

## **Beat the Beast: Adapting the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* to expose sexual harassment and empower communities through theatre**

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This research project, *Beat the Beast*, utilizes the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* through the lens of community-devised theatre to examine and expose sexual harassment within society. Based on a real-life story of harassment during a theatrical production, the project investigates the romanticized tropes of submission, transformation, and redemption often found in traditional narrative tropes that can obscure and maintain the patriarchal power structures and normalize abuse. Grounded in feminist performance theory, trauma-informed dramaturgy, and participatory practice, the project employs a qualitative research methodology that involves focus groups to collaboratively develop a performance with community participants, survivors, allies, and local performers. By centering lived experiences and collective storytelling, the process enables participants to reclaim narrative agency and co-create a space for healing, resistance, and visibility. Integral to the production are post-performance audience engagement forums designed to foster dialogue, raise awareness, and activate community response. These interactive forums transform spectators into stakeholders, promoting shared accountability and social action. Through this layered approach, *Beat the Beast* positions community theatre not merely as artistic expression but as a catalyst for empowerment, critical reflection, and tangible change in confronting gender-based violence.

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