

## Appendix B: Qualitative Responses

Question: Are there any studio/performance policies that you have witnessed that work to be more inclusive and prevent discrimination?

(95 Responses)

- Prompting all students to introduce themselves with their pronouns no matter if they are cis or not
- Rules about undergarments that are discriminatory to the LGBTQ community, body shaming in dress codes.
- Recently, one of the spaces I train at held a zoom webinar on racial inclusivity in circus, conducted by bipoc
- I'm not clear on the details, but a social circus in my area reaches out to kids from diverse backgrounds and trains them in circus skills.
- Money is a huge barrier to entry
- Work/trade programs, outreach to local high schools
- Changed structure of classes and created modifications for multi-abled students
- I really love what [local New York institutions] have done to include more POC performers and performance opportunities for POC members of the pole and aerial community. One space dedicated one night to "tough conversations" between allies and POC in the pole/circus community. I think [this institution] has been really great during the pandemic, as well as coaches making sure that these performers have a space to both train, feel comfortable, and feel celebrated in the community.
- I would also note that the work of [New York City POC coaches] has been essential, particularly in regards to their mentorship of other POC students.
- There aren't many black or POC aerialists [in our area]. We have opened our casting up to other sideshow burlesque acts to diversify our shows. We have also considered having a quarterly BIPOC show and the producers make no money from it. We have also considered trading lessons but have struggled with undervaluing ourselves and the commitment to learning long enough to perform. When BIPOC do not apply for our shows, we specifically ask some BIPOC performers that know us well to advertise that we are looking to cast more BIPOC. We have also directly contacted performers to be in our shows. We also make sure we hire BIPOC MCs and photographers. We are completely transparent about how much money we make from shows, how it is divided,

and who makes what money. Producers have taken huge pay cuts in order to pay performers fairly.

- Youth community outreach. Classes for underprivileged kids
- At [circus space in Miami] there is a foundation program that grants students from low income areas scholarships for summer camps/classes and we also teach circus to the Miami Boys and Girls Club.
- We encourage diversity in work and had several discussions about inclusion racial/gender/sexuality within our studio. It's a constant thing that is usually addressed 1-2 times a year.
- Asking pronouns, inclusive language re body shapes and abilities, explicit antiracist language
- Acting in a discriminating way will be handled with a warning and if it doesn't stop you will be asked to leave.
- This is the whole mission of our studio, and the whole reason for its founding
- Efforts to make acro spaces more inclusive and led by women. Safe spaces for LGBTQ people
- Providing classes free to students/ paid for by donated teacher times and organizations paying as opposed to individuals
- Overt asks to include stories from diverse cultures when creating performances. Sharing experiences from cultures in class.
- "Leave your drama at the door," always treat others with respect while you are in this space
- Inclusion of alternate pronouns/genders in registration. Non-gendered classes. Active all body acceptance.
- It's not technically a policy. But one of our studios taglines/sayings is that it doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, or what your fitness level is, you should always be free to learn, create and enjoy movement.
- Most studios attempt to prevent discrimination when they hire people as "employees" [not independent contractors] because there's a line added due to federal law. In terms of working to be more inclusive - [New York circus] is a great example of a company that does outreach in the NY area.

- Grants at our school for students who otherwise would not be able to attend and community outreach to underfunded schools.
- At the [Circus school in Philadelphia] they're not allowed to give out scholarships with their current accreditation, but they are allowed to give out institutional grants. They basically reduce the price of tuition based on each student's ability to pay. It's still expensive, but it's the best I've encountered. So for example on paper the price of tuition is \$15,000. But if you have great need and apply for financial aid they've granted students as much as \$4500 off of their tuition. It's not that much for everyone, but if you're really struggling they'll help you out.
- Special needs outreach program
- We're very big on treating everyone for their needs and giving everyone the attention they need. We might not be fighting injustice on a big scale but just in our space we respect everyone equally and make sure our students do as well.
- A local studio's public statement of their support for BIPOC and LGBTQ, and that for those who are hurtful to others they will be asked to leave and potentially banned depending on the severity of the situation and if the person[s] being hurtful were willing to apologize and learn/make amends or not
- Positive feedback and denouncing negativity towards performers/students.
- Paid time for teachers to get anti-racist education, teaching actual circus history instead of just "White US" circus history
- Our studio runs a scholarship program to pay for circus education for low income students
- Making it a policy to hire a diverse teacher base AND have a no-tolerance policy.
- Sliding scale or scholarships for training by some instructors
- Performance opportunities specifically for non-professional track [recreational] students of all levels. Even very beginners perform and it's very encouraging and supportive. This helped me get over the fear of not being good enough to perform. I still compare myself to others, but less than before.
- Staff meetings about accessibility/inclusion

- Inclusion of pronouns in opening circle, studio policies stating welcome to students of all ethnicities, abilities, sizes etc and staying zero tolerance for discriminatory acts or speech
- Studio sponsorships for students of color, using the name people use and not legal names, having name and pronoun the student uses on the online registration, ensuring pronouns are always shared at class introductions, offering sliding scale workshops and POC only class workshops, allowing instructors to do pay what you can workshops or classes
- Creating a culture of learning and listening
- Recently my studio announced scholarships for underprivileged students
- Allowing for incremental payment options for large studio/class fees and allowing for work trade at the studio helps make it available for a wide[r] range of people, which is so important given how financially inaccessible it can be. On a very small scale simply hiring teachers that come from different backgrounds and aren't all thin, white, prestigiously trained makes a big impact on students being able to feel confident
- The studio I work at recently began a scholarship program. There's not a lot of transparency though, so I don't know how they choose recipients.
- We have told people to leave and train elsewhere if they speak or act in a way that is discriminatory or disrespectful
- At places I've been there's been community outreach/work in local schools and also scholarship opportunities.
- Payment plans, attention to individual needs, many discussions of social justice
- Zero Tolerance for any discrimination. Dismissal from class and barred from the studio if need be
- I try to recruit kids from minority backgrounds
- All students of our circus school had to fill in a questionnaire in which there were questions about equality and inclusivity in our circus school.
- Hiring diverse teachers
- Sliding scale/PWYC classes, access descriptions on websites, spaces that are designed for different bodies

- Sliding scale, lgbt+ posts, statements of accepting hateful behaviour
- Sliding scale class prices
- Taking away gender roles and language as well as breaking down the barriers of physical "disabilities"
- Hire a consultant and do not depend on a crowdsourced survey...don't download labour
- Some venues have actual diversity, many have tokenization
- Diversity in leadership roles. Diversity of programming. Break down financial barriers. Listen to the community. Inclusivity/Social Justice workshops.
- We ask our students preferred pronouns at the start of class. Our scholarship program is intended to help students of all backgrounds take class, as tuition can be a financial barrier.
- Most are very recent and performative. I doubt that anything will change.
- Hiring policies that work to not discriminate against coaches from different backgrounds
- For our social circus, outreach is done within other local hubs that are inclusive, and relationships are built in those spaces first hoping folx can feel safe entering our space/programs. Our programs are free. Instructors are trained in facilitating use of an approach aimed to reduce various barriers to access (emotional, culture, physical). This has always been the goal in our approach to social circus, though can certainly still use improvement. This goal could/should carry over to the circus community on the whole most definitely!
- Purposefully gender open show themes, Older age specific policies to celebrate older performers, Pride celebrations at the studio, outreach to low income schools, "Transformational Women's circus" as a social therapy program for folx identifying as female, circus programs for people with cerebral palsy and parkinsons, scholarship options for training at all levels
- Posted notice about studio being a safe space, introductions always include pronouns, all bodies positive classes
- [My local space] has made women-oriented safe space classes, as well as LGBT+ classes, and neurodiverse classes at various points. These are not so many policies from the space itself however, rather projects led by particular staff members/trainers.

- I don't know the policies per say but the company I work for actively works with the disability community. People with disabilities are supported to become staff members or active members in their own community. One of the programs we run offers school programs to kids with disabilities.
- Sliding scale class fees, outreach within minority communities.
- Volunteer work trade for classes, inclusion-based
- Asking for pronouns, including accessibility measures
- Stating that any kind of buying for any reason [and specifically naming race, gender] will result in expulsion/firing
- Cost. Building equitable inclusion means making sure that these spaces are accessible to folx who may not be afforded the same financial security in our culture.
- The same policy applies to everyone. The door is open. Come on in. There is no discrimination or lack of inclusivity in any space where I train or teach. All different kinds of students attend.
- Actively reaching out to artists of color in creating/casting shows, using shows to promote and benefit organizations that bring more inclusivity to the community.
- Allowing discrimination and sexual conduct that is discriminatory should have zero tolerance
- More inclusion of women and disabilities
- If a studio has a policy to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and all participants follow it, then it works regardless of who comes in the door.
- Having directors or staff that listen and make themselves available.
- The owner/ head coach / director / head honcho's ability to listen. and to ask appropriate questions; to effectively question a 'privileged' person's privilege, AND to celebrate the small particular things unique to each participant / student
- Asking everyone's pronouns when you first meet them
- [My local] program provides free circus classes to community groups - I think this might have been discontinued however during ownership change, and I have only seen it taken advantage of once or twice in 4 years. There also used to be a discount for students

- We had a sexual harassment prevention training.
- Use of non-gendered language [esp.pronouns], scholarships for students who experience economic disadvantage, person-centred, strengths-based approach to inclusion of people with disabilities
- Offering more scholarships in tandem with running outreach programs.
- Both coaches and students immediately speak up when someone shows/says acts of racism and homophobia
- My space and coach works independently and tries to maintain a lower price point and approaches circus training from a more "social circus" perspective, but costs can still be prohibitive to some and there are no sliding scales/bursaries for students.
- Attempts to balance gender ratios in the performing arts.
- As someone evaluating auditions, or as a teacher: a clear priority given to talent, without taking into account gender/race/ethnicity.
- Diversity in the creative team, the artists participating, and the public.
- [In Canada], there are special programs for indigenous peoples and quotas to fill with regard to cultural diversity and First Nations, indigenous peoples, and mixed race individuals.
- Poorly chosen artists for cabaret programming. By focusing on diversity and inclusion, sometimes this ends up discriminating against other groups.
- A specific search for a female musician to make up for the fact that there were no women in the cast.
- Equality and representation of different races in casting for professional shows. I found that this policy became obsessive, and no longer allowed people to make rational choices. In order for these policies to be respected, artists could no longer rely on the quality of their acrobatic and/or artistic performances; they were forced to rely on their gender or race rather than their talent. This is of course just my experience but I fear it's not an isolated occurrence. I would also like to add that I am of course in favor of equality, but I think that these kinds of policies are overly simplistic and can cause more harm than good.
- At [Montreal Festival], we put on some gay reviews so that everyone could feel welcome.

- The teaching supervisors reprimanded one teacher for the inappropriate comments they made to an overweight student
- Implementation of a code of ethics against sexual harassment. Workshop on gender issues.
- Through different scholarships. There are specific financial scholarships for projects on inclusion.
- I've seen specific diversity policies mentioned in one or two auditions, and as selection criteria for certain scholarships [let's hope they're actually applied].



Question: Are there particular studio/gig/hiring policies that you perceive as being discriminatory or encouraging microaggressions?

(115 responses)

- Hiring and Casting for "a look"
- Typecasting, always hiring a "certain look," contemporary circus being limited in types of style, heavy focus on ballet, grace, and lines. A lot of cultural appropriation.
- Dress codes
- My last big contract hired people of all races, but I still overheard and experienced racism from the cast, staff, and audience. I could not believe that during one show, an audience member complained about being served by a [n-word] and so the white manager served the patron instead.
- Being prompted to play racial stereotypes regardless of my own race or ethnicity
- Generally hiring based on "look"
- Mostly ignorance. It is rarely noticed that almost all specialty performers on most corporate gigs are white. The bubble of working people just sustains its shape, we will have to be intentional to include and support artists of color. This feels self-perpetuating as it is everyone's preference to hire experienced performers, but performers of color aren't given the opportunities that allow them to gain coveted experience.
- Especially in the pole world there tends to be lots of misunderstanding. More from the crowd than other professionals.
- Only hiring the same white girls
- Students pay to perform in student shows, which I get but there's never a scholarship available for those who can't afford it. Usually the BIPOC people get left out and the studio membership is already expensive AF.
- Gigs which request for a certain skin type or size. I've seen their explanation is due to costuming limitations.
- I am sure there have been but I have been privileged enough to not notice or absorb them.
- In St. Louis, many black performers have gone unpaid or are paid less than white performers. This is especially true in the burlesque community when hiring specialty performers.

- It's frustrating to hear a hiring policy address race at all. We absolutely need to be hiring people of color, but why do you need to tell people that's what you're looking for? I'm a Latina woman, and I've been hired for an ethnic look. It completely undermines any confidence I have in my abilities. It makes it feel as though I was hired because they wanted to look diverse, not because they truly valued diversity. We absolutely need to be aware of who we're hiring, but there's no need to explicitly explain that to the person being hired.
- I am very selective of where I work in the Atlanta community because there are a lot of interesting things that happen. The main gig life in Atlanta has major issues with how performers are paid, treated, working conditions, and who is selected for work. The coaching environment tends to be very contentious and other coaches regularly tear down others to build themselves up. It is a part of the circus world I shelter myself from and avoid as much as I am capable. It is why I work only at one studio in the Atlanta area, although I have been asked to coach at every studio/gym in the area.
- Telling my girlfriend at the time and I, another female, could not hug in the gym because there were young children around.
- Often times costumes provided by production companies are not accommodating to darker skin tones. Also hair/make up styling requests are for light skin and straight hair.
- Specifications for women and men alike, such as "we want white, this height, this body type" basically. But being in Atlanta, I find that "black female performers" is more often a specification that hirers often look for, which is great!
- Requiring of specific grooming techniques associated with binary gender presentation [ie. Specific shaving requirements intended for female bodies, etc]
- Certain body types are clearly seen as "more beautiful"
- Looking for a specific sex/race/body type of a person to fill a role when the essence and execution of that role is not dependent upon those characteristics
- "Seeking unmarried female who is willing to travel" "Open to kissing male partner" For a duo trap act my partner and I were applying for
- I have not noticed any but I have not had as much experience and that does not mean they do not exist!
- They typecast certain roles or performers.
- Show themes that appropriate POC cultures that are then promoted by White performers.

- The gym I used to go to always scheduled their instructors really last minute, which I imagine would have made it difficult for instructors who had other jobs or childcare responsibilities.
- Casting for the “look”, using makeup to “hide” race, hetero normative narratives, blatant fatphobia, etc.
- When you walk into a studio and the teaching staff alllllll looks alike or clearly all went to the "same" studio/school, you know.
- The 'tyranny of the pretty' - a very narrow definition of form and aesthetics that usually correlate to ballet. Those bodies that fit that are praised and elevated. Other bodies or movement traditions are looked down upon in the name of 'technique'.
- Weight. And I am small but people seem not to care about talent. Would rather see a tiny dancer on a hoop than someone who knows what they are doing
- I've often seen postings for gigs that specify they are looking for fit/skinny Caucasian performers. And none of them ever seem to have a reason for that role to have to be filled by a person for a specific skin color or body type.
- In search of a certain look. Only seeing white aerialists getting gigs on social media
- For the most part themed parties are assumed to be white, not ethnic
- Requiring “legal” names on things that it isn’t necessary, having rigid payment policies that deny access to people without certain class markers eg credit cards only or PayPal/Venmo, making drop in payments prohibitively expensive compared to commitment payments that enable only membership from upper class folks who can pay a higher amount in advance.
- Strict dress codes, strict cut-offs for late attendance
- Language around body size and shape, particularly failing to acknowledge the need for modifications
- Levels systems that don’t accommodate bodies or difference in ability if a particular level-up required skill isn’t crucial for safety and participation, thus leaving certain bodies in level 1 for many years despite other strengths.
- Performance themes, music, or choreography that focus on white culture and don’t resonate with diverse participants [same for gender]

- Having binary gendered classes, costumes, or choreography
- Using Facebook to communicate crucial information when algorithms and other issues make it an inaccessible medium for many
- Non ADA compliant bathrooms
- Gendered hiring, so many others
- There is a standard body type that a lot of directors look for and their narrow minded thinking is discriminatory
- Picking males over females for stilt gigs
- I have been hired for minor gigs that I was unqualified for almost certainly because I am thin, white, and fit the look people are going for. I have experienced firsthand people choosing looks over professionalism, experience, and ability
- Strength based level graduation requirements that prevent larger sizes of bodies and people with disabilities from progressing through coursework
- For corporate and nightlife gigs especially, the requirement of long hair and a skinny body in skimpy clothing. Also, the exorbitant price of training in comparison to the pay for gigs, the fact that fewer marginalized folx can afford such things
- I mean 99% of the people who get hired with me are white.
- Not entirely sure, but everyone in the scene here is super cookie cutter and anyone that goes outside of that gets slowly pushed out.
- They typecast certain roles or performers.
- A lot of corporate/private event castings I don't think would consider hiring a minority performer. Some explicitly say so, in Asia I've commonly seen requests for Caucasian performers only. Many circuses state no African troupes without clarifying if the policy is due to visa issues or a race thing.
- Dress code
- Not paying teachers a fair wage... think about who has the privilege to teach for fun
- Most hiring is done by who you know/who is in your circle, which keeps the same people getting hired over and over again. Also, because Toronto is very corporate, there is definitely a "look" that gets hired more often. Classes are very expensive and

studios/teachers are resistant to making changes to this (which is somewhat understandable as running a studio is also very expensive). The dominant aesthetic is still straight legs and pointed toes. Sometimes safe practices (which are in themselves important) are used as a barrier to keep circus somewhat exclusive.

- Images that are promoted [students and coaches] seem exclusively cis/het/white/young.
- You have to be "in" with the right crew to get opportunities. It literally doesn't matter if you're a great performer with awesome style, if you're not accepted by the right people, you don't stand a chance. Also, teacher training is SO expensive, it will take years to pay it off, and lots of studios will require new coaches to have it - UNLESS you're friends with them, in which case, you can just teach.
- Shows/gigs/companies that hire white/able-bodied people to go for a certain "look" or aesthetic for clients and shows
- Some studio practices do not leave space for gender nonconforming or non binary folks
- Judging someone based on gender or physical disabilities.
- Hire a consultant and do not depend on a crowdsourced survey...don't download labour
- The stereotypical cis-het thin, white, female getting the corporate gigs, body shaming. Queer/alternative-looking artists being booked only in nightlife and not in corporate gigs. Racialized introductions at shows. Studios where BIPOC are well-represented in work-study programs but not in the staff or the paid performances. This is essentially using free labor of BIPOC to run a studio and is unacceptable. Lack of scholarships, grants, financial support systems for BIPOC. Lack of outreach/advertising in the local community when it is more diverse than the crowd the studio generates from online advertising. MCs making inappropriate racial comments/jokes.
- Giving preference to small bodies
- Not posting gigs/advertising only to those who are already involved.
- Who is hiring? If they are white, have they checked their own privilege / white supremacy / microaggressions / implicit biases.
- In Arizona the majority of aerial gigs are specifically asking for white females under 125lbs. They'll even specify hair color at times.
- Peers have had difficulty working jobs to pay for school because the school is not as flexible with time missed due to working to pay for the program

- In wealthier cities, the costs are so high that lower income students can't afford to go and there is a high density of upper middle class Caucasian females wearing brand names and more concerned with the "photo opportunity" rather than learning and integrating with the community. From here I've seen an inflated egotistical view of what it means to be a circus artist, specifically in aerials (not so much acrobatics)
- Because circus is a recreational privilege, our most advanced students do tend to come from a background of wealth and are usually white. Our youth companies reflect students who can afford that (i.e. in finances, time, transportation, etc). It's not a policy, but students go through an audition process, and are expected to be in class a certain number of times, or they will be penalized. We started a youth troupe specifically for students of color, or those on scholarship - but they are a part of our 'outreach' program and not our 'performance program'.
- We had mandatory diversity training, led by a white woman, and it mostly served to make everything feel super awkward. I don't think anyone felt they could talk about race after that. So discriminatory in the sense it silenced any potential for ongoing dialogue among staff.
- I'm not aware of our exact hiring policies, but in the past, for a short time, if our boss (a white man) liked you and got a good feeling about you, you were hired. There was no official hiring policy that I am aware of. I was hired in this way.
- We have had 1 racial equity training in all 10+ years of our existence. Same goes for myself, honestly.
- Non-compete clauses, lack of transparency in booking fees, lack of concern for safety of performers in venues, lack of accountability for sexual harassment allegations
- Only hiring white performers because the characters "need" to be white; appropriating Black culture in white spaces for the benefit of white performers; disrespecting sacred or meaningful cultural icons like certain songs or costumes for "entertainment"; tokenizing
- No financial aid available
- There is a "type" or a "focus" in the staff that are hired for [our local event space], and their hires seem to reinforce rather than seek to expand on this culture
- Disregard for certification or training when hiring instructors in favor of someone's aesthetic/body type
- Again policies not so much. It's more the unspoken culture that goes on that means that certain types of people are more likely to get work than others, not necessarily based on

skill or experience level. Circus to me is often who you know and hiring your mates. But obviously this means that not everyone gets a chance.

- If there's a lack of Black people in these spaces, then by dint of there being a lack of representation all the hiring practices in the industry are discriminatory or encouraging of microaggressions.
- Almost all training is financially inaccessible for low income families
- Setting restrictions on performer origin not related to Visas
- I have not auditioned myself. But most folk who represent the circus guild here are white and most coaches are white. It would be great to see our studios actively seeking to promote artists and coaches of color.
- I've heard presenters dismiss people of color for not having 'proper technique' and for being 'naturally athletic'
- I have been in shows before where Women are not allowed to drop their props, but the men are allowed to drop.
- Circus directors looking for “flexible and thin” profile for female aerialists usually also meaning “European looking”
- ‘Quotas’: Someone getting hired not because of the quality of their work & skills at because they are type casting
- As they typecast certain roles or performers
- In almost every circus context that I have been a part of, when auditioning -- on both sides of the table -- there is an expectation around aesthetics and technique that is very classist (ie, people need to have had the resources to be educated in forms which teach euro-centric "lines" in the body and "good" form, all of which are colonialist), and racist
- As they typecast certain roles or performers
- The preference is given to those who speak French, those who have graduated from ENC, or those who have performed for Cirque Du Soleil, regardless of any other factors. I also have witnessed a few gay people within the entertainment community giving preference to those performers (male or female) who act and speak more “gay” to fit in (whether they are or not), and passing over more talented individuals who do not. At shows I have experienced people who have worked for Cirque du Soleil getting preferential treatment even if they don't deserve it.

- When people contact artists on social media and lie about being directors working with cirque du soleil and use/abuse new pro artists online and in the workplace
- Hiring is not based on specific criteria but how much the head of the studio likes the staff. Gigs are mostly given based on looks (blond, sexy) and not artistry & ability. Lots of comments about having to look "fit" (I do happen to be very fit, but others in my studio have been discriminated against because they are not).
- Teaching jobs are given based on how you look and how much the head likes you, there are no job qualifications listed anywhere. Social media, website design, general design, are all done by friends of the head of the studio, not qualified professionals...
- Hiring based on "perceived" ability vs actual ability. Hiring based on perceived image [in my case sexualization] vs reality
- Size restrictions for women
- Atmosphere where communication is not encouraged; climate of fear.
- White males, who may have genuine intellect/creativity, still opting to fill the role society has for them (to be heads of companies/institution), rather than ceding or creating space for various voices
- Our theme for one of our student shows was set to be "around the world," and each performer had to choose a country to represent with their costume and music choice. The performers felt weird about appropriating cultures, but also it would be odd for most of the countries to be European. The theme decision was made without consulting the POC on staff. There is also no clear communication about hiring procedures or promotion procedures. People just inquire about jobs and are hired or promoted if they are close with management. This tends to put women and POC at a disadvantage, since we tend to not to directly ask for things even if we have more experience than the people being promoted above us.
- Ostracization and exclusionary behaviours
- Since my son is only [a child], I do want to share a micro aggression that occurred within this past month and hurt him so badly he quit the class. He has been a part of a circus for 4 years. He was invited to a zoom class with another circus and did not know this coach or have much of a relationship. 3 out of 4 classes the coach made a comment "tighten your back, you look like you're breakdancing" He repeated "look like you're breakdancing" three times in the final class where my son ended the class in tears. He is black with locks. There are no other black people in the class and breakdancing was not referred to any other student. What was the most painful out of all this was the lack of support from our circus community. when I suggested this coach might want to examine



racial bias our circus defended the coach and dismissed the comment. Immediately defending the coach as “not racist” and yet we claim to be a social circus. The defending and invalidating reaction was absolutely the hardest part. Let’s do the work to examine our organization way of thinking and be open to our blind spots. As this experience and time is pointing out, people in power cannot know the blind spots until we are ready to accept they are there.

- Only White people are hired
- Discrimination against neurodiverse people and people with mental illness. Transport accessibility and location of venues affect equity of access, compounding socio-economic factors.
- Hiring/typecasting based on race (i.e. expecting all Asians to be trained in martial arts, or giving black/brown people the stereotypical "tribal" roles). Also - not studio policy, per se, but I find that most circus spaces I've frequented are largely white, with usually a few token Asians/Asian-Americans, and that they cater to a middle/upper-middle class audience. For anyone who does not fit in any of these categories, they will feel out of place, regardless of how accepting the studio and its people are.
- Discrimination against disabled people.
- It is a small community of artists in my city and it is very difficult to be hired for gigs unless you know the "right" person.
- I often see a lack of gender diversity in companies, as well as a lack of diversity when it comes to style and disciplines.
- Casting calls that are full of stereotypes
- The plots of various shows, where the distribution of roles reflects a narrow and conservative [non-inclusive] vision. Like in this questionnaire - which was written by white people
- Looking for "a beautiful girl," "a girl who weighs x pounds," "a young girl," "a sexy girl"
- Salary-wise, and in terms of the physical and mental harassment that female artists endure
- The authority of those in charge always wins out over the well-being of employees
- When a particular gender for certain disciplines, and a certain "style" for characters is systematically favored. Directors who push women to be sexy on stage and ask them to

be seductive. These kinds of actions are silently accepted, if not encouraged and rewarded.

- Duos are usually requested by gender [male/female for the most part], sometimes artists are made to wear costumes that are gendered according to the sex that was assigned to them at birth [rather than their expressed gender, implied].
- When an institution is aware of microaggressions occurring in its midst but doesn't do enough to address the situation. This sends the message that this kind of behavior is acceptable.
- Everything that encourages hiring based on "reputation". I think this really creates a small circle of people, often the same people, often white people.

Question: Feel free to expand your answers here

(48 Responses)

- All issues related to costuming, makeup, appearance are related to my unusually petite size and/or not traditionally feminine hair/look. None relate to race as I'm white. Social media struggles relate to clashes of culture between influencers presenting circus skills and generally accepted ethics among professional circus performers. When I don't feel included on gigs it's generally based on nationality and language. I'm very specific in body and skill and am sometimes the only American/Anglophone on projects. As a head of department in production, I can struggle with inclusion, respect, conditions and pay due to sexism. None of this is due to my race.
- Performers in Dallas undercut the industry tremendously to get the gig. I definitely feel and see that white performers block any real opportunities for gigs because they are friends with venues, and it's all a vicious cycle. Producers here also only hire either the undercutters or the well known, usually white acts. It's a rare treat to see a performer of color, but more than likely they are not paid competitively. I'm a Compensation Professional in the muggle world so I know exactly how the system plays.
- I feel comfortable and included in circus spaces, I am currently a student without a professional mentor but was making strides to find one/find more performing opportunities pre-pandemic. My knowledge of these opportunities I would not say is not indicative of exclusion, rather it speaks to the building of my career, or the lack of one.
- I am caucasian but most of my answers that may elude to me not fitting in or others questioning my expertise is because of my body type. People think because I am not skinny that I am not strong.
- As a white female, I am never the only person like me in the room. While my studio does have some diversity, we don't actively work on bettering that, resulting in a space that is largely occupied by a white demographic.
- I am one of the few performers of color in my area. Diversity is seriously lacking in my community. There is constantly a need to prove myself to be just as good, if not better, than my white peers.
- I am white so many of the negative racial dynamics of performance only affect me when working with my black performance partner by proximity. Of more pertinence is the fact that I am a non-binary individual, assigned female at birth, who is frequently pushed to perform and costume myself as hyper-Feminine in performance work. As such, being respected in my gender identity has been more of a relevant identity group for my work in the circus industry
- There aren't a lot of Latinx in circus from what I've seen and it's likely because of the cost and upfront commitment most groups want. Also bc of the smaller class sizes it can

seem cliquy. I understand from a business perspective of wanting a student to commit to 6-8 weeks of classes but a lot of POC don't have an extra few hundred dollars to spend. Normalizing a drop in schedule and making sure coaches can adapt things on the fly would bring in more diversity. It's also hard to find coaches who are diverse in body size and ethnicity and I've seen POC get very intimidated because of that.

- My circus program is tiny so I have a lot of jobs and train on my own and perform a bit but mostly we're just trying to stay afloat. So some of my answers might reflect that since i have about 4 ish "positions"
- I fully support inclusion of Black aerialists so love that you are doing this. One thing with this questionnaire is to keep in mind is that some of these questions on "fitting in" don't mean a racial thing--it could be age, disability, size, etc. Since this was created in "response to the racial injustice highlighted by both the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement", it's worth keeping that in mind and that answers aren't indicative of only racial injustice. Finding out the "why" of the answers is really the key for all inclusion.
- I am fairly new to the circus scene and at my facility I am the only person of Indian descent that I have met. I am just learning so a lot of the professional questions do not apply to me at this time.
- While I am white my hang ups are more around my body type
- I'm a white woman and most of the silks classes I've taken have been predominantly white women, so I've never felt out of place due to gender or race. Only for my lack of flexibility!
- When I began circus 12 years ago it felt much more diverse and accepting. With the rise of social media like Instagram, it now feels like a messed up sorority.
- I was raised in the circus so within my family I fit in. It was part of my tradition and heritage that kept me going. However I am a taller, bigger person and so in the circus world over all I didn't feel like I fit in. I know this is about race but size definitely played a big issue for me with getting jobs.
- Even though I could do the tricks I didn't get jobs because I wouldn't fit into the costume or match the other girls in size. I heard both of those a lot. Even people not in the industry would look at me shocked when I told them I was a circus performer. All the time I would get "wow you don't look like a circus performer"
- But now I have created a community of people of all shapes and sizes. I also see with circus expanding that more people of different sizes joining the broader community! Our

studio is predominantly a white or Latin American female community though. So we could work on being more inclusive for men and other minorities.

- I am one of few black female circus artists that I know in Chicago. To the question "does the space represent the diversity of my neighborhood..." Yes because [neighborhood] is not diverse.
- I don't see many trans and non-binary aerialists in my area
- As a slightly larger than average aerialist I have always had issues fitting in/body and confidence issues- so that is one of my issues with feeling accepted...I am currently at a studio that is purely recreational and is more closely aligned with the pole community. It is very female oriented- the decor is very "soft" and pastel, and we have very few male students (2 or 3 max out of 50-75) All the women are very stereotypical: white, straight, femme, skinny, dancer type body. They're all married (hetero), and all of them have a privileged lifestyle (their husbands make money, they live in big houses with lawns and they all live in the affluent towns in the area. Every single one of them was able to drop 3k on a rig for their backyards during covid). It feels less like a circus community and more like a bunch of rich people who want to do the "hip, exclusive" workout instead of yoga. This applies to coaches and clientele.
- As a member of this community- I feel like a giant freak, because I'm the weird hairy lesbian...I have a lot of skills that other folks don't have, but I'm not what people are looking for or what our community wants to see, despite the fact that I have a lot of skills and experience.

The community here is incredibly competitive. They push circus competitions/aerial competitions HARD...circus is supposed to be non competitive. The whole draw of circus as an art form OR as a workout is that there is no competition; you're striving to be better than yourself, or to test personal limits. And the beauty of circus is that anyone can do it [to their own level], and everyone has skills to bring to the table that are useful and entertaining. And I believe this 100%, especially for youth circus. We should not be recruiting and pushing kids to compete. As a professional- yes circus festivals are a valid thing, and if you're a skilled and experienced grownup [or older kid] and you're making your own educated decisions about doing a competition, then fine. But building a studio with the aspirations of "putting a team together" to go to competitions is not what I'm about, it's not what circus is about, and it's not where I or my peers come from.

So...I've come to resent going to the studio so much that I actually started doing other sports instead, and I've basically resigned myself to the fact that I'm not going to perform as an aerialist anymore...the general vibe of our scene pushes people away. It pushes guys/masc folks away, it pushes gender-nonconforming and queer folks away, it reinforces beauty/body stereotypes, and considering how super-white it is I'm sure it's pushing POC away too. And on top of that, we're probably priced outside what less

privileged folks can afford [and no, we don't do scholarships or community outreach]. So...the community here is DEFINITELY not creating a place for minorities or POC

- I am white so my experiences are related to body size and disability. I know these issues are even more significant for POC
- I don't feel like one of "the cool kids" and I don't get many gigs but I have the privilege to be sure it's not about race
- I am a white woman in a largely white demographic, so in that regard I fit in. But I have a non-typical circus body and am "older" and often feel excluded in those regards. I have a reasonable amount of success in my field, but mostly from an arts perspective which has taken many years to build up. I have never felt like I fit in within typical larger companies (auditions) or the gig world. Despite that, my privilege/position has allowed me to participate in gigs to some extent. I feel uncomfortable in circus spaces to the extent that there is often a feeling of competition/judgement.
- It's hard to respond, because the survey raises all the problems I try to ignore!
- I am not a POC, but still wanted to share my authentic answers, because I feel judged, inadequate, and othered by so many elements of the circus community. And I say this not to try to make some "all lives matter" statement, but to say that if even white folks feel this way, it must be HELL for POC. The gatekeeping in the community is out of control. Even the way the first question is asked - am I a recreational student or pro student? What does that even mean? What makes me pro? I'm sure a few coaches would laugh at me if they saw me put in "pro". I wouldn't DARE put in "performer" even though I consider myself one. We have gatekeepers at the top who have not only decided the races and ethnicities that should be included in circus but also, how they should look, how they should move, what makes them "professional" (which, as far as I can tell, is NOTHING, and if you try, you'll be gossiped about in every studio), what gigs they should take, how much they should get paid, etc. Can't even imagine how toxic and exclusionary this feels for folks who battle these microaggressions every day in a variety of public spaces.
- Most of the negative experiences I have as a performer have to do with booking agencies, clients, and performance companies/studios with performance companies having unrealistic expectations, low pay or shady pay structures, or being sexualized in performances that are not of a sexual nature.
- Locally, outside of Toronto's social circus participants, diversity of the city is not reflected well enough in the circus community.
- My experiences are based on experiences from a neurodiverse standpoint rather than one of race or physical ability.

- I am a trans Non-Binary human. I feel like my studio creates space for me to share my pronouns and be named and seen authentically. But there are not always other folks who look like me in my spaces.
- In terms of inclusion you are always proving yourself. Unfortunately circus as an artform is also a competition. No matter how many hours a day I train, I never feel good enough.
- I am an African American woman. I am filling this out to give my honest options on the circus scene in Rochester NY
- There isn't really a circus community in my hometown, so I feel I can't answer many of the questions properly unfortunately
- Because I teach at a recreational institution, the people who can afford or are interested in circus activities do not represent the overall community. Sadly in my city circus is a white, middle to upper class, female mostly activity. The staff is not diverse at all and they do not promote inclusivity or representation at the studio's social media or promotional material at all.
- There is constant body type, movement style, and even hair colour discrimination (lot of comments about blond & sexy being attractive for corporate gigs). To be able to fit in, you have to adapt to these standards. If you don't, then you are labelled as "not a team member", "not being able to adapt", and "conflictive"
- Regardless of colour, there are geographical constraints that keep many of us feeling like "the other," simply because we do not share the relationships that artists form when they live/work/study in the same community.
- I actively engage in inclusive community building practices in my work as a producer and creator and instructor. I am grateful that societal blindspots and inequalities are being addressed. May we arrive at a time and continue working towards equity, inclusivity and access for all human beings who would like to participate in Circús arts.
- In [my town], one of the circus schools is very welcoming whereas the other one has a racist owner that tells certain minorities that they don't fit in there.
- I am Chinese Canadian, and while diversity is definitely starting to favour Asian-Americans, it is still a very clique-y community.
- I'm a deaf individual, so for me, it's not necessarily about looks, but the reaction I get from professionals and potential gigs

- My act is pretty unique because of this - it is very hard for me to find mentors and to get constructive feedback outside of the producers that I work with.
- People talk about race, but they don't talk about gender.
- Many people don't worry about inclusion at all, and you can see this at all levels in the circus world.
- I also work in social circus, helping young Inuit circus artists develop professionally.
- I feel a difference with others when it comes to language and speech, not physical appearances. My feelings may mean that I get closer to some people and distance myself from others. I really pay attention to these gut instincts to make sure that difference is part of my everyday life. This requires effort and particular attention; we should always seek to challenge and expand our conception of "us".



Question: Is there anything you'd like to add?

- I feel uneducated as a white circus artist on how I can influence circus to be more inclusive
- I'm decades deep in my career & train principally in private spaces. I don't have relevant experience with schools or studios, only professional environments.
- It is helpful to know and understand the student body as well. We have students who have chronic emotional and mental conditions, as well as physical conditions. We have students who are in their 60's, we also have students as young as 12. All genders, races, languages, and cultures are welcome.
- Although I am a white cis woman, I live in a predominantly diverse city and I identify as a feminist who takes pride in work to make everything she does as an artist all inclusive. My community is important to me, and I feel like the circus community needs some restructuring and revamping
- Our studio is located in an area where there are very few BIPOC though everyone is welcome as long as they adhere to our safety protocols.
- Thank you for creating this. I would like to see circus arts move away from using styles notable in Indigenous cultures as performance art.
- I'm really happy that the conversation is out in the open. It's no longer something that is being swept under a carpet. I really appreciate how the circus community is coming together and recognizing how homogeneous the circus community can be at times.
- I have also witnessed on several occasions, a BIPOC instructor having much more difficulty filling their workshop or class, whereas white instructors offering essentially the same class, sometimes even at a less optimal time, will have no issue.
- Wonder if "justice" frameworks would be better than diversity/inclusion
- I'm the daughter of immigrants but because we're white we really haven't seen any of the racial disparities others have dealt with so i feel like it's my responsibility to step up and make change
- Funding/support for circus works exploring the experience of minorities would be a great way to help others feel like there is room for them in these spaces. If I can't see myself in the public image of "circus", why would I think there's a space for me within that community?
- Circus [where I am] is white af. But when you make it free, everyone comes along to play. The company I work for deliberately has gone out to areas that have higher

populations of [indigenous people] and I'm really proud that they practice what they preach in terms of inclusivity. When you reach out and make yourself an accessible activity (i.e. free and just some circus in a park), people come and I really feel like that's the step to getting more diversity in circus and actively seeking it out. Being a bigger presence in communities where circus is unheard of. Circus has so much power to be inclusive of everyone with its diverse range of props and skillets to suit every body type, ability, and even financial ability if they only know about it and are shown for free!! Of course, funding helps and is the only way that the company I work for is able to do the awesome work they do

- I find that the circus community is very “cliquey”. Where I live the Russians mostly stick to themselves. The Cuban circus performers stick to themselves. The LGBTQIAs work with each other. The French stick to themselves, and while appearing to hire locals of other ethnicities, they are secretly passed up to bring in more French or French Canadian who don't even live in this country. I find that mostly when boundaries in the South Florida circus community are crossed, it is unfortunately because someone is using someone else to try to get themselves ahead. I opened my company because I saw talented people who kept getting passed over for performance work by the less talented. I started hiring those talented performers as much as possible. Unfortunately it wasn't enough work to keep those performers in South Florida. I have seen my fiancé, a black man, get overlooked for other performers regularly. I manage to always find work for myself because my talent speaks for itself, but there is no one in the south Florida circus community willing to tell me or my fiancé about opportunities or auditions, because as a straight white American girl, and as a straight Haitian-American male, we don't fit in any of those groups here.
- The sad thing in all of this is that people are good hearted, they just can't see their biases and have no idea how insulting and hurting they can be. There's lots of ignorance out there.
- As a cultural manager, even though we strive to hire more women and diverse artists, if we focus on just acrobatic performance, there are a lot fewer options. I wonder if the situation would be different if there were more graduates [from circus schools, implied]
- I think affirmative action [positive discrimination, literally] is not necessarily the solution, because it can on the contrary create a fake sense of balance, or even more forms of inequality. So long as minorities haven't been able to complete high-level training, we have to address the issue upstream.
- Circus arts in Quebec are not only not diverse; they are generally the purview of white men. The content offered by such companies and institutions is 98% sexy, muscular, physically perfect, white performers, and women are only portrayed as sexy, flexible, thin, and perfect. We're not out of the woods yet!

- I think that the goal of this policy of equality and inclusion is totally legitimate. It seems obvious to me! However, even though the problem has been correctly called out, I think it is overly simplistic to try to fix the situation by following quotas when casting for roles or creating new projects. Quotas could actually cause more harm than good, simply making us feel better about our actions. Encouraging such policies by giving scholarships to minorities to force inclusion makes me sad - it seems like an awkward solution that perverts the whole creative process. The problem, as we all know, starts much earlier: it is the result of inequalities in our society. This debate goes beyond the limits of the circus world.
- I find this questionnaire quite distressing.
- I am the victim of discrimination. Please provide me with resources.