

**The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company – 2021
Anti-racism action plan and policy**

IMPORTANT: If any person working with us, or visiting our shows, wishes to discuss any aspect of improving inclusion, or report an incident of racism, please contact us on southdevonplayers@gmail.com

This is a working document, and should be read alongside our equal opportunities policy and our diversity overview document, available from <https://www.southdevonplayers.com/governance-documents.html>

As a theatre company founded and led by a woman of mixed heritage, we take inclusion, and equality, extremely seriously. As a theatre company in a very “un-diverse” area (see the population statistics in our diversity overview document), very often that person historically is the only person of ethnic diversity in the company. This should not be taken to belie our commitment to inclusion, but simply as a reflection of the local population demographics where we are based.

We would like to be very clear that we take great pride in welcoming wonderful creatives and actors to participate in our projects, regardless of their race, nationality, ethnicity or other protected characteristic.

Racism is a form of bullying which is also forbidden in our company. As a person of colour, our company founder herself has experienced traumatic overt and covert racism and racially motivated bullying directly, including in her work developing this theatre company, and therefore racism (and bullying) is especially unwelcome in this company.

The South Devon Players fully acknowledge the need (and desire) to include and develop as diverse a team as possible, and therefore commit to the following actions.

- To never limit a casting or crewing role to a specific ethnicity, unless the role is specifically for an person of a specific ethnicity/ lived experience, and whose ethnicity / lived experience is crucial for the role.
- To never assume that characters of un-stated ethnicity need to be “White/ British”.
- To state in character breakdowns either “any ethnicity” (our default); OR a specific ethnicity (if it is relevant and crucial) for the role.
- To advertise as widely as possible for all opportunities with the organisation, and clearly state that all ethnicities (as well as gender identities and other protected characteristics) are equally welcome.
- To actively seek out relevant organisations/ networks to advertise our opportunities to reach as many people from diverse backgrounds as possible.
- To challenge, and call out racist behaviour, whether overt or covert.
- To make every effort to share our cast and crewing opportunities to outlets focussing on people of diverse backgrounds.
- To listen and to learn (as well as actively seeking opportunities to learn), in order to develop and encourage appropriate behaviours in our team.
- To learn from any errors or mistakes and to take positive, proactive action to eliminate the problem.

In the casting/ interview/ rehearsal room

- To learn the correct pronunciation of someone's name, as a group, and to use it.
- To not question the person's name (eg “is that your real name?”) or identity (eg “so where were you born then, you don't look/ sound as if you are from ***?”)
- To respect other people's cultural traditions and to learn if we are corrected on a point, by a person with lived experience of that culture.
- To avoid stereotyping or caricaturisation of ethnicities, religions and other protected characteristics.
- To each make every effort to be aware of, and eliminate, unconscious bias or assumptions
- To always be willing to learn from people with lived experience, and to improve ourselves and our inclusion
- When learning a foreign (or even regional British) accent or language, for a show, to seek out and prioritise the input and advice of people of that nationality or lived experience.
- To not enforce costuming decisions which may go against an actor's religious or cultural requirements.
- To never use “blackface” or “brownface” (or “whiteface”) etc or to change a person's ethnic appearance.

We acknowledge that with our company specialism of performing plays about historical events, or based on classical literature, with settings of 1900 or earlier – right through past millennia, we may at times portray characters who behave with racial prejudice on stage, or use discriminatory language or slurs, commensurate with the society or era in which they lived. We have very specific rules about this, namely that:

- The discriminatory or outdated opinion of the character being portrayed is not the opinion of the actor themselves.
- Racism or discrimination is to always be portrayed as a negative character trait, which is challenged and unacceptable.
- Characters depicting racial/ ethnic/ cultural prejudice are doing so, solely as a portrayal of the society in which the character is, and then only when it is strictly relevant to the story. (It is not something which is gratuitously added to scripts or characterisations).
- Racial / ethnic/ religious slur words are to be kept to an absolute minimum. If someone in a production states that the use of the word is too triggering or upsetting, immediate discussions will be had with the script author in order to substitute the word.
- Racial/ ethnic diversity or culture is not to be used as something to be laughed at, or made a joke of.

We also recognise that sometimes racism can be maliciously intended but covert; that a bully or person with racist tendencies, will target a person with general bullying behaviour, that they do not use against other “White English” people. While the behaviour in itself may not be overtly racist, the fact that it is distressing/ intimidating/ bullying; *and* targeting only an ethnically diverse person, means that it is indeed aggressive covert racism and will be treated as such.

In the audience

We recognise that audiences can comprise people of all nationalities, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (as well as other protected characteristics).

While we rarely know who is going to attend a show before the event, we do take the following actions in order to make a project as welcoming as possible.

- State clearly on our website box office if a show depicts characters showing racist behaviour, or any content which, to the best of our knowledge, may not be entertainment suitable for certain cultures/ people of certain religions.
- Provide streaming versions of our show (at the time of performance or afterwards) allowing people in other regions or other countries to enjoy the show; with full sensitivity to other time zones.
- To acknowledge and provide educational and engaging information on any other culture etc, depicted within the show, within printed or digital theatre programmes, with that information led on and checked by a person of that ethnicity/ culture/ lived experience.