

My name is Adria Jordan Kitchens. I am the Director of Equity and Activism at Out of Hand Theater in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. I am deeply grateful and excited to participate in the 1st Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. And I am grateful to those who sponsored me to be here. At Out of Hand we use our expertise in theater to create a racially and economically just world. We use the arts to build the capacities of people to recognize and disrupt structures of racism and to transform our culture to one of racial equity.

We have many years of experience building coalitions of government, institutions, artists, public sector and civil society. I'd like to offer 2 interventions specifically for the format of the Permanent forum.

As I've observed over the past few days, and many others have already named, even in this setting, we are using dominant culture, colonial processes to talk about how we center people of African descent in a system that was created to keep us invisible.

As a more equitable alternative, centering the voice of the community first is vital to begin the process of disrupting structures of racism. When civil society (or community) is centered, states and institutions can better align and appropriately resource work that is already being implemented in communities locally.

With this in mind, I offer 2 interventions for this current forum or future meetings:

- 1) After the formal presentations, ask states, and honestly those members of the permanent forum to possibly yield their time to those in civil society. So instead of 2 minutes, someone could offer to yield their time and give someone 4 minutes to speak.
- 2) If we really want to disrupt dominant culture structures, allow those in civil society to speak first. And then allow the states and permanent members to respond.

This is one pathway to begin creating a different, more equitable structure and centers the voices of those who are at the center of this work. It is not the only pathway; however, it is one way to shift how we create equitable engagement.

If we want to disrupt structural racism and dominant culture outside this room, we first have to disrupt it in this room.

Thank you