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## The Year in Review: 2020-2021 Letter from the Co-Presidents

Robin Brandehoff

*pathways2teaching*, robin.brandehoff@ucdenver.edu

Rachel DeSoto-Jackson

*PTO Board*, jackson@iup.edu

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## **The Year in Review: 2020-2021 Letter from the Co-Presidents**

### **Introduction**

This year, again, remains difficult on so many levels. We continue to endure in a time of global pandemic; racism and white supremacy reverberates through mass shootings, racial violence, and ongoing oppression experienced throughout the world; and basic human rights such as housing, food, and healthcare remain out of reach for many. The work of the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed organization, and its members, is more vital than ever.

We continue to strive for global solidarity, and to build community, unity, and action beyond borders. We continue to reflect, learn, and grow from these shifts in past and present history. Last year, we shared our Statement of Abolition Solidarity which remains as essential now as it did one year ago. As an organization, we continue to challenge and fight for those enduring oppression through acts of social justice using liberatory theatre and popular education. This past year, we invited our members to join us in virtual conversations and community celebrations, and once again we call on our members to continue moving our actions forward in the new year.

### **STATEMENT OF ABOLITION SOLIDARITY**

Estamos compartiendo nuestra Declaración de Solidaridad con la Abolición a continuación como una forma de continuar el diálogo sobre el fortalecimiento de los marcos de abolición dentro de nuestro trabajo como practicantes de la Pedagogía y el Teatro de lxs Oprimidxs. PTO se solidariza con la abolición como una práctica, y con las comunidades en Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Louisville, Tallahassee y más allá que luchan por la justicia para George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade y Ahmaud Arbery. Nos solidarizamos con todxs lxs que luchan en todo el mundo por la seguridad de la vida negra y la vida trans. La violencia sancionada por el estado contra las vidas negras es una herramienta de supremacía blanca y debe ser abolida de inmediato. #LasVidasNegrasImportan #EIPuebloAntesDePropiedad

### *Declaración de Solidaridad con la Abolición*

*PTO se solidariza con la abolición como una práctica. Según lo definido por el Abolition Journal, “Abolition’ se refiere en parte a los movimientos históricos y contemporáneos que se han identificado como ‘abolicionistas’: aquellos contra la esclavitud, las cárceles, el sistema salarial, la explotación animal y terrestre, la violencia racializada, de género y sexualizada, y la pena de muerte, entre otros.” Reconocemos que involucrar a la policía en cualquier conflicto es un acto de apoyo a la violencia del estado contra todxs. Reconocemos que la policía, el complejo industrial de prisiones, el encarcelamiento masivo, la institucionalización y otros sistemas similares son todos esfuerzos del estado para reducir los derechos de las personas a sus propios cuerpos, especialmente las personas negras, las personas indígenas, las personas de color en general, las personas pobres, las personas indocumentadas, las personas queer y trans, las personas discapacitadas y muchas otras personas marginadas. También reconocemos la relación continua entre la policía, la propiedad privada y la explotación capitalista, así como el papel histórico y contemporáneo de la policía en los esfuerzos para desorganizar y criminalizar la movilización colectiva. Pedir ayuda a la policía está en conflicto directo con las prácticas de justicia transformadora, creadas principalmente a través de los esfuerzos en las comunidades indígenas, negras y anarquistas, que el PTO apoya.*

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We are re-publishing our Statement of Abolition Solidarity below as a way to continue dialogue about strengthening abolition frameworks within our work as Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners. PTO stands in solidarity with abolition as a praxis, and with the communities in Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Louisville, Tallahassee, and beyond who are fighting for justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Ahmaud Arbery. We stand in solidarity with all those fighting around the world for the safety of Black and Trans life. State-sanctioned violence against Black people is a tool of white supremacy and must be abolished immediately. #BlackLivesMatter #PeopleOverProperty

### *Statement of Abolition Solidarity*

*PTO stands in solidarity with abolition as a praxis. As defined by the Abolition Journal, “Abolition’ refers partly to the historical and contemporary movements that have identified themselves as ‘abolitionist’: those against slavery, prisons, the wage system, animal and earthexploitation, racialized, gendered, and sexualized violence, and the death penalty, among others.” We recognize that to involve police in any conflict is an act of supporting state violence against all peoples. We recognize that the police, the prison industrial complex, massincarceration, institutionalization, and other such systems are all state efforts to reduce peoples’ rights to their own bodies—especially Black folks, Indigenous folks, people of color broadly, poor people, undocumented people, queer and trans folks, disabled people, and many other marginalized folks. We also recognize the ongoing relationship between police, private property, and capitalist exploitation, as well as both the historical and contemporary role of the police in efforts to dis-organize and criminalize collective mobilization. Calling police for “assistance” is in direct conflict with transformative justice practices, created primarily through efforts in Indigenous, Black, and anarchist communities, which PTO supports.*

## **2021 Conference Reschedule to 2022**

PTO will welcome participants in-person to Loyola University Chicago (and to one day of online events) in May 2022 for its 25th international conference, “Popular Power/Poder Popular.” The local organizing team for the PTO Chicago conference – first scheduled for May 2020, postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19, and ultimately postponed again to 2022 – has been continuing its planning and organizing work

across the last two years. The conference will have an even wider range of ways to participate this year: an in-person three-day Forum Theatre workshop with Julian Boal from May 24 to May 26, 2022; an online conference day on May 25, 2022; and the in-person conference from May 26 to May 29, 2022. Those whose proposals were accepted and scheduled for the 2020 conference will have the option of forwarding their sessions to PTO 2022, and we will also be accepting new proposals. We have preserved many of our all-conference programming plans from 2020, but in ways that will also consider the realities of the last two years, including the intensification many forms of oppression and the simultaneous strength and beauty of many popular struggles against oppression around the world. Additional information can be found at [www.ptoweb.org](http://www.ptoweb.org). We hope that you will join us, either in person or online!

### **November 2020 Online Collaboration with Julian Boal**

As part of our long-term collaboration with Julian Boal, and as an alternative to his annual three-day workshop for PTO, we were excited to host a range of sessions online across November 2020. This series included five connected events with Julian with the intention to facilitate the widest possible array of opportunities for participants to engage. Each one-day workshop was enrolled to capacity: “What Does Democracy Look Like? Ideological Representations in Contemporary Culture” (with one workshop in Spanish and two in English) and two versions of the open-registration talk, “History of Theatre of the Oppressed and Present Challenges” (one in Spanish and one in English). These workshops were offered free or Pay-What-You-Can to our community. While we will not be able to sustain this fee structure for events every year, this was an intentional choice for this year to directly engage our community in a year when we were not able to gather for our annual conference. Thank you to Julian for all his labor in providing these sessions and to all the participants from so many parts of the world for helping to make the workshops and talks vibrant spaces for learning together. We are very happy and grateful to be connected with all of you.

## **Action Groups**

This year, we have re-visioned our PTO Board subcommittee structure to form “Action Groups.” These Action Groups have created opportunities for purposeful change, collaboration, and movement, particularly in digital spaces. Our focus this past year was on creating a foundation through the PTO Board for these Action Groups to engage in the work of PTO. This year, we will be inviting our PTO member community to join these Action Groups to support and move the work forward more widely. By joining an Action Group, members will be able to take part in PTO Board meetings, help to facilitate in-person and digital events globally, and support the ongoing and future work of the PTO organization.

If you are interested in joining an Action Group, please contact [info@ptoweb.org](mailto:info@ptoweb.org) for more information. Current Action Groups and their objectives include:

- **Accountability**
  - Develop guidelines for practicing transformative accountability within PTO, with our collaborators and at PTO events, and to support healing-centered, community-lead accountability practices globally.
- **Communications**
  - Engage people through digital and print communications about the theory and practice of Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed to advance the mission and vision of Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, Inc.
- **Community Engagement**
  - Co-organize and support local/regional/global coalitions dedicated to implementing pedagogy of the oppressed and/or theatre of the oppressed efforts in their communities.
- **Current Conference**
  - Collaborate with a local planning committee to implement an annual International Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed conference.
- **Future Conference**
  - Cultivate interest in and applications for host locations for conferences that take place at least 1 or more years in the future. Build capacity for potential hosts so that we can plan multiple years ahead and have more than one possibility for hosting.
- **Global Solidarity**
  - Promote international collaboration and learning, support people as best as possible in the process of crossing inter/national borders for PTO events, strategize ways to bring PTO events to more regions, and act in solidarity with movements and struggles globally.
- **Journal**
  - Support the PTO Journal through direct engagement with membership on writing support and yearly written submission to the journal in collaboration with PTO journal editor.

- **Resource Development**
  - Identify funding opportunities, develop funding applications and collaborators, explore opportunities for financial sustainability of PTO, and make recommendations for funding.

## **Global Solidarity**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the PTO Global Solidarity Action Group has been hosting virtual events in a series called PTO Global Solidarity Coffee & Tea Hour. These Zoom sessions are intentionally informal discussions designed to build networks of international learning and solidarity.

Some of the sessions have been relatively open in terms of topics; others have had more specific topics, from sessions on the realities of practicing Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of COVID-19 to a session on vaccine inequality, vaccine access and lack of access, and the violence of vaccine nationalism. We aim to continue hosting these and similar opportunities for building connections and solidarity. If you have a topic idea or would like to host a session, please contact us at [info@ptoweb.org](mailto:info@ptoweb.org) or join the PTO Global Solidarity Action Group.

## **Journal**

The PTO Journal Action Group began a new online series called PTO Journal Spotlight. The goal of the series was to generate free, online dialogues between PTO Journal authors and readers from around the world. We hosted three events from January to March featuring authors Uri Noy Meir and Anne Larcher, Je Naé Taylor, and Tania Cañas. Each of these events allowed members of our community to gather remotely and practice our Freirean commitment to building knowledge together. All PTO Journal articles remain freely available for download to encourage the ongoing exchange of ideas across borders. [Browse the archives here.](#)

## **Raising Revolutionary Voices**

It's been over one year since we launched "Raising Revolutionary Voices." This newsletter amplifies the work of PO and TO practitioners, activists, and organizers. Each month, we feature work happening

around the globe, revolutionary news, resistance resources, and media recommendations. Former board member and Communications Director, Skye Kantola, compiles this monthly offering complete with content notes, image descriptions, and more. [Browse the archives here.](#)

### **Looking Toward the Future**

As we enter into the 2021-2022 cycle year, we reflect on the work we have begun and look forward to our future Action Group collaborations with the PTO member community; embrace ongoing opportunities to reflect on our own work and collaboration as a board; and strive to find new ways to promote and support the incredible work of our members across the world. Please visit our website for updates and ways to become involved in future events, action group planning, and conferences. Visit us at [www.ptoweb.org](http://www.ptoweb.org).

### **In Solidarity,**



Robin Brandehoff  
Co-President



Rachel DeSoto-Jackson  
Co-President

### **Board Members:**

Sasha Sigel (Secretary)  
Charles Adams (Treasurer)  
Miles Boucher (Communications Director)  
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