

Editorial: Complicity

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As I walked into the courtyard of the apartment building in Albany Park, I had no idea what to expect. I hadn't met anyone from the neighborhood before, but I'd heard many things about what it was like to live there. Among the rumors were that it is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the United States; that 40+ languages are spoken in the streets and bodegas. But most impressive among the rumors were those of a shifting demographic of immigrants over many decades, with populations coming and going over the years, as predictable as the tides.

This courtyard was remarkable in and of itself. Having lived in various neighborhoods throughout New York City and Jersey City, I was very familiar with such an apartment building. The main structure formed a 'U' around a central courtyard and the main entrance was in the dip of that 'U.' A centralized cement walk allowed you to move from the street to the building's main entrance. In most buildings, the entirety of the courtyard is paved over, but there might be a patch of grass on either side of that central walkway—as was the case here in Albany Park. There's nothing particularly ethnic or otherwise

representative of the people who live within the brick and mortar of it all—generic mid-west and northeast urban apartment building from the early to mid-twentieth century, but in a flag that might hang from a window; the scent of dinner cooking in the late afternoon; the music emanating from open windows when the weather permits—these are the first indicators that bring the vibrancy of the inhabitants to life.

Among the current in-flow are immigrants of Mexican descent. As such, Mexican flags are among the accouterments flowing from one window. That flag is not alone, of course; the red, white, and blue of the Philippine flag hangs from a window above; a star of David emblazoned on a bandera below. But on the day that I walked into the courtyard, it was the child of one of the Mexican immigrants who greeted me and my friends. In her welcoming remarks, she told us a little about the building, relaying a version of the rumors highlighted above so that we understood that the current occupants of the building could be temporary—that those who came before have moved on to other neighborhoods and that, in time, those who lived here now would move on too. But today, on this day, a friend of hers was agitated about some issues happening at home. Her friend's agitation was becoming unbearable so she was hopeful that as part of our visit, we would help organize a surprise party for her friend. Unanimously willing, she invited us to go inside the building to meet some of her neighbors who would also help put the party together.

She led us through a gate and into the entryway of the building. In similar buildings in other neighborhoods, gentrification will strip away any feeling of 'lived-in' that we found before us. While a new coat of paint does its best to cover up the ebb and flow of the tide over the previous nine decades, the texture of the walls betrays the newness of the color. We ascended one flight of stairs, and our host led us down a hallway to her friend's apartment. We are welcomed by her friend's mother and invited into their living room.

Given that I had no specific expectations for what I would encounter when I arrived at the apartment building that day, I was pretty open to whatever experiences might follow. And yet, I was confounded by the rush of emotions that overwhelmed me as I crossed the threshold into that apartment. I am not Mexican-American, but my husband is. And twenty years ago when I was a high school English and drama teacher in Los Angeles, the majority of my students were. And crossing that threshold and looking at the photographs that

adorned the walls, the imitation gilding on the frames on the ‘artwork,’ the small shrine to la Virgen de Guadalupe on the wall among them—I had been in this apartment many times before. In some ways, I lived in a similar apartment at that very moment. For however open I might have been to whatever might come that day, I did not expect to feel as though I had come home as I crossed that threshold into a stranger’s apartment. I was home and not home; they were strangers and family. And as I was invited in because a young woman was distressed and there was hope that a party might mask that distress in some way...in a Mexican-American home...in 2024...in the United States of America...I knew instantly all that I was in for. And I wasn’t prepared—I wasn’t expecting to be invited into someone’s home in Albany Park, but that’s exactly where I was ten minutes into a production of Port of Entry.

Port of Entry is a co-production between Chicago’s Albany Park Theatre Project (APTP) and New York City’s Third Rail Productions. Founded in 1997, APTP devises theatre works with young people that tell stories from their neighborhood. Over the last decade these works have gained wide acclaim for their site-specific approach to bringing these stories to life. In the case of *Port of Entry*, a local warehouse was retrofitted to become a three-story apartment building, enabling stories from within three apartments to enliven the challenges experienced by immigrants in the neighborhood over many decades. And in the impeccable attention to detail in creating these apartments, we are in living rooms. Young people take us into the private world of bedrooms to share their innermost thoughts about their lives. We sit around kitchen tables, we prepare and taste foods. We laugh. And we cry. And we experience community in a visceral way, both in public and in private. And as it is performed with a panoply of aesthetic conventions, we are reminded periodically that this is theatre—but the rooms, the texture, the environment is so meticulously real that we cannot escape the fact that the problems presented are from real people in the neighborhood—that don’t just need space to be heard, but need the energy, advocacy, and sponsorship of the audience to change course. In 40+ years of theatre going, it was—without question—the most incredible experience I have ever had at the theatre.

Since my visit to that apartment building in Albany Park seventeen months ago, I think about it often. For someone who has made their career about theatre by, for, and with youth, it is not surprising that this experience made such an impact on me. In one of many tearful moments that night, while seated across from a young person on an adjoining bed in their character's bedroom, I leaned back against the bedroom wall and remarked, "They're just kids," in acknowledgement of the catharsis I was experiencing as brought to me by these young performers. 'Just kids,' who brought the fullness of their lived experience to the telling of these stories that highlighted complex problems plaguing the inhabitants of their neighborhood. I think about *Port of Entry* not only because of the exceptional nature of the theatrical event, but also because it should be instructive to theatre makers about what theatre can do in terms of highlighting contemporary issues.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was created in 2002 following the attacks of September 11th, and since that time, there are more people in immigration detention than ever before; 65,740 individuals in ICE detention centers as of December 1, 2025, according to a report by *The Guardian* (Craft, Witherspoon, & Olivares, 2025). Total immigration arrests from January 28, 2025 to December 1, 2025 stand at 307,440, up 17,560 in the last 14 days of November, and deportations in the same time period were 307,170 (Craft & Witherspoon, 2025). Given the media attention and condemnation by the political left in the U.S., these numbers need to be contextualized historically, as they are shy of President Obama's deportations averaging some 340,000 people per year of his 8 year term; President George W. Bush averaged 1.291 million deportations per year; and President Clinton deported 1.536 million people per year (Chishti, Pierce, & Bolter, 2017).

While these numbers highlight that the current number of immigrant detentions and deportations are not particularly significant, it is the tactics—the 'show' that is truly alarming. Masked bands of unidentified federal actors from ICE, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, National Guard, and who knows who else are being deployed in cities across the country to make a 'show' of U.S. Supreme Court-sanctioned

anti-immigrant terror following their opinion in a September 2025 case (Ryan, Detrow, Garsd, & Keatley, 2025). In the concurring opinion, Justice Kavanaugh opined,

Illegal immigration is especially pronounced in the Los Angeles area, among other locales in the United States. About 10 percent of the people in the Los Angeles region are illegally in the United States—meaning about 2 million illegal immigrants out of a total population of 20 million. Not surprisingly given those extraordinary numbers, U.S. immigration officers have prioritized immigration enforcement in the Los Angeles area. The Government sometimes makes brief investigative stops to check the immigration status of those who gather in locations where people are hired for day jobs; who work or appear to work in jobs such as construction, landscaping, agriculture, or car washes that often do not require paperwork and are therefore attractive to illegal immigrants; and who do not speak much if any English. If the officers learn that the individual they stopped is a U.S. citizen or otherwise lawfully in the United States, they promptly let the individual go. If the individual is illegally in the United States, the officers may arrest the individual and initiate the process for removal.

Immigration stops based on reasonable suspicion of illegal presence have been an important component of U.S. immigration enforcement for decades, across several presidential administrations. In this case, however, the District Court enjoined U.S. immigration officers from making investigative stops in the Los Angeles area when the stops are based on the following factors or combination of factors: (i) presence at particular locations such as bus stops, car washes, day laborer pickup sites, agricultural sites, and the like; (ii) the type of work one does; (iii) speaking Spanish or speaking English with an accent; and (iv) apparent race or ethnicity.

(...)

Under this Court's precedents, not to mention common sense, those circumstances taken together can constitute at least reasonable suspicion of illegal presence in the United States.

Importantly, reasonable suspicion means only that immigration officers may briefly stop the individual and inquire about immigration status. (2025)

Common sense? Per Justice Kavanaugh, as 10% of the population of Los Angeles are illegally present in the U.S. and most of those people immigrated from Mexico, if the government sees people who appear of Mexican descent or speak with an accent or in Spanish and congregate where immigrants are 'known' to congregate, then they should be profiled and questioned.

Where is this heading? This is not the first time the U.S. has engaged in racial profiling or systematized mass detention and expulsion. During World War II, more than 117,000 Japanese Americans were detained based solely on their race (Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, n.d.). The official rationale was that this detention was necessary in order to prevent Japanese espionage, but in time, it was revealed that though the government had assessments indicating that Japanese Americans posed no threat at all and were not likely to engage in espionage, this racist policy was implemented in order to take land, farms, and other businesses from this community and hopefully expunge them from American society (Maddow, 2025).

Just a decade later, more than 1 million Mexican men were similarly profiled and forcibly deported or voluntarily returned to Mexico in "Operation Wetback" (Fernández, 2024). The current policy claims to be targeting illegal immigrants more broadly, but given the Supreme Court decision, we can see that targeting specific racial or ethnic groups is permissible (*common sense*, even).

Some might believe the morally bankrupt position that this is not your fight. Targeting Japanese Americans one day and Mexicans another. In just the last few weeks, President Trump has opined that Somali people in the U.S. are 'garbage.'

These are people that do nothing but complain (...) When they come from hell and they complain and do nothing but bitch, we don't want them in our country. Let them go back to where they came from and fix it (...) [Somalia] stinks and we don't want them in our country (...) We could go one way or the other, and we're going to go the wrong way if we keep taking in garbage into our

country. (direct quotes that appear in Kanno-Youngs & McCreesh, 2025)

Which community will they target next? And targeting through words and terror tactics are just the beginning. In the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act, “Congress set aside roughly \$170 billion for immigration enforcement and border security efforts through the legislation, including \$75 billion in extra funding for ICE, making it by far the highest-funded law enforcement agency in the federal government” (Montoya-Galvez, 2025). In addition to expanding the agency, these funds also provide for additional private detention centers (Esien, 2025). So the administration is just getting started.

I think about the young people I met in Albany Park, particularly as the terror squads descended upon Chicago in the last few months. I think about those recreated apartments at *Port of Entry* that I stepped into, and the real-life apartments that they represent. I think about my fellow citizens who are disengaged. I think about educators and theatre makers who think these issues are beyond their remit. I think about bystanders. I think about complicity. In this issue, we see our peers and thought leaders investigate how they are fighting back in their way. It's not enough. It's never enough. But it's a start. Let these tools motivate you to examine your practice. Who in your sphere of influence needs your support? What are you doing to stand up in these times that require moral courage? And how can you do more? We will get past this. And when we look back at the ignominy of this time, let us be counted as among those who resisted capitulation and refused complicity.

IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue, our contributors offer reflections and documentation of creative practices that are reimagining the field. [Dermot Daly](#) launches the issue with a provocation, asking how and why we need to diversity curricula in theatre programs. [Crestcencia Ortiz-Barnett](#) interrogates her experience (alongside students of color) of the imposter syndrome through an analysis of community building work she has instituted at North Carolina A&T State University. [Kaitlin Orlena-Kearns Jaskolski](#) returns to *ArtsPraxis* to explore the paradoxes of disability inclusion in theatre through four case studies from The Oasis League, an applied

inclusive theatre project at Oasis Association, a group home for adults with intellectual disabilities in Cape Town, South Africa. [Shuangshuang Cai](#) examines the role of applied theatre as a tool for community development within contemporary China's urban context, with a specific focus on its capacity to strengthen community identity and social capital. [Lemar O. Archer](#) considers how documentary theatre can be used as an arts-based research method for international graduate students to share experiences of language barriers, financial limitations and cultural adjustment difficulties in order to promote awareness, empathy, and institutional reflection. Couched in the politics of a Southern Indiana school district, [Luke Foster Hayden](#) explores how Christopher Small's concept of "musicking" can be used as a methodological framework for critical pedagogy. [Nabanita Chakraborty](#) contends that Badal Sircar's 'third theatre' or 'intimate theatre' provides a compelling model for transforming literature classrooms into participatory spaces. [Carla Lahey](#) documents the way some evangelical churches provide spaces for children and teens to engage in the arts. Finally, in reviewing Jo Beth Gonzalez's *Temporary Stages III: How High School Theatre Fosters Spiritual Growth and Critical Consciousness*, [Lauren Gorelov](#) demonstrates how Gonzalez situates theatre pedagogy within a critical spiritual framework that unites students' inner development with their growing awareness of social structures and inequities.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 1983, Dorothy Heathcote stated that, as educators, we should be asking what sort of schools we want—but also, what sort of society we want. Her words are incredibly timely today: they challenge us to consider questions of purpose, curriculum, access, and stewardship. Our next issue (Volume 13, Issue 1) looks to engage members of the global Educational Theatre community in dialogue around these ideas which were investigated at the recent 2025 Dorothy Heathcote Now Conference hosted at Manchester Metropolitan University, under the leadership of guest-editor and conference chair David Allen. We encourage article submissions from artists, educators, and scholars from different disciplines. Our goal is to motivate a dialogue among a wide variety of practitioners and researchers that will enrich the

development of educational theatre in the years to come. That issue will publish in mid-2026. Thereafter, look to the [Verbatim Performance Lab](#) for outreach and innovation from the NYU Steinhardt Program in Educational Theatre.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

[Jonathan P. Jones](#), PhD is a graduate from the Program in Educational Theatre at New York University, where he earned both an M.A. and a Ph.D. He conducted his doctoral field research in fall 2013 and in spring of 2014 he completed his dissertation, *Drama Integration: Training Teachers to Use Process Drama in English Language Arts, Social Studies, and World Languages*. He received an additional M.A. in English at National University and his B.A. in Liberal Arts from NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Jonathan is certified to teach English 6-12 in the state of California, where he taught Theatre and English for five years at North Hollywood High School and was honored with The Inspirational Educator Award by Universal Studios in 2006. Currently, Jonathan is currently an administrator at NYU Steinhardt. He serves on the editorial board for *Applied Theatre Research* and *Youth Theatre Journal*, and on the board of directors as well as chair of Research and Scholarship for the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) where he serves as Board Chair, 2025-2027.

Jonathan has conducted drama workshops in and around New York City, London, and Los Angeles in schools and prisons. As a performer, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Town Hall, The Green Space, St. Patrick's Cathedral, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, The Southbank Centre in London UK, and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Jonathan's directing credits include *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Elsewhere in Elsinore*, *Dorothy Rides the Rainbow*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *The Laramie Project*, *Grease*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *West Side Story*. Assistant directing includes *Woyzeck* and *The Crucible*. As a performer, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Town Hall, The Green Space, St. Patrick's Cathedral, The Cathedral of

St. John the Divine, The Southbank Centre in London UK, Bord Gáis Energy Theatre in Dublin, and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Production credits include co-producing a staged-reading of a new musical, *The Throwbacks*, at the New York Musical Theatre Festival and serving as assistant production manager and occasionally as stage director for the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, most recently directing *Quiet No More: A Celebration of Stonewall* at Carnegie Hall for World Pride, 2019.

At NYU, Jonathan previously served the Program in Educational Theatre as faculty member, coordinator of doctoral studies, and student-teaching supervisor. His courses included Acting: Scene Study, American Musical Theatre: Background and Analysis, Assessment of Student Work in Drama, Development of Theatre and Drama I, Devising Educational Drama Programs and Curricula, Directing Youth Theatre, Drama across the Curriculum and Beyond, Drama in Education I, Drama in Education II, Dramatic Activities in the Secondary Drama Classroom, Methods of Conducting Creative Drama, Theory of Creative Drama, Seminar and Field Experience in Teaching Elementary Drama, Seminar and Field Experience in Teaching Secondary Drama, Shakespeare's Theatre, and World Drama. Jonathan was awarded the Steinhardt Teaching Excellence Award in 2025.

Early in his placement at NYU, Jonathan served as teaching assistant for American Musical Theatre: Background and Analysis, Seminar in Elementary Student Teaching, Theatre of Brecht and Beckett, and Theatre of Eugene O'Neill and worked as a course tutor and administrator for the study abroad program in London for three summers. He has supervised over 50 students in their student teaching placements in elementary and secondary schools in the New York City Area. Prior to becoming a teacher, Jonathan was an applicant services representative at NYU in the Graduate School of Arts and Science Enrollment Services Office for five years.

Recent publications include [Discoveries beyond the Lesson Plan: A 'How to'](#) (with David T. Montgomery) in *Education in the North*, 31 (2), ["And So We Write": Reflective Practice in Ethnotheatre and Devised Theatre Projects](#) in *LEARNIng Landscapes*, 14 (2), *Let Them Speak: Devised Theatre as a Culturally Responsive Methodology for Secondary Students* in [Routledge Companion to Theatre and Young People](#) (edited by Selina Busby, Charlene Rajendran, and Kelly

Freebody; forthcoming), [*Paradigms and Possibilities: A Festschrift in Honor of Philip Taylor*](#) (2019), and Education at Roundabout: It's about Turning Classrooms into Theatres and the Theatre into a Classroom (with Jennifer DiBella and Mitch Mattson) in [*Education and Theatres: Beyond the Four Walls*](#) (edited by Michael Finneran and Michael Anderson; 2019). His book [*Assessment in the Drama Classroom: A Culturally Responsive and Student-Centered Approach*](#) was published by Routledge in winter 2023/24.

Recent speaking engagements include So You Wanna Be a Scholar: Turning Your Session/Workshop into an Article, Workshop Presentation, AATE Theatre in Our Schools (TIOS), Washington, DC and AATE National Conference: Stages of Change, Cleveland, OH. (2025); [*Communing with the Ancestors*](#), Plenary Performance, International Drama in Education Research Institute at University of British Columbia, Vancouver (2025); Establishing Communities of Practice among Pre-Service Drama Teachers: Revisiting Learning to Teach Drama: A Case Narrative Approach, EdTA Teacher Education Conference: Building CommUNITY, Minneapolis, MN (2024), Amplify & Ignite: Creative Practice in and With Communities, Emerson College, Boston and AATE National Conference: Stages of Change, Cleveland, OH. (2025); Assessment in the Drama Classroom: A Culturally Responsive and Student-Centered Approach, AATE National Conference: Rooting Change, Chicago, IL (2024), Face to Face 2024: NYC Arts In Education Roundtable Virtual Conference (2024), and EDTA Connected Arts Network (2025); Communing with the Ancestors—a keynote lecture for Amplify & Ignite: A Symposium on Research and Scholarship (AATE/NYU, 2024) and featured guest spots on Fluency with Dr. Durell Cooper Podcast, speaking about [*Origins, Inspirations, and Aspirations*](#), and Conversations in Social Justice Podcast, York St. John University, speaking about [*Activism and Race within University Teaching and Research*](#) (2021); panel moderation for AATE Leaders of Color Institute (We Will Not Be Erased: Combating Censorship and Book Bans in Theatre by, for, and about Youth, 2024 and [*Cultivating Spaces for LOC in Educational and 'Professional' Theatre Settings - Opening Keynote with Daphnie Sicre and José Casas*](#), 2022), invited workshops for AATE Theatre in Our Schools ([*Reimagining Drama Curriculum: The Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework*](#), [*Locating Order in the Chaos: Revisiting Assessment in the Drama Classroom*](#) and [*Stage to Page: Reimagining*](#)

[the Teacher/Practitioner Role in Scholarship](#)) and the AATE National Conference ([Classroom Justice: Culturally Responsive, Student-Centered Assessment in the Drama Classroom](#) and [Pandemic Positives: What Do We Keep? Looking Backwards to Move Forward](#)); invited workshops for the 2024 NYC Arts in Education Roundtable ([Assessment in the Drama Classroom: A Student-Centered Approach](#)), LondonDrama, 2023 Dorothy Heathcote NOW conference in Aberdeen, Scotland (Assessment in the Drama Classroom; and co-facilitation with David Montgomery: *The Bear That Wasn't: A Process Drama Investigating Identity* and *The Last Book in the Universe: A Process Drama Unpacking the Consequences of Book-Banning*); an invited lecture on Performance as Activism at the Research-Based Theater Seminar, Washington, D.C. Citizen Diplomacy Fund Rapid Response COVID-19 Research-Based Theater Project, The COVID Monologues, part of the Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund for US Alumni Rapid Response made possible by the US Department of State and Partners of the Americas (2020); a keynote lecture on Drama and Education: Why and How for the Drama and Education Conference, Shanghai, China (2020); and an invited lecture, On Creativity, for the University of Anbar, Iraq (2020). Upcoming engagements include hosting Amplify & Ignite, a symposium on Theatre for social and Civic Engagement at NYU Steinhardt in 2026.

In addition to his responsibilities at NYU, Jonathan teaches Fundamentals of Public Speaking, History of Theatre, and Introduction to Theatre at CUNY: Borough of Manhattan Community College.