

**Let's Talk About Sex, Baby**

by

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## Table of Contents

- 3. Goals and Impacts
- 7. Down With The Fourth Wall Reflection Essay
- 13. Links to Video Essay and Script: Let's Talk About Sex, Baby
- 14. Work Cited for Video Essay

## Goals and Impacts

*Down With The Fourth Wall* is a production that came to me while taking Andrew Saito's *Intro to Applied Theater* course my sophomore year. To be honest, I didn't think I would do this as my senior project. I thought I would just act in someone else's play. But during Junior Seminar, since we were in a room full of actors, we were asked what would be an alternative that you would like to do if you weren't acting. And I remembered the idea that I had back in my sophomore year. I really started thinking about it and all I thought about was, "I can't leave this school without doing something big!" One of my goals is to leave a legacy with *Down With The Fourth Wall*. This project is meant to bring awareness to issues that usually don't have solutions. It's based on Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed where spectators/audience members become performers and help create solutions to social issues. This is meant to break down the walls that we usually have when going to watch shows. In a typical theater space, you as audience members watch the performance, clap when it's over, and go home. This is supposed to be something more. My goal with this show is to get the audience out of their comfort zone. Have them actually pick their brains and talk about what they think they should do in very real situations. If even one person stands up and wants to change the scene in a positive way, I think I would have done my job. It only takes one person to decide that they will be a leader. I want

people to go watch the show, participate, clap, and go home to further talk about what can be done with the problem raised at the show. That is my goal.

My goal for myself is that I hope for this project to help me become a better leader and better performer. I will become a better leader by stepping up to the plate. My cast and crew will rely on me during this process because this is so new to Purchase. It's new to all of us. There's so many things that I will have to learn because this isn't a traditional play. For example, how the rehearsals will look like. There is no script, no table read or working with the actors scene by scene. My goal for the first few rehearsals is to spend them brainstorming ideas and ranting about things that piss them off and/or something that they would like to change in the world. The broad topic I will give them to work with is the concepts of race and gender inequality. The rest of the rehearsals leading up to the performance will consist of improvisation and theater games and workshops. They will be taken from Augusto Boal's very own "Games for Actors and Non Actors" book. It consists of different games to get to know everyone better and games that deal with getting ready for the live performance. Something that will also make me a better leader will be the ability to communicate my expectations for this production and my expectations of them. I become a slight perfectionist when I'm passionate about something and I tend to shut people out so I will have to learn how to listen to people like my collaborators and my advisor. At first, I was terrified about having to take the role of their "boss" for lack of a better word. It scares me to be in charge of a whole production on my own, but that is something that I'm starting to overcome. I just have to take it a step at a time. I think that will do me very good. I also have to accept that not everything is going to be answered right away. I'm learning as well. I will have to learn how to rely on other people's help. I will need it from time to time. Yes, I'm

not going to be their “boss” but I will be the person they come to when they have questions about things because it’s **my** senior project. Yes, it’s scary but that’s part of being a leader. I will learn how to overcome that anxiousness and be an efficient leader at that. Another goal of mine is to have everything sorted by at least March. When I say “everything” I am mostly talking about lighting, sound, costumes and the set. These are the biggest technical things I have to decide. I’ve been a part of some productions that have to rush a lot of things and get set pieces or costumes at the last minute and I want to make sure that I’m not rushing anything so everything can go as smoothly as possible. At first, I didn’t think I would need much of these things because I thought it would take away from the message of the show but with further thinking, I believe that I can get creative with these things and have an entertaining yet educational show. Another part of making sure everything goes smoothly is the promotional aspect. My goal is for this production to reach people even outside of the THP major. I have already been in contact with a graphic designer to help create the poster and I’ve been going around telling people about the show through word of mouth. The next thing to do is start an Instagram account so that it will be able to reach the larger audience that I’m hoping for. I will be creating an Instagram for the show during winter break. I will have to emphasize in both the posters and the Instagram that this will be an interactive show. I don’t want anyone coming to the show and not knowing roughly what is about to happen. This road will not be an easy one to walk on. There will be times where I will doubt everything I’m doing but my goal for myself is to stay focused and dedicated to making this an amazing show. Not only that but making sure that this is a safe place for people to feel comfortable for both my performers and the audience.

I will become a better performer by doing something so out of my comfort zone. I have never in my life done something like this. I've done a bit of improv before and while the piece has a lot of improv elements to it, it's just so different to it even though it's a big part and highly used in this form of theater. Another example of something I will have to learn because this isn't a traditional play is how to fall into my role. My role in this production is the Joker. Now, the Joker is a very important person in this type of show. They are essentially the mediator between spectators and performers. They are to stay impartial and just make sure that everyone's ideas are being heard. "It is more important to achieve a good debate than a good solution" (Augusto Boal). I've always just acted. I've usually been handed a script, I'd do my job and that's it. Even when I did improv, I didn't have to rely on audience members to actually do it. This is completely different. I have to rely on the audience and their participation, which is the scary part. But I think that the aspect of the audience being a big part of this show will make me a better performer. This is also a big step out of my comfort zone because being the joker entails that I'm going to have to play various roles; director, mediator, leader, etc. I am also the one breaking the wall that is usually between the performers and the audience. This is why I believe that taking on the role of the Joker in my production will not only make me a better performer but it could also aid in making me a better leader as well.

My goal for this project is that other people become better leaders and listeners as well. The whole point of this project is to impact people and to make them feel like they can make a change, especially the people of color at this school because there are a lot of times where our voices aren't heard on this campus. Based on my time here, this has rarely been done at Purchase College before so I believe this can help both audience and performer to better understand the

world around them. Some people are not aware about the things that go on, especially the things that don't affect them personally. I want to create a space where they can come and feel heard, feel like they are making a difference, even if it is in the smallest way. If done well, I believe this show will have people thinking about the situations presented to them and try to find ways to find the right solutions. I'm excited to start this journey with the cast, it will be very different for sure, but I think we can all use this as a learning opportunity.

Watching a performance like this one will help people open their eyes to a lot of the struggles that minorities face and not only that, it will give them the opportunity to learn how to help. There aren't any magic answers, meaning you can't come up with a solution that eliminates oppression or conflict in an unrealistic or impossible way, so they will learn from their peers' logical solutions. According to psychology, if people are aware of how to help, they will be more likely to help and that's what I want to do with this project.

## **Down With The Fourth Wall** *(Reflection Essay)*

I've heard horror stories. I've seen other people do it.

And now it was my turn.

### ***The Birth***

I had the idea for Down With The Fourth Wall during my sophomore year of college. The funny thing is, it wasn't really an idea, it wasn't really a thought. It came about in Andrew Saito's Intro to Applied Theater course. Throughout the course, we learned about all different kinds of

theater but Forum Theater was my favorite. So I fantasized of doing something like that at Purchase. I quickly gave up on the thought. I wouldn't know how to go about it, I wouldn't know where to start, I wouldn't know if I could. So I didn't.

Fast Forward, Junior Seminar. My intention was always to act in someone else's piece. Maybe even do one of the mainstages. And it seemed like I wasn't the only one. My section of junior sem were all actors with probably the exception of one. One day we were prompted with a question, "what if you had to create something for your project, what would you do?" Now this question was purely hypothetical. Most of the responses were never brought to fruition because again, we were actors. But I really thought about it. Do I just want to be a part of *someone else's* show? I wanted to be remembered for something, even if it was temporary. So, I went back to the forum theater idea. No one has ever done something like this at Purchase, according to the professors. WBM, my junior seminar professor, told me it was an interesting idea and I should pursue it. So I did. There came the birth of Down With The Fourth Wall.

### ***The Process***

The beginning of the process was tough. Throughout the summer, I was trying to reach out to my original collaborators but no answer. Come to find out coming back in the fall that they were no longer going to be a part of my production. I was essentially doing this on my own. Everything was falling apart before it even started. My two collaborators dropped and I thought my project was going to get cut. I then got introduced to Elissia, she needed a project and I a collaborator. So we made it work.



I didn't really hold auditions. I didn't really know how I would hold auditions for this kind of thing. My strategy was recruitment. I recruited people that I could trust, that had stories to tell, and that were fun to work with. This recruitment went on for the entirety of the fall semester. I was also starting to get prepared for what's to come in the spring. I reached out to a Theater of the Oppressed professor on campus, Rachel Owens. She provided me with a valuable tool, Augusto Boal's book on Forum Theater, *Games for Actors and Non Actors*. This was actually a God send. The book went into detail about Augusto Boal's experience with forum theater and it provided games and exercises to use during rehearsal to prepare the actors for the art of forum theater. At the end of the fall semester I sent an email to all of my actors letting them know what exactly they were in for. All I had to do was wait till spring started and rehearsal began.

### ***Rehearsals***

Getting actors in a room together at the same time is harder than it looked. At the beginning of the spring semester I asked for everyone's schedules. After much discussion, we finally decided on a day that would work for everyone, Mondays at 9. The problem was, it was once a week. This limited the number of rehearsals we could have and we had spring break right before the performance. All of this considered, I knew I had to come prepared for the first rehearsal. I used two of Boal's games from his book and started off rehearsals. They seemed to really like the games. After we played the games, we sat down and brainstormed what came to mind when I put the words, "Race, Sex, and Gender" in front of them. We told stories about our experiences and we tried to narrow them down to make a cohesive story. We started a doc for all of us to write the script. It was interesting writing things with like 7 different people. Sometimes

we had differing ideas, sometimes we agreed, and other times I had to completely veto the ideas. As we went on, it became a little difficult to rehearse without an audience. We would go over the scene but we couldn't rehearse the improvised parts without people there. I wanted them to be prepared for what audience members would throw at them. So I called in reinforcements. One of my shadows came to my rehearsals and acted as an audience member. I also had Professor Andrew Saito and my boyfriend come to a few rehearsals to help them as well. Lashay, my other collaborator, also brought her shadow. All of them were super helpful to my actors. They didn't just give one suggestion, they gave a few. Saito also provided notes at times to help improve their performance. I really appreciated this because without them I don't think my cast would have been as ready as they were.

### *Panic Attack*

This was my first time directing. I was scared to say the least. There was a situation with one of my actors where he wanted to drop out from the production in the beginning. And I completely broke down. I had a panic attack. My fears of not being able to do this were coming back. "I should have just done someone else's production" I said to myself. I was completely botching it as a first time director, I mean I was about to lose an actor. That night however, I scheduled the rest of the rehearsals and texted my actor. He was worried about the kind of show it was, it was different from a normal play and he was scared. I told him that he wasn't alone, I thought that he should at least give it a try and maybe he will acquire a new skill. He eventually changed his mind. The next rehearsal after that, I showed my cast an example of Augusto Boal facilitating a forum theater performance. They finally understood what they were there for. And we got to work.

### *Opening Night*

My heart was going to beat out of my chest on opening night. I was so excited for people to see how hard my cast and I worked on this project but at the same time I was scared that things would go wrong. I remember running around doing everything. My lighting guy was late and the house manager and sound guy were asking me so many questions, I was overwhelmed. My cast and I did a little prayer before the start of the show and it was really cute. It became the ritual for the beginning of the shows. And then, it was lights up. I walked out and there were more people than I expected there to be and all eyes were on me. That moment felt surreal, all these people, some I have never seen in my life, came to watch something that wasn't even a real thought two years ago. I did something that I was scared to do and now it was being presented to other people. The audience was great, they were very interactive and they seemed to enjoy what they were doing. They understood how important this was. I loved how in every show you could see the different situations and solutions the audience members had for the problem in the scene. It made me really happy to witness. At the end of the night, the house manager came up to me and said "wow, they must have really liked your play, they were laughing and talking about it all the way out." This comment made me so happy. To think that people liked something we worked so hard on, it was incredible. I got an email from one of my favorite teachers saying how amazing the show was and all I could do was smile. I was so incredibly proud of my cast and myself.

This project brought out a lot of different sides of me. There are the obvious: Producer, Director, Actor. But there was also the go-getter, the cry baby, the entrepreneur, the boss. I broke from my shell and this was the show that made that happen. I will forever be grateful.

## **Video Essay: Let's Talk About Sex, Baby**

Link to video:  Let's Talk About Sex, Baby.mp4

Link to Script: <https://www.celtx.com/auth/public/resource/x51qh8jg>

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AFTER [▶ Hardin & Tessa's VERY Steamy Moments! | After We Collided, After We Fell, Af...](#)  
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[▶ Leighton hooks up with the girl from the party | The Sex Lives Of College Girls 2x02](#)

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Bridgerton IN FRONT OF PEOPLE

[▶ Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story / Kissing Scene - Charlotte & George | India Amartei...](#)

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On My Block [▶ jasmine and rubi first makeout session|on my block season 4 episode 1](#)

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Skins [▶ Effy And Cook Have Sex In The Nurse's Office - Classic Skins](#)

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