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## **NPRP CONVENING DAY #1 (July 29, 2016)**

### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW (1—1:30PM) led by Carl & Mellon**

**Susan Feder:** Mellon was inspired by David Dower's work on the report "Gates of Opportunity," Todd London's *Outrageous Fortune* in terms of infrastructure. Relationships with NTP, NET, NPN, and HowlRound helped frame the NPRP initiative.

The program launched in 2012 with 14 playwrights. There was an invitation to 40 theatres and a peer review process for the initial round.

#### Goals of NPRP:

- Freedom of time & space
- Finding the value of playwrights in the theatre
- Deepening the relationship between playwright and Artistic Director (i.e. a playwright-driven theatre)
- Higher quality productions of ambitious work
- The impact of a playwright-in-residence on an institutional level

In the first round, there were few restrictions. The main stipulations was that each theatre involved in the program had to commission one play from the playwright. Also, HowlRound published any documentation that came out of the residency.

The residency itself acknowledged the power of an individual artist within an institution.

Challenges we learned from the first round include the idea of the playwright as a salary freelancer; and many playwrights thought about their fourth year on the second day of their residency. Lastly, we didn't anticipate leadership turnover the way it played out during the first three years.

We renewed nine playwrights from the first round and added nine new playwrights for the second round.

**Katie Steger:** We tried an open application process for the first time for the second cohort. We had such strong applications that were all competitive.

The issue of residency lies in where you are living during the process. This second cohort allowed us to open up to more artists and companies, ones that we wouldn't have known of it hadn't been for the open application.

**P. Carl:** This program is much needed. Given our relationship with Mellon, the HowlRound team thought, "How might we be helpful? How does HowlRound make the program known to the world like Mellon did for us?"

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HowlRound's role for NPRP is to produce convenings like this, manage development funds, provide a residency at Emerson, and disseminate the documentation of the learning.

Commons Producers were initially part of the project, the idea being that they would take the burden of documentation off the playwright and theatre, but it was, in fact, more difficult to have a third party come in and document the relationship between the playwright and Artistic Director. So, for this cohort, the documentation is up to the playwright and Artistic Director.

### **RENEWED GRANTEE REPORT-OUTS (2:30—4 PM) First Cohort**

Prompt: As a teaching moment for the new cohort, please offer one salient teaching moment from your residency.

#### **Z Space**

**Peter Nachtrieb:** My approach to writing and producing has transformed because of this program. Having the institution behind me allows me to not only work with other artists, but also take creative risks. It's been an undoing, or "being unsouped." I've thought a lot about: "what kind of work do I make? How is it done?" I wrote my first immersive piece during these past three years.

**Lisa Steindler:** Peter seeped into every corner of our theatre, and we're in an old warehouse. Peter brings a different worldview to the mix; he shared this with us by attending staff meetings, and retreats. I think having an artist at the heartbeat of what we do—sitting at the table—reminded us why we love what we do. What helps is that he's Bay area-centric. Overall, NPRP has elevated our work.

**Peter:** With our last show, I felt like a producer. I used my microfund to fly artists to work with. Being present during the week (or a passive presence) allowed me to have ownership of my position. Being there [Z Space] empowers me to exploit and take advantage of the resources that are there.

**Lisa:** In a way, Peter has become my partner. I encourage the new playwrights to identify the challenge you have within your organization. Then, look to your Artistic Directors as partners to meet that challenge in three years. Peter helped me activate the footprint of the warehouse by writing a piece for that space. So, now I have a better idea of how I can utilize the warehouse as a space.

#### **OSF**

**Luis Alfaro:** The word gratitude has been on my mind lately. Being a playwright is like being in a gang or the Serengeti. If you can get through the first fifteen years, you've made it. The idea of *breathe* is something else I want to throw out in the room. My father passed away during my

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residency, which has changed how I work. I asked myself, “How do you find an audience? Deepen the roots in the community?”

**Chris Acebo:** In terms of the audience, 80% of our audience are from 200 miles away. Thus, we represent the Pacific Northwest. We asked ourselves, “How do you bring in an artist activist like Luis into the fold?” He actually had to leave OSF to explore this idea of OSF’s community. During his first three years, Luis was in the forefront of going into local communities and letting them know how to get to OSF.

**Luis:** I’ve made seven trips to Portland. My mission has been building community, not building artists. I did a residency at Portland State University at the Native American Center. From that event, two people went onto do the FAIR program at OSF. We also brought 50 Latino lawyers from Portland together with the question: “How can art and theatre do what you do?” We also did a weekend with 20 non-profit leaders asking this same question.

I’m also curating the Blacks on Lab and we do these things called noon talks in which people pay to hear you speak. I went to the LMDA, in which we hosted a POC event the following day. I’m an academic and just got tenure at USC; so there’s the push and pull of being an educator that I’ve been working with too.

As a person of color in the American theatre, you have to learn to multitask. The shooting at Pulse in Florida inspired a memorial event, in which almost 300 people showed up.

**Chris:** Part of our challenge in the first three years was getting Luis on our campus as much as possible. Another program Luis is involved in is the Latino Play Project, which is a collective of artists, scholars, and community members.

**Luis:** What’s important is that this community is kind of a family. To think about relationship is amazing. My relationship at OSF has been everything.

### **The Huntington Theatre**

**Peter DuBois:** The first round was fantastic and exciting. We produced Melinda’s *Becoming Cuba*. We also had one of those rehearsal processes (for a different show, not by Melinda) that was intense. We [the Huntington] wanted to come up with an internal core value statement that’s about how we want to treat one another as a company and visiting artists. I asked Melinda to create a core value statement.

**Melinda Lopez:** Peter asked me to do this, so I thought the best way to start was to talk to everyone. There are about 100 people who work at the Huntington, give or take. I interviewed people one-on-one and had long lunches. I tried to Anna Deavere Smith it—“what is your core value you bring to work every day? How can we articulate your values better?”

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Over the past six months, I talked to about 75% of the staff. I came up with a 15-page document of just quotes. No names were attached; it was anonymous because some people shared some very intimate details. Overall, people wanted similar things, they wanted to be heard. Then, we had an ongoing document about what shouldn't be a core value. We created two documents—one for external (to share with visiting artists & freelancers) and one for internal. We ultimately decided to do one document to serve the purpose for everyone. We're getting it ready for August so that everyone will get a copy of this document at the start of the season.

### **Mixed Blood**

**Jack Reuler**—I've known Aditi for about 20 years prior to this program. Aditi and Mixed Blood are interwoven together. Aditi wanted to create a narrative for the theatre via social media. She attended staff meetings, weekly meetings, etc. Prior to the first cohort, Mixed Blood's Board recommended that we didn't have the capacity to accept Aditi to be our playwright-in-residence. Once our [Mellon] application got accepted and we got the money, however, they changed their minds.

My advice to the incoming playwrights is: don't think of this program as a job. If you think of it as a job, you won't make the most of it.

**Aditi Kapil**—I've been with Mixed Blood for so long. Radical hospitality—we don't charge anyone to see our shows—has changed our audience. We [Jack and I] had weekly meetings and we argued a lot, which was productive. I felt that Mixed Blood had so many amazing stories that are internal, but didn't really do a good job of telling everyone else. My advice for the playwrights is: figure out how to integrate with the traditional staff so that they see you as an asset, not a weirdo. There's definitely some trust-earning that needs to happen before they see you as an asset.

Another thing is that I got to be more selective for which projects I'm a part of during this residency. I have my place at MB, and I've used my development funds to explore. I would encourage you [incoming playwrights] to think creatively on what you can do with artistic freedom. As an artist, you can create your own mission statement instead of seeing yourself as a freelancer.

### **Victory Gardens**

**Marcus Gardley**: This residency has taught me to dream bigger and to face my three biggest fears (I hate talkbacks, I typically write in a Black aesthetic, and I'm afraid of people coming to talk to me after my show). What's really great working with Chay is that I tell him my ideas, which I know he'll say no to; but he always says yes.

There's a HowlRound article in which I discuss how I was really shook by Ferguson. I couldn't finish a rewrite for a show that was already in the season. I went to Chay and he said to write my new play mid-season. And I was scared to write this play.

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I wrote another play about slavery, for which white and Black audiences sat side by side and watched. The big gift I received from the first three years of this residency was writing into my fears. I think there is something powerful about facing your fears in this setting.

In terms of community, we started working with an organization led by an older Black woman who passed away. So, everything fell apart. I learned that in order to be in the community, I also need to pass down my knowledge. I helped develop a local playwright collective in which emerging playwrights workshop their plays. In this regard, I'm just another playwright working through my own work alongside them.

Now, I'm working with an older Black couple who bought a house on one of the dangerous streets in Chicago. The house is for the neighborhood. They asked me for help with laptops for job training, and I said I would help them. I actually hate asking people for help, but I had to ask on their behalf because I said I would do it. I'm not sure how it happened, but I asked and people gave me money and laptops to pass onto this couple for their job training program.

**Chay Yew:** Marcus didn't mention that he's also mentoring several playwrights of color. For the incoming Artistic Directors, let the playwrights feel at home and welcome. Be open to their ideas because you never know what they will reveal to you. Also, let the artists take the lead. As an artist, people listen to Marcus. He's been able to develop a unique relationship with our audience that we didn't have before.

### **Kansas City Rep**

**Jerry Genochio:** I met Nathan about eleven years ago when he was coming out of Julliard. Having the first round of cohorts allowed our Board to have a light bulb moment of producing new works. We had to figure out how to integrate Nathan into the office. In the first three years, we worked through our expectations and his expectations.

Nathan's involved in our education department. He mentors students from communities of color. He's also involved in Development and Outreach.

Artistically, having Nathan at the table with me forces us to think about what we're putting on our stages. I'm a straight white man, along with many of my colleagues. It's not enough to say, "let's produce an African American playwright in February." Having Nathan at the table helps because his ideas have weight.

**Nathan Louis Jackson:** One of the best things about NPRP is that I get to live in my home city with my family. Now, I'm getting a greater understanding of that community. I'm meeting new organizations, and people. I'm even learning why my city is laid out the way it is. I've been able to communicate with the artists in the community.

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I started having Sunday dinners for visiting artists of color to garner a sense of community. Communication is important in this program because the plan changes. Having expectations is great, yet things change. We have to adjust to different opportunities and schedules.

**Jerry:** A salient example of working with an artist in residence—figuring out how they work is key. Base your expectations on what the artist needs so that they can do their best work.

### **Dallas Theater Center**

**Will Power**—Dallas has a rich theatre history, but it doesn't necessarily have new play development of local artists. The community had ownership of my play *Stagger Lee* because we had a series workshops that garnered more audiences over time. We started a group for writers and we're doing a teen playwriting program. A couple of writers decided to start their own theatre companies during my residency.

Just to piggyback on Kira—when I was younger, I didn't care who the audience was. With *Stagger Lee* though, I was mindful of what are the multiple access points for the piece? Are there different aspects to tap into? Like Marcus, I was able to dream big and given the opportunity to speak to funders. It gave me a good understanding of being your own advocate for your work. I've been able to articulate what I want artistically to production/development due to me being in the institution.

**Kevin Moriarity:** If we didn't commission this piece, his residency wouldn't have worked. I echo that having Will's voice in the institution was important for the staff. Will's family moved to Dallas. He's valuable to our staff, and our community. Guest artists don't have the same capacity to support a dialogue with the community.

**Will:** I didn't realize how important physically being in the theatre was. You can schedule two hours to do e-mails, but coming to the theatre and having brief interactions with folks makes a difference.

**Kevin:** We initially invited him to staff meetings, but learned that they weren't content rich. He was sitting through budget reviews and marketing plans. We initially aimed to make him part of the senior staff, but realized that wasn't necessarily the answer for us.

### **Ten Thousand Things**

**Michelle Hensley:** Kira wrote three plays and we produced one each year of her residency. We also produced five of her plays in a seven-year period. A group of actors got really familiar with her humor and style; and they love her work. Our audiences have been willing to come along on the journey. Over this period of time, our non-traditional audiences and paying audiences have enjoyed her.

Kira will talk about her idea Play Local, which is about creating more opportunities for local artists. The biggest impact has been having an artist in the room. It made me reinvigorate our

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Artist Core, everyone is paid all the time no matter what they do. We pay them as consultants to brainstorm ideas for our organizations. AC created projects what they want to do, while TTT raises money for them to do it.

This Mellon residency addressed: why is it that the only people who make full-time benefits are administrators? What about the artists? I asked the AC about how can we pay actors. So we came up with a Twin Cities Repertory theatre. Eighteen to twenty artistic directors have collaborated and raised money to do a pilot version, in which we pick 5 actors and give them 40 weeks of work. We pay them \$50,000 (through foundation support), and give them 4 weeks of paid vacation for a year.

**Kira Oblensky:** It's a privilege to work in the town you live in. Playwrights come to Minneapolis for the Playwright's Center and receive funding from that program. However, local theatres don't produce new work by local playwrights. Hopefully, we'll change the climate in Minneapolis and it will be cool to do new plays by local artists.

### **Alliance Theatre**

**Chris Moses:** Being willing to be surprised on both sides is important. We commissioned Pearl Cleage's *My Life in Paris*. What's unique about the Alliance is that we're committed to develop new work for all ages. She worked with a group of middle school students. She's currently working on the Collision Project, which is a devised theatre project for teens.

Early on, we thought that we would have Pearl in the Senior Staff meetings. We quickly learned that she didn't want to be at the table for those type of conversations. By opting out, she's had an impact on our artistic content.

She's been in Atlanta since the 1960s, she was also the press secretary for the first Black mayor of Atlanta. She went to Spelman; so we decided to do a internship program partnering with Spelman. These interns can self-select and they can also sign on to do a two-year fellowship after they graduate.

### **PLAYWRIGHT BREAKOUT #1 (4:45—5:15 PM)**

**SUMMARY:** Jamie and Ramona introduce the changes and procedure for playwrights' residency at Emerson College and spending their microfund budget.

**RESIDENCIES AT EMERSON:** As part of their residency, playwrights come to Emerson and can choose what to do here and what to work on. It's required that playwrights come to Boston, though there is no required presentation of work. HowlRound hopes to do 6 residencies a year and it's up to playwrights to choose when to come in the next three years. Depending upon availability, playwrights are either in artists' housing at Emerson College, or in a hotel (artist housing preferred). Residencies are paid by HowlRound, separate from micro-fund budget. Folks

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should try to confirm dates at least two months in advance of the residency. Ramona is point person for all things on this program and questions about it.

The current dates are for year one. Around this time next year the next year of dates will be available. If there is a particular time a playwright would like to come, and they're not looking for studio space, talk to Ramona. It's possible for two playwrights to be in residence at the same time, if the playwrights were doing retreat-type work, not like two full workshops.

Past residencies have included:

- Meetings with HowlRound staff or Emerson College students
- Conducting workshops
- Writing retreats (common with Cohort One participants)
- Table reading with local actors (with or without rehearsals)
- Researching play with local experts, ex: Peter toured historic homes
- People have gone to see local shows or seen [ArtsEmerson](#) (sister org) shows
- Playwrights have coincided residencies with panel events

**BUDGET:** Playwrights are given up to \$5,500 for travel, housing, salaries. HowlRound will work with playwrights to make this budget work.

**EXAMPLES:**

- **Aditi** did an early residency and timed it to coincide with Company One's production of her play *Displaced Hindu God Trilogy*, which gave her extra time to work on the play.
- **Will** used his residency primarily for writing time. He was gearing up for the final workshop. Got to know David, P. Carl, Jamie. Connected with local Boston artists. Met up with Lydia Diamond
- **Kira** workshopped an early draft of a play and Carl was the dramaturg. She also gave the first incarnation of her *Imagining the Audience* presentation.

**Madeline** has been slowly developing something with folks at another company, *totally* unrelated to her resident theatre, and wouldn't be there. Spending her residency working on this separate project is an appropriate thing to do. The Boston-residency is whatever the playwright wants to work on.

**MICROFUNDS**

Each playwright gets \$30,000 over the next three years to play with. It can be used for research/travel/conferences, space rental, theatre tickets, books related to research, and probably more. This is the same amount as the first round. To streamline things and make things easier for all: requests will be made via a Google form. HowlRound can pay collaborators, whether you're working with an independent dramaturg or hiring actors, etc. Reimbursements can take up to four weeks. Balances will be sent every six months, or you can ask Ramona any time for an update.



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Emerson only accepts hard copy receipts if it was originally a hard copy, like at a restaurant. Instead of just sending receipts, those have to be numbered and put onto pieces of paper. Digital receipts like for Uber or ticket purchases, should be emailed to Ramona.

For hotel reimbursements, you need an actual receipt, not a booking confirmation.

In the past cohort, collaborator invoices were made by Ramona, but now playwrights fill out an invoice form. They will need a W9 form filled out.

For foreign receipts, there will be two columns to fill out including what the costs were in the foreign currency, and the value in dollars the day of purchase.

HowlRound's fiscal year ends at the end of June each year. Thus, receipts should be sent by as soon as possible, or by June 1, prior to the deadline.

Fees for collaborator are up to the discretion of playwrights. HowlRound is all for a living wage, but the playwrights can set this based on local rates. For the Boston residency, HowlRound staff will help decide based on previous residencies.

**Nathan:** What if a writer needs like a babysitter, there was an issue, about taxes and listing someone like this as "collaborator". This isn't a problem because it's related to getting your work done. There's a process about getting it handled, maybe requiring a W9 from the babysitter. Melinda pointed out that for something like a residency, this would be an expense. Jamie will check in with Mellon and Carl.

**Kira** mentioned it would be good for playwrights to have a way to share how they spend their money.

**Melinda** asked if part of documentation could include ways for playwrights to learn from each other, such as spending money, and other aspects/challenges.

#### **AD's/THEATRE REPS BREAKOUT #1 (4:45—5:15 PM)**

**Susan Feder:** I'm curious to hear if anyone from the first cohort has any feedback.

**Sam Woodhouse:** I never know when I'm getting grants. There were about four or five months of Herbert not knowing if he had the residency or not. I was comfortable, but he didn't know if he had a job.

**Peter DuBois:** I was impressed by the transparency.

**Susan:** We had questions for our renewing cohorts about when shows are happening. I would have liked to see more of that in round 1.

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**Ralph Pena:** I found the application process very user-friendly. Part of that was talking with Katie. I was surprised by how simple the financial information was. It's definitely not something we're used to at my company.

**Jasson Minadakis:** The transparency of talking with cohorts about the good and the bad was help. I think we avoided good things and bad things from folks. If you could continue that would be great.

**Katie Steger:** Is that a general consensus? That was part of the nature of this cohort.

**Jasson:** Hearing specifics about the salary being too low, or going the right way. I'm not used to talking about this during the grant process.

**Susan:** The group that's renewing—all who participated in the grantee survey, one of the biggest take-aways that there's great interaction during the proposal process. Yet, when you receive the money, we kind of go away. I'm curious about the communication of the first cohort from us and the HowlRound team.

**Carl:** We do have a session tomorrow about making the cohort more cohesive. So that's something to think about—as a cohort vs. individual grantees.

**Katie:** In regards to the application process, I just want to reiterate that modifications and extensions are fine. This program is a bit different because the artist needs to get paid. Anytime you expect anything to change in your budget, reach out to Hannah or Susan let us know. There is a formal process, a form you have to fill out.

**Susan:** One thing we didn't anticipate in the first round is what constitutes salary? For example, The salary and benefits are for the time and space it takes for a playwright to be a playwright. In this round, we asked for a job description. When I met with Sam & Herbert, you were concerned about time away from the theatre. Herbert is an ambassador of San Diego Rep.

**Katie:** Artists have different privileges and needs. It's easier to talk about it.

**Carl:** I think sometimes it's easier to call me instead of raising a red flag for Mellon. I generally take on the philosophical questions about NPRP. Ramona can answer the nuts and bolts of the residency. We [HowlRound] are open to feedback because it's been a learning curve for all of us. We're doing a lot to make the systems work better.

**Jerry:** I'm impressed by what you do. You're investing an astonishing impact on communities in America. I was impressed with the diversity and the work of individual playwrights.

**Carl:** One thing we found is that people think about renewal. That actually influences how people think, or not think, about the residency. What's your answer to that?

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**Ella Baff:** Having lived with anxiety as former Artistic Director of Jacob's Pillow, I'm extremely empathetic to waiting for the next grant. I think it's a brilliant program and I would love to keep this thing going for a long time. You can't really say anything beyond that because it would be misleading. We really don't know. All I can tell you is that intention, it's the honest truth. Pan-American conference revealed to me a lot of artists who aren't safe outside the theatre. There is power in what you're doing when you support writers; you legitimize that writing is a profession and needs a place to live.

**Katie:** We went through this process about renewing last year. Who knows what will happen in three years? It's hard for us to predict three years out. Things that are to be considered: do we renew? Or do we have a new cohort? Those questions are not just on us, they're also on you. It's not just about money, it's a constant conversation.

**Susan:** Mellon gives much of its money to larger institutions. Historically, endowments happen at universities and museums. We recognize that the theatres we support don't have an endowment, or a little endowment. Our Board thinks that institutions that don't have \$100 million endowment, we should invest our money somewhere else. Arts and Culture Heritage Program is experiencing this challenge. So, we are working with you. We realize that this program would end without our support. Hope eternal, we can bring some other funders into this group.

**Ella:** It's very important that we acknowledge that we have a national perspective because ACHP funds visual arts and performing arts.

**John Dias:** Is there anything that we can learn from the five theatres that didn't renew?

**Susan:** There are several reasons, including some playwrights gained new teaching positions; a new Artistic Director was hired for theatre; and some playwrights wanted a different career path outside of the theatre.

**Katie:** I also think that some playwrights and theatres were not a great match at the end of the day. In this process, there is a need for both flexibility in scheduling and firm commitments. We took a lot of that learning from the first round into this second cohort's proposal process.

**Susan:** We updated our residency requirement. For example, playwrights have to live where they work.

**Kristin Marting:** In terms of the application, the questions were really clear and helped for us [at HERE] get excited and set appropriate expectations.

**Katie:** We didn't have any expectations going into the first round. We learned that one playwright was expected to direct, but wasn't getting an additional pay because they were already on staff. The mindset was: "the Artistic Director doesn't get paid for directing; so why

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would the playwright?” So we learned from that. We’re not going to tell you what to do; we do recommend that you discuss your expectations upfront with the playwright.

**Carl:** Some of the playwrights also felt bogged down. It also took a lot more time for the residencies to actually kick off.

**Susan:** We asked that in both rounds that the salary is set based on the Senior Staff at the beginning of the application process.

**Kristin:** I think it’s wonderful that you did it that way because if staff feels they’re getting paid differently than the playwright, that can cause some problems.

**Jasson:** The recommendation to talk to our staff about doing the residency before round two began, actually helped a lot.

**Hannah Durack:** We would love to hear more info about when the plays are happening. The interim reports are another opportunity to bring up your learning.

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## **NPRP CONVENING DAY #2 (July 30, 2016)**

### **CONTEXT FOR NPRP & REFLECTIONS ON ROUND # 1 (9—10 AM)**

#### **A Conversation with David Dower:**

*Note: we recommend watching the video from this portion of the day over reading the notes.*

**David Dower:** The goal of this morning is to lay out a continuum of work that frames NPRP. The really important thing for me to convey to you is that you are a delegate for the field-at-large, and you have a responsibility in that way by participating in this program which is really asking the question: how do we improve the economics for playwrights in this country? What can each of us do to move the inquiry forward? In 2002, Duke, Mellon, and TCG supported a panel on New Works, New Ways. That meeting was the first time we saw each other as something other than individual organizations, but rather as a bunch of peers who were all doing this work together, but also in isolation, in many cases unaware of one another.

This would play out in a certain way. In almost every grant application, a theatre company said they made Sarah Ruhl. Every so often, Sarah Ruhl received phone calls asking if so-and-so theatre made you. When she was asked this, she had to say yes because as a playwright she didn’t want to negatively impact her relationship with these theatres. We have to be able to tell the truth and ask questions to reveal the truth; and in 2002, we weren’t telling the truth.

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I asked a question about where the development centers were showing up in any of this conversation—about where I was—and the response was intense. I basically felt like I had taken a crap in the middle of the conference. I got up to leave the conference, and really the field too. On my way out the door, Olga Garay asked me: “Who is your tribe? If I was a funder, who would I support? What’s their path?” These questions led me to thinking about which artists I was focused on. I was in San Francisco at the time at Z Space. Then, Peter Nachtrieb came to the Z Space, along with a few other playwrights. Yet, he was the only playwright whose work I saw. How could I support him by giving space; connect him to a larger network for more opportunities?

I also thought a lot about traveling to see what my colleagues were doing at a national scale. I got a small grant from Mellon to do so. I was thinking about answering Olga’s question about making a path for artists. I saw myself as a gatekeeper (I had contacts and the position to provide opportunities) and I began asking myself about the role and health of a gatekeepers in our field.

It shouldn’t be a surprise that HowlRound is in the middle of this. HowlRound is a knowledge commons for the theatre. You all are the cohort to push the inquiry about playwrights. This is not a gift. This does not make you special. This does not change your lives. This is a large set of questions you have been asked to help us answer. You are the scientist and you will help us carry out these studies. You will tell us what is working and what is not.

One of the things the NEA taught us is about the light residency requirement. In many instances, the residency requirement was an issue because it was often for one show. In a few cases, a playwright had to lead an education program—they were paid \$25,000 to lead an educational program, but didn’t have time to write. [Mellon decided that a three year residency was better than one and offered more money in the first cohort], but there were still things to learn. The first cohort did not ask for a prior relationship between the playwright and theatre. If you do not know each other’s work, it can be hard to make up for that in three years.

The things we need from you is learning, curiosity, and honesty. Help us learn. Move the needle for playwrights. Make a contribution to the commons.

It is okay to fail, just make sure you fail forward.

### **Discussion**

**Luis:** A couple things are popping up for me; we have a thematic quality as playwrights. Another thing that I’m wrestling with is helping people transition out of their fields. One of the challenges is that I’m meeting a lot of older people who are transitioning out of the field. How do we keep envisioning the future? Can we still make change? That’s something I’ve been thinking about with this renewal. How do we move on?

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**Jasson:** For the residency with Lauren, we're working to be a more family-friendly organization; she is a fairly new mother. We're experimenting with what works for her in terms of days she comes to the office. Is there anyone from the first cohort who has experience working with new parents? Is there anything we can read? We'll try to document our process, we'd also like to know more info.

**Jack:** What can we do collectively to move the idea of a resident playwright forward? So it moves forward without the need of Mellon's support. Is there something we can do collectively to make producing these 19 playwrights more common?

**David:** We are in a different era and the era of our elders was about infrastructure and things already in place. Now in this era, we have the virtual infrastructure and now we have organizations like HowlRound. My question for you, is how we can use the internet? How can we use the virtual infrastructure to move this forward?

**Susan:** There was a theatre who applied for both rounds, but didn't make it. They offered to pay for the playwright's residency themselves because they could afford it. However, I'm still waiting on them to do it. How do we get the smaller theatres, who can't afford to do a playwright residency, into the fold?

### **Reflections on Round 1**

**Carl:** I wanted to share a few things from my perspective. The first is this idea that the playwright is nomadic. When we first came together, it seemed like a no brainer that a playwright would want health insurance and benefits.

Immediately it did not go as smoothly as we planned. There are many playwright who pride themselves on being nomadic. There are artistic directors who pride themselves on being part of an institution.

It wasn't a bad start, but there are a lot questions brought up. To acknowledge this relationship between the playwright and artistic director is a new thing. These residencies took a long time to germinate and grow. This question of "what are we doing," has lasted for six months to a year. These cohorts will need time to unfold.

There will be three levels of transformation with residencies: personal transformation, relational and institutional transformation, and the overall community transformation.

The moment in my career that first moved me was a residency program with Karen Zacarias. She really created the model for the ultimate playwright residency. She had development funds like you do. With some of her funds, she produced one of her plays; and she also wanted to get a group of Latina/o theatre artists to have a conversation. We invited 15 people, and 8 people showed up. They created the Latina/o Commons. They wanted to have a Latina/o artists convenings. Jose Luis [Valenzuela] wanted to have a festival called Encuentro. Karen wanted to

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have a play festival, which she called Carnaval. And someone else wanted to start a Latina/o theatre journal called Cafe Onda. I can say that all of those things happened.

## **Discussion**

**Katie:** To tie back to documentation, one of the things that's different in this round is documentation is in your hands. Fortunately for Karen, HowlRound was already embedded into Arena's program. Bringing HowlRound into the conversation is a way to bring to the forefront and nationalize your process. It's helpful for learning and enormous things can come out of it.

**Peter:** Documentation for us in the first round was with Commons producers. So, the 10:45 am session will be about documentation.

## **DISTILLATION OF ROUND # 1 DOCUMENTATION (10:45—11:15 AM)**

The first reason why we feel documentation is important is because of knowledge-sharing. The second reason is we want to show this radical model of salaried playwrights. The third reason is we want people to know about the amazing things you are doing onstage, and in your communities.

We want every pair to let us know who the primary documentation caretaker will be. Whoever you make the primary contact does not have to write everything down, we just need them to be in contact with us. If you haven't decided who you want that person to be, think about it.

1. Written content (i.e. blogs, essays)
2. Livestreamed content
3. We are open to new ideas. If you are thinking about doing a podcast etc. just let us know.

## **Round 1 Standout Examples:**

- ***Interviews that speak directly to the day to day work, experience, and particulars of the residency:***
  - "Artistry, Advocacy, and Agency: Will Power, Dallas Theater Center, and the Playwright On Staff Model" by Will Power & Jonathan Norton:  
<http://howlround.com/artistry-advocacy-and-agency-will-power-dallas-theater-center-and-the-playwright-on-staff-model>
  - "Aditi Kapil, Jack Reuler, and a Pack of Skittles at Mixed Blood Theatre" by Hayley Finn:  
<http://howlround.com/aditi-kapil-jack-reuler-and-a-pack-of-skittles-at-mixed-blood-theater>
  - "The Constant Gardener: Melinda Lopez Reflects on Her Mellon Residency & Repotting" by Miranda Craigwell:  
<http://howlround.com/the-constant-gardener-melinda-lopez-reflects-on-her-mellon-residency-and-repotting>

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- **Really help us understand local community**
  - “Marcus Gardley on *An Issue of Blood* and *The Gospel of Lovingkindness*” by Rebecca Stevens:  
<http://howlround.com/marcus-gardley-on-an-issue-of-blood-and-the-gospel-of-lovngkindness>
  - “Let Us Breathe” event that Victory Gardens produced on HR TV, was also in some ways informed by the spirit of the residency. This is something we would love to see more of.
- **First person accounts that teach**
  - “The Benefits of Not Being a Guest: How being a Playwright In Residence affected the World Premiere of My Latest Play (I think.) by Peter Sinn Nachtrieb:  
<http://howlround.com/the-benefits-of-not-being-a-guest-how-being-a-playwright-in-residence-affected-the-world-premiere-of>
  - Soul Serenade Series By Pearl Cleage:  
[http://howlround.com/search?f%5B0%5D=field\\_post\\_tags%3A254](http://howlround.com/search?f%5B0%5D=field_post_tags%3A254)
- **Leverages existing programming that can fold in content about residencies**
  - “Taking Arms Against the Sea: Playwright Residency Programs”:  
<http://howlround.com/livestreaming-the-theatre-bay-area-annual-conference-mon-april-14>
  - “Livestreaming Playwrights Panel Who do you write for?—18th Annual Pacific Playwrights Festival—South Coast Repertory—Sun, April 26”:  
<http://howlround.com/livestreaming-playwrights-panel-from-the-18th-annual-pacific-playwrights-festival-who-do-you-write>

## Discussion

For the people who are renewing, can you throw out a piece that you really enjoyed reading.

- Aditi’s [Radical Hospitality Series](#)
- Michelle’s book on [Ten Thousand Things](#)
- [Mikado series on Yellowface](#)
- City Series

**Susan:** Can you give us a couple stats of your reach?

**Jamie:** We now average 55,000 unique monthly readers, about 85% from the US, 15% from all over the world. We’ve amassed over 6,000 videos on demand in HowlRound TV archive, and folks have watched over 14 years of video.

**Carl:** We have a New Play Map that will turn into a World Theatre Map, which will launch soon. It’ll be another way to document the work that you’re doing.



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**Jamie/Carl:** Info about the World Theatre Map: Beta period begins September 15, 2016. World Theatre Map will integrate HowlRound content that mentions the artist/theatre organization. Check out more here: [www.worldtheatremap.org](http://www.worldtheatremap.org)

**Melinda:** What counts as documentation for the residency? I wrote a piece about buying tickets for *Hamilton*.

**Herbert:** Is it safe to say that these 2-3 pieces will be published by HowlRound? Or is it for Mellon too?

**Katie:** If there are things you want to share in both contexts (HowlRound and the Mellon report), especially if it's about the nuts and bolts. You don't have to do eighteen different things to serve your grant purposes.

**Kevin:** Can you remind us for what the reporting we're doing for Mellon that's separate from HowlRound?

**Susan:** We want to see the financial report, and the narrative report at the end of each year. We ask you to air your laundry, particularly your challenges.

**Katie:** If you want to air your laundry, that will be definitely help others learn about the pitfalls. For the theatres that didn't get the residency, sharing your pitfalls isn't about failure. It'll help the people for the next round.

**Kevin:** Are you able to utilize content that is not original to HowlRound? NPR did a segment about the ongoing process of *Stagger Lee*. That would have been a huge undertaking for us to document the process like that. Is there a way to use what they've done and republish it via HowlRound? Or should we just talk with you about [documentation ideas] beforehand?

**Carl:** I doubt NPR would allow us to repurpose their content, but because we are a commons NPR could use our content. We allow anyone to remix content that we originally publish, they just have to attribute to us as the original publisher.

**Jamie:** We're more than happy to hyperlink to traditional press on our site. We did that with Will when Essence interviewed him.

### **POPCORN IDEAS FOR DOCUMENTATION (11:45—12:15 PM)**

**Carlos Murillo:** When we worked together on *Augustus Noble*, we built interactive communities. We did story circles. The only documentation was the script. So we'd like to do that again and actually document it. Inspired by Marcus' documentation of working with the community; we'd do that for West Town.

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**Noel Raymond:** Maybe Christina [Ham] can do a selfie essay so that you can see where she's going in the community.

**Kristin:** Jeffersonian dinners are a tradition at HERE. Taylor's working on a new piece in which he gives information about one queer character to an audience member to follow throughout the performance. To start that, we thought of doing these dinners where we invite 8-10 members of our community and talk about how the gay movement lost its way. We wouldn't record, but would document it after the fact.

**Chris Acebo:** OSF is doing a program called Think and Drinks. So Luis will be working with a journalist Hector Mahada on having talks with community members about issues of immigration, etc.

**Luis:** Hector and I grew up in the same neighborhood (in LA). We were thinking about doing a podcast about our process, which can be part of my documentation.

**Peter:** I will be interviewing a group of writers who are part of a weekly writer's group. I will profile them about living and working in San Francisco. I'm also thinking about doing a piece on the secret lives of the Z Space staff.

**Herbert:** A lot of people do not know that I am visual artist. I was thinking about creating a photo essay illustrating the process for *Manifest Destinitis*.

**Ralph:** We have an existing play lab, in which we have a podcast. So we will be interconnecting with the play lab about what happens in the next three years. Mike wants to write about that, while I'm concerned about the constant whitewashing of our work. So, I'll write a piece about "Diversity for Idiots."

**Vera:** Mine was natural. I thought about it right away. Blogging is a hobby of mine. I am an editor of an Alaskan Magazine. I can combine my social and political life with my artistic life.

**NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT AND AD/THEATRE REPS BREAKOUT SESSIONS HAVE BEEN EMAILED TO PARTICIPANTS IN THOSE GROUPS**

#### **BREAKOUT REPORTS/REFLECTIONS (2:15—2:45 PM)**

**Melinda:** We moved much more towards our feelings and social justice. Is that the theatres job or the playwright's job? We asked about how our activism can be supported by the Mellon Foundation.

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**Michelle:** I was comparing this gathering to the first cohort. The conversation quickly went to how can we support this cohort with each other? We're all interested in learning about the seeds of plays, even a two-three sentence blurb would help. How can we move the work around?

**Carl:** What is the infrastructure already in existence? In concrete terms, what role can HowlRound play? What role can existing theatres in this cohort play? And what are the other organizations? Let's keep these ideas rolling for next steps in the wrap-up.

**Jasson:** We did think that HowlRound can learn of what our theatres are doing internally. We also talked about reaching out to the playwrights about what other institutions they are interested in working with.

**Peter:** It's like creating a mini map of what work we're developing and where it can go.

**Carl:** Would it be valuable to get all the Artistic Directors on the phone together every six months? This way you're actually talking to each other about the work itself.

**Will:** That might be interesting for the playwrights too, every six to eight months.

**Carl:** That is easy. It's easy to send a Google calendar invite and get ten to fifteen people on the phone. Anything else?

**Luis:** Two things came up: the notion of when you change (how to negotiate change, and the communication of change). The difference between small staff theatres and large staff theatres—there are two different ways to work in.

**Kira:** I think the size of the theatre affects your experience. It was an observation of mine. It seems to be useful for folks in similar sized theatres to talk

**Carl:** Do artistic directors find that that the size of the theatre effects things?

**Herbert:** I think the demographics of the audience is the same. We get really excited when there are a lot of comp tickets and diverse audiences in previews. Yet, once the run continues, we're all concerned about the audience homogenizing.

**Nathan:** There is an importance of communication between the writer, the writer and organization, and the writer, organization and HowlRound. Jerry and I had a conversation about the office. I couldn't write in the office set aside for me, but I was able to write next door.

**Carl:** What about expectations?

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**Faye:** I don't really know Christina's writing process. One of the first things I asked is: can she write in the office? I'm trying to be open and adjust to our previous relationship, which is in a new form with this residency.

**Carl:** [To Christina Ham] Do you still write at the Denny's?

**Michelle:** I'm making a comparison to the first cohort, it feels like everyone has much more realistic expectations. At TTT, we don't have an office; so that's not something that we expect. The first cohort, folks were saying that playwrights should be in the office five days a week. It seems like everyone is going into this with much more realistic expectations.

**Susan B:** Pearl is a citizen colleague; knowing that she would be a regular presence in the building was centered on advocating conversation. It wasn't about producing written text. It's sort of like where the therapist's office is.

**Nathan:** I was in Atlanta and was invited to a conversation [by Alliance]. I was part of a great conversation. Just finding the time to sit is precious.

**Sam:** A word that is really important to me is being a citizen of the community. I care about diversity, justice, and I live there. I've seen my city transform. One of the great values of having Herbert is having a colleague who is a fellow citizen with similar values.

**Herbert:** We represent your mission. Staff represents your day-to-day. All organizations are dysfunctional from top to bottom. We're not there to fix it; that's not our role.

**Susan Feder:** Both Chris and Susan B. said that they couldn't imagine programming a season without Luis and Pearl at their side. I'm curious how this relationship can affect the aesthetics of the American theatre.

**Sam:** Herbert introduced me to a play by Taylor Mac, which I wasn't familiar with before. So I think the aesthetics are integrated.

**Kristin:** We have 6 to 8 people in a panel for new artists. Taylor's been on this panel and will continue to be apart of this panel. So this is something new that we're doing.

**Peter:** We work the same way as the artistic staff with Melinda. At artistic staff meeting we are looking at dramaturgical things about the play. When Melinda walks in the room. She can tell how we feel about the play by looking at our faces. We need to figure out how to have the conversations with Melinda about her work when she is in integral part of the team.

**Christina:** I just started July 1. Part of my responsibility is being part of the artistic staff; curating New Play Series. What does that mean for me to take more of a lead role?

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## MIXED BREAKOUT SESSION & REPORT-OUTS (3—4:15 PM)

### **Groups C:**

**Tom:** We have the usuals: Google hangouts, phone calls, TCG. But we also wanted to do things like hang-out or have a party. The dinner we had last night was great to generate conversation. A place where we can come together to get to know each other.

**Ralph:** Great comment—we are the face of American theatre and in order for us to know where to go—the impact that as a cohort we can have on the country or to other artist can do that on their own. No one artist can do it alone. We all have to be allies, but we have to know each other's work.

### **GROUP D:**

**Madeline:** We talked about having Informal exchanges and hospitality. Some theatres have artist housing that's in lull for a while

**Kristin:** We also talked about telling folks who come into town what places we recommend, such as shows, food, etc.

**Madeline:** We also came up with a semi-structured thought experiment activity, in which we play a manifesto game, or a utopia game. The Kilroys list can be a model for a document that has a catalytic effect on the field.

**Kira:** We talked about doing that twice at the beginning of the residency and the end; just to see the differences between the two.

**Madeline:** We also talked about a simple Listserv that's only shared within this group.

**Kristin:** As a group, we can do a free rush ticket program for unsold tickets. Anyone who comes to HERE with student IDs get discounted tickets, but we found that program hasn't been as successful as we hoped. Perhaps we can do that for one another in terms of tickets. We could also follow New Georges lead; they started a Professional Friday Matinee program and they invite professionals to see a 3 pm show.

### **GROUP B:**

**Aditi:** We would love a contact list; interested in a quarterly e-mail of upcoming readings, productions. We'd love to plan ahead. We also love the idea of wrapping it into the work. Our group would like to do yearly meetings, especially in the summer. We'd like to piggyback a convening with TCG.

### **GROUP A:**

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**John:** Getting together more was a point we talked about a lot. I did a Launch of New Plays with Mellon in which we had to travel together to see the premieres. It was a requirement that I thought would be onerous; and it was also organized by someone else. Yet, I learned so much about the show and the theatre. If only eight of us got together, it would still be a wonderful experience.

We are also a collective voice that can remake the model; how do we return to the artist as the center of the institution?

## **FULL GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Melinda:** I would like to make a plea for the party.

**Susan Feder:** Your question about building cohesion in the beyond network and meeting more regularly please let me know if you would like board members in the meetings in any type of way. I would like to have feedback on that.

**Christina:** I think having board members would be very helpful. I think a lot of larger theatres have very homogenous board structures. I think it would be important for board members to not be part of the whole conversation, but to come in occasionally,

**John:** It would have been fantastic for the board members to come in. I'm thinking about my board members not in the room right now wouldn't be happy with this. I would like for us to travel around to watch other people's work.

**Kristin:** Going back to Plan B. We talked about a lot of things a e-newsletter, dropbox. Even if we had a dropbox to share each other's work. It can be tacked the Mellon's group and access the work they want public.

**Carlos:** I teach at DePaul and I would love for you to stop by when you're in town. How we can use our resources when people are in town? We are nomadic and we do end up in each other's cities. Beyond our connection to the city also ur communities.

**Kristin:** Is there a way to integrate technology to our benefit for connectivity?

**Carl:** One idea is that in three years, there can be a national convening in which returning and new cohorts discuss what this means for the field.

**Carlos:** We talked about how AD are directors and administrators; this is an opportunity for writers to have an artistic role

## **WRAP-UP (4:30—5 PM)**

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**Susan Feder/Ella Baff:** Thank you.

**Lisa:** Thank you Mellon for your advocacy and your friendships. It wouldn't happen with you.

**Melinda:** (to Katie) When is the baby born?

**Herbert:** Thank you to the first cohort, you're really leaders. Thank you for being so candid and true.

**Carl:** This has been a complete and total pleasure. I'm privileged to have a career that started with playwrights whose stories has allowed me to go on in the world. The work you do has helped us imagine hope for our world. Thank you for your generosity, attention span, and passionate intensity. We have a lot to do.

**Katie:** I'm going on maternity leave for 6 months and I'm starting a PhD at the same time. My role will be very different at the end of 6 months. I won't be working with you as much. I wanted take a moment to tell you how much it has meant to work with Susan, Katie, Carl, David Dower, and the HowlRound crew to shepherd this through. It means a lot to me to watch you flourish and to have contributed in some small way.