

Theatre Workshop
in Birmingham June 28, 2017
with BARA Refugee Group and Implicated Theatre

Warm Up

Facilitator: make a round circle, keeping equal distance apart

The group makes a round circle by making equal distance between people

The group introduces themselves to each other saying where they are from

The facilitator asks the group to make a gesture based on how they are today

The group makes a set of gestures based on how they are today

The facilitator asks the group to walk around the room keeping equal distance apart

'Walk around the floor looking at the floor making sure the distance between people is the same

We turn around and walk around and around the room, keeping the same space between people

The facilitator says 'make sure you fill the space!'

Keeping, walking, now instead of looking at the floor look at each other, smile and say 'hi'

Facilitator says : Freeze.

Everyone stays still

Facilitator: Walk around the room and greet somebody and say what your name is and what your favourite food is. you can lie, give an example

Group: Walk, small and greet.

Facilitator: Freeze

Group: Stops and in pairs describe their favourite food

Facilitator: Walk, walk and walk again and smile and say 'hi' and stop again

And walk, walk and walk and 'freeze' and listen for a moment

Walk again. What is the best thing that could happen?

There needs to be something that you want and something that you love.

'Walk!', walk fast and greet somebody new

Group : There is cacophony in the room and all are getting to know each other

Walk once more, think about what you said last time and how to make it a bit 'more'

Facilitator: Walk the right speed for thinking, look at people if you wish, and, freeze

Talk in pairs

The group talk in pairs at less volume

...and 'freeze'

Facilitator: make a big circle

go into the centre of the circle and make an image, to make a group image

Group: each person goes into centre and makes an image

Facilitator - make a sound

The group makes an image and a sound

Facilitator

What we are about to do is Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is about how we make a change through scenes

This is sometimes about the scene and sometimes about changing how we respond to a scene

Scene I - Queue Scene

Set: stage left three chairs are set up, one facing forward and two facing back

There is one person in each chair (one facing forward and two with their backs facing the circle)
there is a queue of people on the other side of the circle (stage right)

the person facing forward is a Home Office official

the one on the left prepares people for detention

the person on the right allows them to go home

Home Office official: 'Next!'

the first person from the queue walks and stands in front of the border guard

Home Office official: (in stern voice): 'Documents'

First person (non English speaker): I'm a professor, from Argentina

Home Office official: 'did I ask about your profession?'

Person number II: leaves queue, crosses circle to stand in front of the guard

Home Office official: 'How long have you been in this country?'

person II: pauses before answering, 2 years

Home Office official: Why did you pause, do you not know?

Is this the first time you've come to this country?

Person II: negotiates but is sent to detention line

Home Office official: 'Next'

Person III: leaves queue, crosses circle to stand in front of the guard

Home Office official: Your documents

Person III: can't find documents

Home Office official: 'Go to this officer please' and directs to person on the right

Person III goes to the right

Home Office official: 'Next!'

Person IV: leaves queue, crosses circle to stand in front of the guard

Home Office official: Your documents m'am

Person IV tries to explain something but does not speak english

Home Office official: 'Is this the first time you've come'?

Person IV 'I don't understand you'
'I don't know'

Home Office official: 'No you'
'Does not look like you'
(officer is getting louder)

Facilitator: Freeze, what should she do?
Come and show me what she should do

Participant I: 'interpreter', 'need interpreter'
'me, english, no'

Home Office Official. Okay, 'Come back with someone who speaks english

It worked, applause

Group discusses
that it is the job of the Home Office
you can say 'interpreter' or 'solicitor'
Or, get someone else seeking asylum there who does speak English.
Where would she find out about an interpreter ? Could call BARA for support

Participant II tries to break the scene

Home Office official: Next !
'your document madame'
is this you?

Participant II : 'me a visitor'
comes with her husband, an interpreter
an English speaker, married to the asylum seeker

Home Office Official says: 'this is not her'

Husband says: it is her, that picture is her when she was sixteen
This is what she has had for twenty years

Home office lets her leave

Participant 3:
woman walks in with her cane
she says she comes everyday

Officer: Every day? Why do you report every day?

Have you been in prison?

Participant: I go to the hospital

did not work

Home Office official: NExt !

Participant 4,appr and falls down as they approached the officers

security!

everyone comes to his attention to see if he's okay

they take pity on him

'it works

Home Office official: NExt !

Participant: arrives in office on a bicycle

security escorts him out

Officer 'Get back in the queue'

Scene II - How to Get a Bank Account

set: One chair with bank official sitting in it

two people approach the banker

Person 1: I want to open a bank account (not an English as first language)

Bank Teller: We need some identification

Person 1: Brings partner, says 'my partner is British'

Banker (to partner): is she British?

I need to speak to the person who needs the bank account

Person 2 /partner: 'He looks like someonee we know.

You look like Jo, someone I know from school'

Banker: What's your name?

Do you have a name?

What's your name?

Do you have a name:

Person 2: very nice to see you

Banker: please come step aside

Person 1 : gives her passport

says 'she's british' of her partner

Person 2/partner: 'we are in love', she needs a bank account...

you look great by the way, better than before..'

Banker: we will open a bank account for you have to choose which one

Banker does paper work

Banker calls the police - we have an immigrant who should not be here who wants to open a bank account

Interlude

Group carries newspapers and reads anti-immigrant headlines.

Scene III - Care Workers (BARA)

There is a group standing in a circle

Each person introduces themselves

Amina: 'My name is Amina, I am from Kenya'

I was in a marathon and I won many competitions

I was very good. I am here to be a carer.

everyone applauds

Boniface: My name is Boniface. I'm a friend maker, I love to make friends. I'm here to be a carer.

Doreen: I'm Dorreen and I'm a hairdresser

group: you could do hair in the care home....

Jo: I'm a professional wrestler, I'm from London

Gerogina: I'm Georgina, I'm a singer

Emaculate: My name is Emaculate and I'm a pharmacist

Christiane: Hi, I'm Christane and I'm a carer

Amina: Yes, well I've come to train here in this care home, what I also wanted to add is that I'm an asylum seeker

Different people in the group make different gestures

two turn their backs, one calls the home office, others turn and speak to each other, others take a photograph of her

Forum-ing this scene

Participant 1:

This happened to me

I was speechless

I'm speechless, I have no words to say how it affected me.

Faciliator: How would you replay the scene

Participant 1:

the woman goes to each person and says

'do you know how it feels to turn your back on me'

it makes me feel less human

i'm not untouchable

i'm just like you
put yourself in my shoes, how would this feel
i'm not here to take your job.
you are really rude, you can't talk to me like that
you're horrible, you're wicked
You are a racist
You are a moron
im not here to take your benefits
if you saw the conditions that i live in you would see that that
i worked hard in my life, and i'm still in this situation
escalating the situation
you are a heartless person
it's not worth talking to you, get lost.
in africa we would 'slap' you

responses from the 'care circle' group members
i'll get in trouble
you take our jobs, you come here

another way to end the scene

one person turns her back
a friend comes from behind and says 'are you done?'
and turns to the person with back turned to say hi
'hi' 'are you okay?'
the back turner comes into the conversation with amina

discussion

gestures and body language are important in terms of communicating how the stigma attached to asylum seekers plays out in everyday life.

another idea: what I was feeling when the people turned their back is
i am thinking 'why are you treating me like that?'

More Foruming:

keep trying to talk to the person who turns their back
'are you sick or something?'
are you ignoring me? Why?
All of a sudden she is busy
i'm sorry, I'm busy (tone is very stern, does not sound sorry)
i'm still here, you're still ignoring me
back turner: sorry, i'm still busy (tone more annoyed, does not sound soorry)

in this scenario you don't necessarily win, but you take a stand

another strategy - looking for support

'was just going to ask for the programme today'
'ive been told to ask you'
person says: 'don't know who told you but it's wrong'
'wrong lady sorry, i just want to get on with the stuff'

goes to the other person 'didn't you tell me to go and see that woman?'

other person says ':sorry' she's a bit dodgy' (meaning the person with her back turned.

Scene IV - Bar Scene

there is a table on the stage with drinks
music is playing (club music)
a group of men stand by the table
a group of women stand over on the other side of the bar
'hi' i'm amal
the men pour the women drinks
'cheers everyone'
can you get be a drink
'im an asylum seeker'

all the women walk away
man's friend says : next time don't say you're an asylum seeker, you let me down

No time for forming this

Last scene

set: two people sitting on chairs at the front of the room

Person 1, looking at map: 'I'm totally lost'

Person 2: Where are you going?

Person 1: Croyden

Person 2: 'you want croyden, you're in the wrong place, what is this place'

Person 1: 'its the reporting centre, to get a stamp on my passport'

Person 2: where are you from?

Person 1: kosovo

Person 2: are you a refugee?

Person 1: yes

Person 2: do you work?

Person 1: (getting frustrated with all the questions) 'i can't work at the moment'

Person 2: do you even try to find a job ?

Person 1: i'm not allowed to work

Person 2: what's happend to you, what is your story, what about your children?

discussion
person seems in
pain
isolated
too many questions
desperate
really uncomfortable moment

people usually do not have to tell strangers what is happening in their lives
why do you get to know my history

Forum

strategy one

woman does not give very much information and lies, says she is going to university
i can't tell my life to a stranger

strategy 2

Person 2: What's your story?

Person 1: it's a long story

there's no need to tell it

Person 2: 'maybe i can help you'

'what are you doing here in my country'

Person 1: 'where are you from?'

Person 2: 'im from here, this is my country'

Person 1: 'you know in my country we have lots of british people', so hmmm
why don't you 'just give me the directions'

Person 2 gives directions

Applause

strategy 3

Person 2: 'what are you doing here'

Person 1: it's a long story

Person 2: just give me the directions

Another story emerged spontaneously

Scene V

Scene: at the Guinean Embassy, a consular and a person from Guinea trying to get their passport

Consulate Officer: 'you say you're guinean'. what did you say to the Home Office about why you are here?

Person 1: looks puzzled

Officer: What did you tell them when you claimed asylum?
what did you tell them?

Person 1: i said i was ... needing to work

Officer: was it for political problems in guinea?
what was it about?

Person 1: Ummm. I don't understand

Officer: if you don't tell me i will contact the home office and they will let me know
is that you claimed asylum. you better tell me know
you need to tell me what you said at the home office

Finale

Everyone walks and smiles and shakes hands

Everyone freezes and tears up the newspapers and says

'this is not true', 'nonsense', 'disgraceful'

Reaction from BARA member:

Another scene is coming to my mind.
At the Home Office sign in there are officers in black uniform
you have to decide whether or not to go through
each time you are going, your heart is booming
if they say 1 o'clock you have to be there
people dressed in black
you're not sure, who they would want and whether to stay or to go.

Reflection on the workshop
Was it useful, how was it for you?

it was good
it's easier sometimes to describe it with/to strangers, others that might understand
you get confidence and can hear the views and strategies of other people
brings me a lot of compassion
it's good like this because the mood is good and playful and it's a gathering, not isolating
the space feels good here and the fact that there is a support group here at BARA
the fact that we are holding has the idea that things might change, that we might change what
people say about us
they are not our words
I wondered if you could talk about what's on tv on the news the night before to try to give context
to what is happening
you could bring the issues to a group and try different things

you see what people who are attacking you don't see

Facilitator: Shall we thank each other?

everyone says thank you
swings hands and beathes a bit and says whoooo, whoooo, whooooo!

