



Producing Guidelines for *The Every 28 Hours Plays*

We welcome you as a partner in *The Every 28 Hours Plays* project. *The Every 28 Hours Plays* were created with the goal of capturing the history in the making of our current Civil Rights Movement and giving us something to respond. The title of the project is inspired by the contested nature of the statistic that every twenty-eight hours a black person is killed by security guard, vigilante, or police by extrajudicial violence. When the Malcolm Grass Roots Movement released their report, the claim went viral, inspiring denial and questions about their methodology. For us this raised the larger question: every 28 hours, every 48, every 98, how many hours would it take for this not to be a national issue of vital importance? #BlackLivesMatter was created in 2012 after Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman, was acquitted for his crime, and dead 17 year old Trayvon was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder. We use #Every28Hours because as a nation #BlackLivesMatter is still being treated as a question.

This project centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements such as black queer and trans folk, undocumented, and black women as a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement. They are broadening the conversation around state violence to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state, and acknowledge the ways in which Black lives are deprived of basic human rights and dignity. As described in Time Magazine, "The movement is also made up of countless other protest groups that emerged from the streets of Ferguson, with names like We the Protesters and Hands-Up United. The prevalence of the Black Lives Matter hashtag prompted media outlets to seize the phrase as shorthand for the struggle writ large. The new civil rights movement had its rallying cry" (Altman).

While all theater is a political act, we have always been very clear that this piece of theater was created without a singular political viewpoint. Our curatorial process was open, and we asked our playwrights to reflect on the civil rights movement that is happening today and the events that inspire the Black Lives Matter movement. The process has included dialogue with both law enforcement and activists, and it continues to. Theater, culture workers, and law enforcement are designed to serve the community in their own unique ways. Theater offers a space to explore our differences, find our commonalities, and practice empathy.

We approached the development of these plays inclusively, with voices from different communities hailing from all over the U.S. Our producing guidelines are based on what we have learned and are an attempt to replicate best practices. This is an iterative process, and we encourage you to debrief with us to improve these documents and future productions. We have found that these plays can be produced in a short amount of time with few resources and result in a large diverse audience, emotionally engaging work, and positive relationships with more artists and community members. The powerful conversations held in our theater spaces around the country remind us of why we do this work. In this document we start with *Pre-production elements* such as community engagement and communications. Providing context for the event and partnering with non-arts community organizations, with the aim of allowing multiple perspectives to be voiced and heard, is key to initiating a productive community dialogue around these themes. We then cover in detail several ways you can approach producing these plays in a *Production elements* section that includes subjects such as casting. *Post-production elements* are listed at the end of the documents with some parting thoughts.

PRE-PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

All productions are aided by audience development, community dialogue, and historical context for everyone working on the play. This collection, more than others, demands this rigor, preparation, and connection to community. Below are a few suggested next steps to get inspired by.

Community Engagement: This engagement is vital for a good post-show discussion. 4-6 weeks prior to the production, identify who in your community needs to be in the audience and what perspectives you want to bring in the room for either a post-production engagement. A few questions to consider as you plan: How does your mission connect to this work? What is your interest and intention with this production? What non-arts community organizations are doing work that intersects with and/or deepens the conversation around the themes of this project? Some communities to reach out to may include: community organizers, activists, law enforcement, educators, politicians, and families affected by extrajudicial violence. Invite them to act as ambassadors for your production to build audience. Ask questions. Find out who else you should connect with. Do all this before you reach out to press!

Dramaturgical packet: We created a packet of articles, websites, photography, and art that gives context to the themes and events in the plays. Share this with producers, board members, directors, scenic artists, administrators, and everyone connected to your production. Add to it with other sources of information from your community.

Planning Post show: Plan your post-show engagement in dialog with your community. Immediately following the presentation of the plays you should have a community engagement and/or a dialogue session such as a facilitated talkback, a town-hall meeting, a graffiti board exercise, some form of process drama, or a participatory dialogical session.

Development: This project is an opportunity to develop donors with a passion for social justice. If you can, raise additional funds to pay your artists for participation, but it's not required. This project is also one with positive social capital; connect with organizations for in-kind donations to share in the social capital of the project.

External communications: Make a facebook event and add facebook.com/Every28HoursPlays as a co-host. This will allow us to share your event on our website. Directions on how to add a facebook event co-host can be found here. <https://www.facebook.com/help/501279386703858>
We have provided you with a press release template to fill with your communities' specific information.

Be sure to include information about talk backs, live-streaming, digital spaces, and other post or pre-show engagement opportunities. Send the press release to more than traditional news outlets; reach out to cultural, educational, and law enforcement organizations. Who do you have to speak about the project? You will be aided if this group is diverse from your organization as well as from others.

Internal communications: It goes without saying that production meetings are necessary to plan a production. When producing in collaboration with several different organizations you will want make sure you organize group phone conversations or in-person meetings with representatives from all participating organizations.

Style Guide: You should retain the style of your own organization with your Every 28 Hours Plays engagement. We value your identity and voice. Please use our Every 28 Hours Plays logo on all materials to keep us visually connected nationally.

Logos: We have provided a designated logo for theater/artist use on all iterations of press materials, web presence, and print materials for all iterations of this project. We encourage you to include it in your work but to also add your own branding and design elements.

Digital Communications: Share this information with your full creative team so they can work to build audience with you. Email us your own digital spaces so we can amplify and promote your work.

URL: <http://every28hoursplays.org>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/Every28HoursPla>

Hashtags: #Every28Hours #Every28HousPlays #ThisIsHappening #BlackLivesMatter

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/Every28HoursPlays>

Crediting Language: *The Every 28 Hours Plays* was co-created and produced by Claudia Alick of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), Dominic D'Andrea of The One-Minute Play Festival (1MPF), with the participation of theater artists around the country. Originally created and produced on the ground in the St. Louis and Ferguson communities, the project includes engagements all over the country. For more information on the original artists who created this body of work, please visit:

<http://every28hoursplays.org>

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

Producing models: Approximate running time for the full collection is 90-120 minutes. You must engage with all the plays. What does engage mean to you and your organization? It could include producing the full collection to simply reading and discussing it with your team to choose an excerpt. We also encourage communities to generate their own material and include it in their engagement. There are many different models you can use to engage with these plays. Below are a few that might work for you.

1. **Individual Organization.** One organization handles all creative team hires, casting, rehearsing, and venue for production. In this model a minimal cast of 6-12 actors can cover all roles with a longer rehearsal period; however, you can use as many actors as you wish. The director and creative team receive scripts before show and precast all roles with strict casting deadlines set by the theatre, prior to the event. For a fully memorized production, we recommend 45 minutes of rehearsal for each short play (70-75 hours total) plus a technical rehearsal consisting of 45 hours to work the transitions between clumps and stage the finale play.
2. **Multiple Organization.** In this model multiple organizations share resources. One organization provides a lead producer, or multiple organizations create a team of producers. One organization can provide the venue, or many organizations can join to produce in a community space. The directors and creative teams receive scripts before show and precast all roles. In this model we recommend having a separate director whose job is to solely stage the transitions between the different sections.

All collaborating companies and artists arrive at the venue the morning of the engagement. Individual theaters can rehearse their sections separately or on the same day in the venue, depending on how memorized or well-rehearsed you prefer your plays. For a partially staged reading we recommend 5 minutes of rehearsal for each short play plus a technical rehearsal consisting of 90 minutes to work the transitions between clumps and stage the finale play. For a fully staged reading, we recommend 30 minutes of rehearsal for each short play plus a technical rehearsal consisting of 3 hours to work the transitions between clumps and stage the finale play. For a reading without staging we recommend 10 minutes per play.
3. **Educational institutions.** Colleges and educational institutions can adapt the models above. For example, if an acting and/or directing class is responsible for a section of plays, rehearsal can be embedded in class time with students in the course. We encourage making connections outside more customary theatre departments including African American Studies Departments, American History Departments, the Office on Diversity and Inclusion, Black Student Unions, etc. We also encourage educational institutions to collaborate with area theatres.
4. **Alternate models:** Some organizations are engaging with the plays in alternative ways. Community table readings of small selections with non-actors. Tweeting the plays. Creating short films. Including the plays in a different collection for social justice. Creating music or visual art in response to plays. We encourage you to think outside of the box and please share your new models once you've refined them.

Sample Production Timeline A

6-8 weeks before event

- Confirm date, time, venue, and participation of collaborating artistic organizations
- Identify and invite director(s) and actor(s) to participate and partners for community engagement & cultural competency work
- Schedule 1-2 production meetings that include core artistic collaborators

2-3 weeks before:

- Launch facebook event, press release
- Confirm community engagement partners and plan pre and post show engagement activities

On the day of the event: Full company staging and rehearsing of all plays

Sample Production Timeline B

9-12 weeks before event

- Confirm date, time, venue, and participation of collaborating artistic organizations
- Identify potential partners for community engagement & cultural competency work

4-6 weeks before event

- Identify and invite director(s) to participate
- Schedule 2-3 production meetings that include all artistic collaborators

2-3 weeks before:

- Cast company of actors per the requirements of the plays
- Schedule rehearsals
- Confirm community engagement partners and plan pre and post show engagement activities

On the day of the event: Full company staging and rehearsing of all plays

Sample Production Timeline C

3-6 months before event

- Confirm date, time, venue, and participation of collaborating artistic organizations

6-8 weeks before event

- Identify who you want to be a part of the audience
- Strategize for marketing & publicity
- Identify potential partners for community engagement & cultural competency work

4-6 weeks before event

- Choose order of plays (if different from suggested curation)
- Identify and invite director(s) to participate
- Schedule 2-3 production meetings that include all artistic collaborators

2-3 weeks before:

- Host a production meeting with all participating directors

- Cast company of actors per the requirements of the plays (this can either be at the discretion of the producer or of individual directors)
- Schedule rehearsals (this can either be at the discretion of the producer or of individual directors)
- Confirm community engagement partners and plan pre and post show engagement activities

1 day before (or on the day of) the event:

- Full company technical rehearsal for final staging and transitions.

Lead Producer: The role of the Lead Producer(s) in this process is to be the primary rally point for all information, deadlines, and project implementation, and all of the information contained in this packet. Lead Producer(s) recruit participants, determine the venue, tech, and performances, and act as the primary contact to the creative team. Lead Producer(s) keeps entire creative team in communication, provides hard dates and basic project information to all participants at least 3 weeks prior to the event. Lead Producer(s) determine if printing of plays is done in house or by the other partner theaters, depending on resources. It is the primary job of the lead producer to determine project needs and problem solve, providing a solid and clear framework for a large community of artists to work within. We encourage you to build a big team, collaborate, delegate, and share the joyful work of preparing for a full engagement with these plays.

Production Meetings: Communications, clear deadlines, and connectivity are paramount with this project. You will want to gather all of your directors at least 2 weeks prior to your production for casting and to discuss aesthetics of the project. It is tempting to do this work digitally, but meeting in person will help build a working vocabulary and create space to discuss complicated dynamics. You will want to have at least 34 meetings with all organizations collaborating on your engagement prior to your collaboration.

Play Curation: We have provided you with a suggested order of the plays. Our suggestion is to follow this sequence to streamline your process for casting, distribution, and execution; however, Theatre/Artist can order the plays in any way that feels organic to their iteration of the body of work, if they desire. Artist/theatre shall avoid conflating the work of the individual plays into longer pieces, or altering the work or words of the playwright(s). We respect each play as a full and complete work.

Final Play: Nikkole Salter's play 'Unknown Hundreds' shall always be the culminating play in the collection. This play should include all of the actors on the program on stage together by the end of the piece. The playwright requests you add names to this piece.

Directing: We suggest using a team of 1 director and 5-10 actors for each of the 9 sections of plays. It is also helpful to have a separate director to stage transitions, and opening and closing moments.

Casting: Casting should respect the requirements of the play and specific requests of the playwrights. *The Every 28 Hours Plays* have themes of race and representation, so ethnically/racially specific casting is necessary. There is a deficit of representation of POC stories embodied by POC bodies in The United States. This deficit is a result and a tool of white supremacy. This project works against this. Another goal of this project is helping grow empathy and understanding. Non-identity specific casting for age, gender, sexuality, and ability are acceptable when the script allows or with the community reading model.

Additional Elements: We encourage you to add your local community's creative content to your engagement. This could be done through music, poetry, original monologue, storytelling, or testimonial.

Please note that 1MPF has proprietary ownership of the “one-minute play” model. The collection of plays provided in *The Every 28 Hours Plays* have been carefully curated and developed. It is a completed and final collection. Creating additional “one-minute plays” to be added to the collection is prohibited; however, all other forms of artistic response are encouraged.

Duration: Traditionally, all work in 1MPF are 60 seconds or less as an integral piece of the idea of giving all voices equal weight and focus. For the purposes of *The Every 28 Hours Plays* we strongly recommend you keep plays and transitions tight, but we acknowledge and appreciate that a few of the plays (and especially the final play) will exceed 60 seconds.

Lighting : If plays are presented with lighting, there shall be a “lights down” or “blink out” dim look between each individual play. Each play is a separate, clear note inside the symphony of the collection.

Sound Design: Use of music is encouraged

Costumes/Props: Costumes and props should be minimal and actor controlled.

Excerpts: Theatres have permission to produce excerpts of the collection as long as they vet their collection through Calling Up.

Live Streaming: We encourage all productions to share their work online as allowed by union guidelines of your individual productions. Howlround TV has been a great partner. WE also encourage Facebook Live as an option. Sharing a small clip online can be very powerful.

POST-PRODUCTION ENGAGEMENT

The days, weeks, and months following your engagement with these plays are as important as the production itself. The content generated in your process will need to be shared and archived. The creation of community artifacts documenting this period in history and the local response to these topics are necessary to access and further these conversations in the future, if we are to understand what this moment in time is all about. Your audience and company will want to continue the conversation, to keep the momentum going in a meaningful way.

Possible next steps for your organizations:

- Gather the immediate reactions of audience in writing, images, pictures, film, or other means of documentation.
- Share this content digitally on facebook, webpage, or blog.
- Arrange for a feature article to be written by local press outlets after your production that captures
- the feelings of your audience.
- Schedule a time to do a reading of these plays at another date, as a reflection.
- Produce a different full length play, or other artistic responses that engage with these themes in your season(s).
- If you are doing a multi-organization collaboration, gather with these artists again 6 months afterwards to unpack what happened, establish where we are now, and brainstorm possible next steps for continued response to these topics and ideas.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Please keep in mind, *The Every 28 Hours Plays* will trigger some of our most polarized community members into having a reaction before the plays are even produced. Triggered reactions in writing from donors, board, or audience indicate a passionate base that can and should be engaged with. We have found that transforming these kneejerk reactions into dialogue has strengthened individuals' connections to our theaters. Providing context for the event and partnering with non-arts community organizations, with the aim of allowing multiple perspectives to be voiced and heard, is key to the start of a productive community dialogue around these themes.

Our National Advisory Board has created a Cultural Competency task force to help organizations navigate the complicated territory of race, representation, and justice. Please reach out to us if you feel you need support in these areas. To produce a play like *Richard III* is not to promote murder or hatred or divisiveness, it is simply producing theater inspired by history that allows us to reflect on experiences that are not our own.

This piece aims to successfully capture history in the making. Your organization is involved in the first national readings of this work, and we are proud to count you as collaborators.

SUPPORT

For general questions, please email: every28hoursplays@gmail.com