
That we dove deep with love and honesty,
Deep into ourselves.
That we began to understand our greater role, our impact –
Even learning to see harm we’ve caused: not defensively but with
ownership, wisdom, integrity, expansiveness.*

*I want to feel pride about this beginning.
And power, in the form of vulnerability.*

*I want our peers, allies, and accomplices to feel deeply seen, loved,
and a part of our work.”*

-Melissa Lewis
Program & Communications Manager
Joe Goode Performance Group



We are living in an unprecedented time when social inequities caused by systems of oppression are being laid more bare than ever before. Black Americans are dying from COVID-19 at disproportionate rates. People of color are also disproportionately likely to be doing “essential jobs” in the food industry, health services, public transportation, and the like, where they are at greater risk of exposure to the virus. The economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic will certainly exacerbate large, long-standing racial wealth gaps.

Within one pandemic lies another: systemic racism that has been plaguing our nation, and all of the systems designed within it, since its founding. George Floyd's death at the hands of a white police officer has sparked a flashpoint, bringing together the centuries-old and ongoing rage and pain felt by Black communities, and the sudden awakening of many white people and non-Black folks of color to these devastating and long willfully ignored daily experiences of oppression of our Black friends, family, neighbors and colleagues. This flashpoint is both shifting the tide of public consciousness around systemic racism, and is putting much needed pressure on public officials and policy makers to take material action to divest from policing, prisons, and other criminal legal systems.

This is also an important moment for organizations to take seriously the **moral imperative** of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity. To ensure that this moment is more than a knee-jerk reaction, organizations can get on the right, long-term track for sustainable, meaningful change by looking inward to critically interrogate the ways in which they may in fact be reproducing systems of oppression internally and externally, and examine what they can be doing better to actively dismantle systemic inequality and anti-Black racism.

Racial Leadership Gap

The race-based caste system upon which the United States was built (one in which those who fit the definition of “white” occupy the uppermost rung)



scaffolds the nonprofit sector as well. In 2017, the Building Movement Project issued a report, [*Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*](#), showing that nonprofit organizations are overwhelmingly led by white individuals, while front-line staff are generally more diverse and representative of the communities served. Despite years of investments in increasing the capacities of people of color to assume leadership positions, the percentage of people of color in executive director or CEO roles has remained under 20 percent for the last 15 years. In 2019, the Building Movement Project released an updated report, [*Race to Lead Revisited: Obstacles and Opportunities in Addressing the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*](#), presenting evidence for what authors of the report call the ‘white advantage,’ a term to describe the concrete ways that structure and power in nonprofit organizations reinforce the benefits of whiteness and keep leaders of color from flourishing in the sector. This frames the problem more accurately - not as a deficit among nonprofit professionals of color, but as a structural one - and calls for systemic solutions capable of dismantling the structural roots of inequity.

Race Outcomes Gap

Structural racism, cultural racism and individual-level discrimination have generated [racial disparities](#) in [education](#), [employment](#), [income](#), [wealth](#) and [social mobility](#), [health](#), [mortality](#), [rates of incarceration](#) and so on, such that people of color fare far worse than their white counterparts across every age and income level.



Untapped Potential of Diverse Teams

Diverse teams lead to better outputs. Diversity's positive impact on organizations and teams by now are well documented. It improves [collective intelligence](#) by lessening bias; it improves [decision-making quality](#) and [innovativeness](#) through strengthened [analytical and creative thinking](#); and it enhances [performance](#) and thereby increases [financial gains](#). Diversity carries heightened importance when it comes to nonprofits, because of its critical ability to meaningfully engage stakeholders, improve organizational responsiveness, and effectively manage fiduciary responsibilities - in other words, ultimately ensuring their relevance, legitimacy, and ability to fulfill their mission-driven mandates.

Such is the Habitat in which each of us live, work, and relate to each other. ***White supremacy culture*** is the water we are swimming in.



Figure 8: A working definition of white supremacy culture.

Truly insidious, white supremacy culture is [invisible](#) and it is toxic. It pervades every social institution, including our organizations. We have been conditioned *not* to see it, and many of us unflinchingly accept its unearned advantages.



And yet, mass protests and public reckonings following this most recent spate - within a long history - of police brutality against Black bodies has awakened individuals and institutions alike to finally confront the enduring crisis of anti-Black racism. A broader swath of humanity is stepping into the streets to put their bodies on the line in defense of Black life. In the nonprofit sector, organizations are meeting this moment with a renewed commitment to living out their professed values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, putting themselves in the turbulence of transformation to do so.

There is greater recognition that each of us holds a critical piece of the work of dismantling the constraining realities that perpetuate systemic injustice and the immense suffering that flows from it. Indeed, recognizing our fundamental interdependence is a necessary step. Only then can we honor our sacred responsibility for the power we each have - our capacity to create the conditions for change and transformation, embody new ways of being and doing, and persist in the inner and outer work necessary to bring about the world we so urgently need.

Hindrances

LEADERSHIP & POWER DISTRIBUTION

What We Heard from the Data

"I feel like we could better serve as a team...if we knew how decisions were being made or even what the decisions are and have opportunities to... hear and maybe talk about [them] as a group."

"[W]e have this tremendous resource and we're gatekeepers."

Over 75% of folks think there is not enough transparency in decision-making, and over 40% think that those most impacted are not included in decision-making.

Manifestations

- Staff/Programs are siloed; Lack of connection & relationship
- Lack of transparency in decision-making
- Limited information sharing & inconsistent communication
- Lack of alignment around mission, vision, values
- Limited resource and power sharing

Habits of White Supremacy

Paternalism

Gatekeeping & Power Hoarding



Definitions

Paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

Power Hoarding & Gatekeeping

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

Hindrances

MAINTAINING DOMINANT CULTURE

What We Heard from the Data

"[W]e don't have precedent for explicitly prioritizing POC / mixed-ability artists in programs... I am wary of tokenizing."

Over 44% of folks say the organizational culture dictates that conflict should be avoided

"It is hard to bring things up - like tension or conflict."

"I think supporting all LGBTQIA+ artists, artists of color, differently abled artists, etc. is a value of many at JGPG... but this is not necessarily institutional or ingrained in how JGPG innately functions."

Manifestations

- Tokenizing
- Inability to show up as whole people
- Lack of diversity & missing voices
- Over-emphasis on representation as pathway to equity
- No community engagement strategy
- Class used as a proxy for race
- Lack of shared intersectional analysis & framework
- Focus on external-facing work, limited internal-facing work
- Culture of silence and conflict avoidance
- Professionalism

Habits of White Supremacy

Right to Comfort

Fear of Open Conflict



Definitions

Right to Comfort

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing 'logic' over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness again

Fear of Open Conflict

- people in power are scared of expressed conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
- emphasis on being polite
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

Hindrances

PRODUCTIVITY & EFFICIENCY

What We Heard from the Data

"I keep being stretched too thin."

"[There is an] expectation of keeping things going... stick to the timeline."

Nearly 45% of folks believe time is a major barrier to working toward diversity, inclusion and/or equity

"[P]rioritizing efficiency is in the air."

Manifestations

- Culture of over-working
- Hyper-productivity
- Prioritizing "Efficiency" & "Expediency"
- Time as a barrier to explore & resolve conflict
- Disconnection from our bodies
- Limited and/or inconsistent communication
- Limited information sharing
- Lack of transparency in decision-making
- Focus on external-facing work, limited internal-facing work

Habits of White Supremacy

Quantity over Quality

Sense of Urgency

Definitions

Sense of Urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

Quantity Over Quality

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)



PEOPLE & CULTURE



Relationships with
artists & funders



Organizational
champions



Collectivism over
individualism



Embodiment practice is an
integral part of individual and
organizational praxis



Some foundational race
equity / racial justice
knowledge

What We Heard from the Data

90% of staff and Board say
they value group over
individual achievement.

"[W]isdom of people who maybe
have not been as folded into the
organization...amazing artists that
have all of this wisdom"

"People at the table/in
the conversation are all
in multiple skills /
environments - but are
coming together and
pulling from all the
necessary communities
of people."

"Opportunities in relationships --
long histories with folks, lots of
value and sense of long-term
investment in someone's creative
practice and life."



Helpers

PEOPLE & CULTURE



The Annex



Co-Production
Program



Education
Program

What We Heard from the Data

"I always saw it as a performance space and... hub for the community... I really felt like we have to take this responsibility very carefully and very seriously, and try to offer opportunities to other artists beyond us. It's not just going to be our performance space or our rehearsal space, it's gonna be something larger than that." The Annex

"Something that I have been really... happy about that we've started crafting is their Co-Production Program that prioritizes QTPOC, Black, indigenous, people of color, people of different abilities. And to be a part of those meetings, and to have folks receive this, has been one of the most rewarding things while working at JGPG. And... I would like to see that program expand and... be a thing that's incorporated into the daily [operations] of the organization." Co-Production Program

"[W]hat I like about the kids program is teaching them how to find ways to communicate their own voice." Education Program



The chart below represents a collection of pathways forward that we recommend cultivating and investing in. These areas of experimentation and transformation emerged from the equity mapping data, ideas generated during the Design Team's peer discussion, and observations by the StarLion Collective team.



Figure 10: Recommendations for areas of experimentation and transformation.



Horizon: A Shared Vision for the Future

As JGPG advances in their journey towards a Race Equity Culture, they will approach the long horizon - a shared vision for the future, characterized by not only increased diversity but also an environment where whole selves are welcomed, everyone feels equipped to talk about race with awareness and compassion; and race equity gets integrated into daily operations and interactions.



Figure 11: Characteristics of a shared vision for race equity.

What we heard from the data:



Figure 12: Additional quotes from staff describing their visions for JGPG's future.



Closing Reflections

In October 2019 the StarLion Collective was invited to set out on an equity journey with Joe Goode Performance Group, and we were honored and humbled to be chosen to support JGPG through this inaugural phase of their work. Committed to leading with love, and grounded in the principles of emergent strategy and human-centered design, our goal was to guide JGPG to find the third path that recognizes the complexity of equity work, links inner transformation and outer change, and is inclusive of multiple voices, relationships, and lived experiences. To do this work well requires building an awareness of individual and organizational habits -- which none of us are immune from, and yet are always painful to uncover and address -- in order to intentionally interrupt those habits and invest in new practices. We know that the subject of white supremacy and systemic racism can elicit feelings of defensiveness and shame, even for the most enlightened among us, and so our approach -- valuing multiple ways of knowing, practicing deep listening, centering joy, and co-creation/co-learning -- is designed to be disarming. Nevertheless, we were struck by how the staff and board members who sat on the JGPG Design Team received our guidance and feedback with grace, compassion, and integrity.

In a [2019 article](#), Kad Smith of CompassPoint Nonprofit Services pointed out, “the main ingredients for an organizational metamorphosis are time, trust, and deep care.” JGPG had thoughtfully carved out the time (and associated resources), and it was up to us to identify opportunities and create the conditions for trust and deep care to flourish. We were intentional about centering relationship building and co-creation so that we could harness the wisdom each person brought into the room and lean into equity practices together. The openness and vulnerability that each member of the Design Team brought into the room allowed all of us to step into each part of the process with a profound sense of curiosity and wonder.

We honored our own learning, interrupting habits of performance, urgency and perfection in order to center spaciousness, our creative thinking, and radical



self- and community-care during the parallel pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism -- circumstances which easily could have brought this process to a screeching halt, but instead fueled an even deeper commitment to the work.

Through these 10 months of working together, we have grown to care deeply about each person on the Design Team, and about the future of their work together. We are in awe of the amazing work they are leading the organization through. We see their willingness to dive into the messiness and complexities of equity work. We watch as they begin to embrace the non-linear processes of consciousness-raising, relationship building and navigating continuous and iterative cycles of navigating conflict, harm and repair. While we helped by offering guidance and building collective knowledge, it is their powerful commitment to center equity and transform the organization that will carry them through. We step away from this phase of work with JGPG knowing they have the building blocks they need to continue on this journey together, and knowing that transformation is inevitable.

Grateful,
Cristy & Ada