



Artists and staff at the Guthrie Theater have been extending their learning and development consistently in regards to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This quarter's Volunteer Newsletter is an extension of that training to the people that help us all make the work on stage possible: the volunteers!

We are going to take a deeper look at three things: working with people who have disabilities, gender pronouns, and microaggressions. Perhaps this information is old news, or maybe this is the first time you are hearing some of this terminology. No matter where you are at in your learning, please join us in extending our organizational understanding around these topics.

Thank you,
Monica Servi

Working with People Who Have Disabilities

Here are some general guidelines for working with people with disabilities:

- Relax! Someone with a disability is entitled to the same services, professional consideration, and respect as people without disabilities.
- If you offer assistance and the person declines, do not insist. If it is accepted, ask how you can best help. Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Remember that each person is an expert on their own disability.
 - Do not push a person's wheelchair or grab the arm of someone walking with difficulty, without first asking if you can be of assistance. Personal space includes a person's wheelchair, crutches or other mobility aid.
 - Do not move someone's crutches, walker, cane, or other mobility aid without expressed permission.
- If someone with a disability is accompanied by another individual, address the person with the disability directly rather than speaking through the other person.
- See the person, not the disability. Avoid referring to people by the disability they have, i.e., "an epileptic," or "blind person." A person is not a condition. Rather refer to "a person with epilepsy" or "people who are blind."
- People are not "bound" or "confined" to wheelchairs. They use them to increase their mobility and enhance their freedom. It is more accurate to say "person who uses a wheelchair."
- When interacting with a person using a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, find a seat for yourself so you can speak at eye level.
- Be considerate. It may take extra time for a person with a disability to say or do things.
- Speak facing people who are hard of hearing so that they can see your lips move.
- It is not your responsibility to provide personal services, such as pushing a wheelchair, assisting a patron in the restroom or administering medications.

For any additional questions regarding accessibility, please contact Hunter Gullickson at HunterG@guthrietheater.org.

Gender Pronouns FAQs



Frequently asked questions below are courtesy of the LGBT Resource Center located at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

What is a pronoun?

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

What are gender pronouns?

A gender pronoun is the pronoun that a person uses for themselves.

For example: If Alex's pronouns are she, her, and hers, you could say "Alex ate her food because she was hungry."

What are some commonly used pronouns?

She/her/hers and he/him/his are a few commonly used pronouns. Some people call these "female/feminine" and "male/masculine" pronouns, but many avoid these labels because not everyone who uses he feels like a "male" or "masculine."

There are also lots of gender-neutral pronouns in use. Here are a few you might hear:

- They/them/theirs (Shea ate their food because they were hungry.) This is a pretty common gender-neutral pronoun and it can be used in the singular. In fact, "they" was voted as the Word of the Year in 2015.
- Ze/hir/hir (Tyler ate hir food because ze was hungry.) Ze is pronounced like "zee" can also be spelled zie or xe, and replaces she/he/they. Hir is pronounced like "here" and replaces her/hers/him/his/they/theirs.
- Just my name please! (Ash ate Ash's food because Ash was hungry) Some people prefer not to use pronouns at all, using their name as a pronoun instead.

Never refer to a person as "it" or "he-she". These are offensive slurs used against trans and gender non-conforming individuals.

Why is it important to respect people's pronouns?

You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.

When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or dysphoric (often all of the above.)

It is a privilege to not have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender. If you have this privilege, yet fail to respect someone else's gender identity, it is not only disrespectful and hurtful, but also oppressive.

How do I ask someone what pronouns they use?

Try asking: "What pronouns do you use?" or "Can you remind me what pronouns you use?" It can feel awkward at first, but it is not half as awkward as making a hurtful assumption.

If you are asking as part of an introduction exercise and you want to quickly explain what gender pronouns are, you can try something like this: "Tell us your name, where you come from, and your pronouns. That means the pronouns that you use in reference to yourself. For example, I'm Xena, I'm from Amazon Island, and I like to be referred to with she, her, and hers pronouns. So you could say, 'she went to her car' if you were talking about me."

What if I make a mistake?

It's okay! Everyone slips up from time to time. The best thing to do if you use the wrong pronoun for someone is to say something right away, like "Sorry, I meant (insert pronoun)" If you realize your mistake after the fact, apologize in private and move on.

A lot of the time it can be tempting to go on and on about how bad you feel that you messed up or how hard it is for you to get it right. Please don't! It is inappropriate and makes the person who was misgendered feel awkward and responsible for comforting you, which is absolutely not their job.

Taking an active role in your classes, you may hear one of your students using the wrong pronoun for someone. In most cases, it is appropriate to gently correct them without further embarrassing the individual who has been misgendered. This means saying something like "Alex uses the pronoun she," and then moving on. If other students or faculty are consistently using the wrong pronouns for someone, do not ignore it! It is important to let your student know that you are their ally.

It may be appropriate to approach them and say something like "I noticed that you were getting referred to with the wrong pronoun earlier, and I know that that can be really hurtful. Would you be okay with me taking them aside and reminding them about your pronouns?" Follow up if necessary, but take your cues from the comfort level of your student. Your actions will be greatly appreciated.

Microaggressions



A microaggression is a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.

The following examples of microaggressions show exactly how different your intent may be when you say a microaggression verse the impact it can have on someone. These examples are courtesy of YWCA.

Theme	Intent	Impact
Alien in Own Land When Asian Americans, Latino Americans and others are assumed to be foreign-born	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Where are you from?" • "Where were you born?" • "You speak good English" • "Fresh off the boat" • A person asking for the target to teach them words in their native language 	You are not American You are a foreigner You don't belong
Ascription of Intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You are so articulate" • Asking an Asian person to help with a math or science problem 	People of color are generally not as intelligent as whites It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent All Asians are intelligent and good in math/sciences
ColorBlindness Statements that indicate that a person does not want to acknowledge race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "When I look at you, I don't see color" • "America is a melting pot" • "There is only one race, the human race" 	Denying a person's racial/ethnic experience Assimilate/acculturate to the dominant culture Denying the individual as a racial/cultural being
Denial of Individual Racism A statement made when whites deny their racial biases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm not racist. I have several black friends" • "As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority" 	I am immune to racism because I have friends of color Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression

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