



Popular Power/Poder Popular: The 25th Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed (PTO) Conference

**Pre-conference workshop (in-person in Chicago) with Julian Boal: May 24-26,
2022**

Online Conference (1 day; limited submission availability): May 25, 2022

**In-Person Conference: May 26-29, 2022
Chicago, Illinois, USA
Host Site: Loyola University Chicago**

About PTO:

Pedagogy & Theatre of the Oppressed (PTO) is an international organization that supports people whose work challenges oppressive systems by promoting critical thinking and social justice through liberatory theatre and popular education. Our approaches stem from the theories and practices of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. We foster collaborative connections to share, develop, promote, and document liberatory theatre, popular education, and other revolutionary actions. Our annual conference seeks to provide an accessible, inclusive, and educational space. We actively seek both introductory sessions for those new to Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed practices, as well as advanced sessions for long-time practitioners.

**Deadline for Early Proposal Review or Confirmation of Intention to Present in a Session Previously Accepted for 2020 (with notification no later than January 15):
December 1, 2021**

Please note that, if you are concerned about the timeline of review and notification for reasons of travel, visas, or funding planning, you should submit by this date.

[Propose A New Session](#)

[Confirm Intention to Present Previously Accepted Session](#)

Deadline for Regular-Schedule Proposal Review (with notification no later than February 15): January 10, 2022

[Propose A New Session](#)

This year's focus

Honoring the theme of the PTO Chicago 2020 conference that has been postponed for 2 years due to COVID-19, PTO Chicago 2022 will emphasize *popular struggle* and *popular power*, which are themes as relevant as ever now.

By popular power, we mean actions that are:

- Powered by people who are often excluded from conferences like this one.
- Focused on genuine equality and justice.
- Organized to dismantle systems that benefit some people at the expense of others.
- Waged against elitism, condescension, class division, capitalism, racism, White supremacy, coloniality and settler occupation, imperialism, nationalism and borders, fascism, austerity, privatization, patriarchy, heterosexism, gender norms, ageism, ableism, inadequate health care and vaccine inequality, educational inequality, slavery, imprisonment, environmental destruction, genocidal pandemic denial, and other forms of violence. (The COVID-19 pandemic has only amplified these forms of oppression and danger in so many ways, and it motivated us to add forms of oppression to this list.)
- Taken collectively, built through movements or alliances (often hard, complicated, partial alliances) across barriers that have been built to keep people from fighting together.
- Performed by, as Paulo Freire described, “people engaged in the fight for their own liberation.”
- Reflective of Augusto Boal’s notion that, “[t]o be popular” is to “always tackle issues from the people’s perspective, that is, the perspective of permanent transformation, of anti-alienation, of struggle against exploitation.”

New to PTO? Not sure what to propose or how your work might relate to the theme? For more info, click on or scroll down to [Context For Proposals: Some Thoughts On Popular Power!](#)

Contents (click on each one or scroll down):

[Covid-19 Updates and Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)

[Context For Proposals: Some Thoughts On Popular Power](#)

[A Note on Language](#)

[Session Lengths and Session Format Options](#)

[Important Dates](#)

COVID-19 Updates and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This conference was originally scheduled for May 2020 and postponed due to COVID-19. If you did not apply to present as part of this conference on Popular Power/Poder Popular the first time around (2020), now is your chance! We welcome new proposals as well as the presentation of sessions previously accepted for 2020.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What are the COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 testing requirements for being onsite at the conference?

Our conference will happen at Loyola University Chicago, and we must comply with the COVID-19 policies of the host university at the time of the conference. This is the current policy relevant to vaccines/testing for campus guests: "All external guests must have proof of vaccination or proof of a negative test in the past 72 hours. If they are under the age of 12, they do not have to be vaccinated or tested." All vaccines endorsed by the World Health Organization are currently accepted. Please note that this policy might be different by the time we reach the conference, and we will communicate quickly when we are notified of any changes. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us: pto2022chicago@gmail.com.

I submitted a proposal in 2020 and it was accepted for presentation. Do I need to resubmit that whole proposal again?

If you already submitted a proposal for a session at the PTO conference in 2020 and it was accepted for presentation, you do not have to prepare a new proposal

as long as you still want to do that session or just make minor revisions to it, **[BUT you do need to complete the brief form here](#)**. Please note: Should you not complete this form, we will assume you do NOT plan to present the previously-accepted session and we will not schedule your session.

I did not submit anything in 2020. Can I submit a proposal now?

Yes! [You can do that here](#).

I want to do the session that was already accepted in 2020, but can I make some changes to it?

If you want to make only MINOR changes (example: slight change to title but still with the same topic), you can indicate those changes [when you complete the brief form here](#). If you want to make major changes to the session (format change, significant theme change, major change of methods), a new proposal is required.

My proposal was accepted in 2020, and I plan to present it, but I also would like to make another proposal now. Can I submit a second proposal?

Yes. However, depending on session availability and needed areas of content, a second proposal might not be prioritized over those making a first proposal.

My proposal was not accepted for presentation in 2020. Can I submit the same proposal now?

Yes. [You can do so here](#).

Can I apply to present online if I cannot travel to the in-person conference?

Yes. This year we will also have an online conference day on May 25, 2022, the Wednesday before the in-person conference, as an option for scheduling sessions by those who are unable to attend in person. When you submit your proposal or officially confirm your intention to present a previously accepted proposal, there will be an opportunity to tell us whether you are applying to present online, in person, etc. Please note: 1) Depending on capacity, we may not be able to accommodate all requests for a specific mode of presentation (online or in person). 2) A portion of the online conference day will conflict with participation in Julian Boal's in-person pre-conference three-day workshop.

I want to do the session that was already accepted in 2020, but can I request to change it to an online session without a whole new proposal?

Yes, pending online session availability. If you are not making significant changes to your proposal besides requesting to present online, you can simply request to present online when you [confirm your intention to present here](#).

CONTEXT FOR PROPOSALS: SOME THOUGHTS ON POPULAR POWER

Organizers, workers, students, teachers, activists, artists, scholars! YOU are invited to submit a proposal to share your practices and knowledge at the 25th international conference of PTO: Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed! This is a gathering for learning, sharing, and exchange between people who want to struggle together for a better world for all. If you want to be a part of that struggle, this conference is for you, even if you do not yet know anything about Pedagogy of the Oppressed or Theatre of the Oppressed. Below we explain more about how you can submit a proposal for the conference. However, if you are not sure how to communicate some part of your idea or how to submit a conference proposal, you can just email us at pto2022chicago@gmail.com with a question or idea, and we can collaborate with you to develop that idea. In addition, you can learn more about Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed at www.ptoweb.org.

When we wrote this Call for Proposals for the 2020 conference, we were especially interested in exploring popular power given the global intensification of fascist control: authoritarianism, nationalism, violent suppression, etc. All of those concerns remain. Those forms of oppression also invite us to consider the differences between popular movements and the rhetoric of leaders often associated with populism. Many populists claim to be popular: they promise to represent “ordinary” people against the elite, but usually they do the opposite. As Freire reminds us, “Since the populist leader simply manipulates, instead of fighting for authentic popular organization, this type of leader serves the revolution little, if at all.” For example, in Brazil--where both Freire and Boal were born--the current regime came to power partially by *seeming* to many people as though they were anti-system, by *seeming* “popular.” How can we build *true* popular power and popular organization, locally and globally?

We also ask: How do we sustain popular power over time--in the face of exhaustion and the pains of defeats? We hope to explore the possibilities of (and the need for) joy and happiness inside struggle. Oppressive systems lie to us, suggesting that joy and

happiness are only privileges of the elite few, not the rights of all. We reject this idea, and we know that many movements in the past and present give us concrete reasons to hope.

For that reason, we welcome consideration of how past movement wins and losses (and everything in between) can shape the present and future. Even just in the last two years since this Call for Proposals first circulated, examples of people's power and people's struggles abound: The Movement for Black Lives and its continued organizing and rebellion, with marches all over the world, ongoing struggle for police defunding and abolition, and a wide range of platforms and legislative initiatives. Uprisings and protests in so many countries and regions. Workers deemed essential but treated as anything-but-essential organizing for fundamental pandemic safety protections. Forms of mutual aid and community-care organizing in Chicago and all over the world. These are just a few examples. And Chicago itself, our host city, has long been known for popular struggle, popular education, and popular art. International Workers' Day began in Chicago, and a tradition of worker organizing remains very strong here. As just one example among many, the Chicago Workers' Collaborative, which has been represented on the board and on the local Chicago conference committee, celebrated 20 years in 2020, the year for which this conference was originally scheduled, and PTO marks its 25th conference (and 28th year) with the rescheduled conference in 2022. In recognition of those milestones (as well as what would have been Paulo Freire's 100th birthday in 2021) and the long, vibrant histories of so many other organizations everywhere, this conference also invites reflection on histories of arts and education for liberation, of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, of Theatre of the Oppressed, of PTO as an organization, etc.

Additional questions that might help you develop your ideas

As you think about making your proposal, you could use some of these questions below to guide you. You do not need to have *answers* to these questions. They are just intended to give you an idea of some of the many questions that we hope to explore together.

- How do you try to build popular power through popular education, liberatory arts, and/or Theatre of the Oppressed or Pedagogy of the Oppressed?
- What are some ways that you work for genuine equity and justice? How can we do so together?
- How can histories of popular struggle help us understand our tasks today?
- How do you find joy in struggles and constructing them with others? How do you find the strength to keep fighting?

- How do we create space to celebrate victories and learn from defeats?
 - How can we break barriers that oppressive systems build between groups?
 - How do you advance the struggle of people over profit?
 - How can arts and education help us organize for healthy, safe work?
 - How can larger movements for people's power connect to the specific, concrete, everyday struggles by workers against wage theft, sexual harassment, discrimination, and other forms of abuse?
 - How can we combat the systems that take particular advantage of those with especially vulnerable legal status: refugees, migrants, undocumented people, current and former prisoners, etc.?
 - How can people fight the normalization of "the gig economy" and the turn to temporary work in most fields?
 - How does popular power fight populism?
 - How have the uses of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, popular education, Theatre of the Oppressed, and other modes of social justice changed over the last several decades?
 - How has PTO changed as an organization? How should it continue to change?
-

A note on language

We release this Call for Proposals in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. We have the capacity to read and respond to proposals in those languages and for presenters to offer sessions in all three of them. We also plan to mark clearly in the program the language(s) of delivery for each conference session. We regret that PTO does not currently have the capacity, however, to guarantee language interpretation and translation for conference attendees onsite during the conference itself. Our lower-cost conference fees are designed for economic accessibility, but that also means that our budget typically cannot allow for full translation and interpretation for all sessions. However, we will provide an option on the registration form for presenters to indicate languages spoken, and we will work very hard to facilitate as much interpretation as we can. Though a majority of program sessions have happened in English in the past, we will also try to de-center English whenever it is possible to do so.

Session lengths and session format options

- ❑ **Single Session:** 90 minutes
- ❑ **Double Session:** Two back-to-back 90-minute sessions totaling three hours

- ❑ **Workshops: The Techniques:** Interactive workshops that focus on exploring, explaining, and experiencing techniques of PO/TO or liberatory practices. Workshops may also present adaptations, expansions, and permutations of the work developed for various situations, circumstances, and populations.
- ❑ **Workshops: The Applications:** Interactive workshops that explore the multitude of ways PO/TO or liberatory practices can be (and is) used for social justice, transformation, and liberatory work. Workshops and case studies may also highlight convergences other liberatory artistic and educational techniques.
- ❑ **Performances:** Interactive performances that promote and problematize transformation, liberation, social justice, and/or political engagement. The conference should not be seen merely as a showcase, but rather as an opportunity to engage in interactive exploration of the performance itself, the topics about which it was created, or both.
- ❑ **Youth-Led Session:** Any session by, for, and about youth-led initiatives. We broadly define “youth-led” as projects and sessions with significant leadership from young people up to age 24, although we recognize meaningful support from elder collaborators may also be integral to the success of such projects and conference sessions. Financial support opportunities are available through scholarships and volunteer opportunities.
- ❑ **Roundtable Discussions:** Discussions or debates between activists, artists, organizers, and/or popular educators. Sessions may also ask attendees to participate in dialogue around specific concepts, techniques, or case studies related to PO/TO or liberatory practices work. These are proposals to host a conversation with others about a topic of interest, rather than a fully formed presentation of your own ideas or conclusions.
- ❑ **Panel:** Pre-formed group of 3-4 presentations addressing a specific area of PO/TO or liberatory work. All presenters must have agreed to participate and be part of the proposal. Sessions should also include dialogue or other interaction with attendees.
- ❑ **Paper Presentation:** Summary of research or issue in PO/TO or liberatory practices work and theory, delivered from notes. Papers should

NOT be read, but rather presented. Each presentation should last approximately 10-12 minutes, excluding discussion. We will cluster papers in groups of 3-4, under a proposed theme, with time for dialogue. Not eligible for a double session.

❑ **Anti-Oppression Workshops:** Specific interactive workshops in various aspects of anti-oppression work, including language/terminology, specific communities and populations, challenges and ethics, and working methodologies rooted in liberatory education and/or TO techniques.

❑ **Well-Being and Community Care:** These sessions may address such topics as health and well-being for activists, embodied healing for practitioners, and other practices of self and community care for folks directly engaged in movement-based or other social justice work.

IMPORTANT DATES

The deadline for **Early Review of New Proposals** is **December 1, 2021**. [You can submit here.](#)

The deadline for **Confirmation of Intention to Present in a Session Previously Accepted for 2020** is **December 1, 2021**. [You can confirm here.](#)

The deadline for **Regular-Schedule Proposal Review** is **January 10, 2022**. [You can submit here.](#)