



AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR
THEATRE & EDUCATION

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Anti-Racist Plan

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Introduction

“Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Anti-racism, Access, etc. is an ACT OF LOVE – showing love to people who have never been loved by this country. This work is to end a race war, not start one. ... What we all bring to the conversations make the experiences richer and more visceral. These are not just principles or beliefs; they are the fuel that drives everything we do.”

- Michael Bobbitt, Anti-Racist/Race Equity Consultant, former AATE Board Member, and Executive Director of Mass Cultural Council

In the fall of 2020 AATE members engaged in personal and organizational reflection and learning. It was a curriculum in honor of earlier commitments and under the guidance of theatre practitioner Michael Bobbitt. The Board, staff, leaders within the organization, and members from across the country met with the aim to move AATE closer towards its goal of becoming an anti-racist organization. Through Michael’s consultation, our members have created the **AATE Anti-Racism/Race Equity Actions** - a list of nearly 40 actionable steps with timelines for accountability.

It is important that all AATE members and potential members feel their voice can be heard, and it is equally important that everyone have the same context for the work and goals of the community -- *a community serving and inspiring a growing collective of theatre artists, educators, and scholars committed to transforming young people and communities through the theatre arts* -- and doing so in a manner that models race equity. Before reading the **AATE Anti-Racism/Race Equity Actions** at the end of this document, it may be helpful to read the following statements and messages,

The plan reflects AATE’s intentional and action-oriented efforts to create an anti-racist, inclusive, diverse, accessible, and racially equitable culture within the AATE Community. This Plan focuses on anti-racism, as it is the most difficult and deeply rooted form of discrimination that exists in our society. However, AATE will address other oppressions and discriminations in additional separate plans. We, the Board, staff, Network Chairs, Taskforce members, and all those engaging in this work stand firm in the discomfort of doing anti-racist work.

Alexis Truitt, Executive Director

Dr. Jennifer Katona, Board Chair

Message from our Board Chairs

As Theatre is a reflection of the world around us and Education is the preparation for that world it stands to reason that an organization committed to Theatre and Education would adjust to the current moment and engage in the necessary and difficult work of creating an inclusive anti-racist culture. To serve the artists, educators, and scholars of AATE we offer this document as a next step in creating a system that allows access to all and that is a celebration of our programming and our members - current and future. These action steps aim to lift and celebrate all the voices, perspectives, and work that truly reflects our field.

This document serves as a reflection of our commitment to this important work. Throughout this document we share the thinking, commitment, and perspectives of AATE stakeholders in this work. As Chairs we are grateful to our colleagues and appreciative of the time and many conversations that have gone into the creation of this document and these S.M.A.R.T. goals. We share them with you now and look forward to the next many years of work together as an organization and field to hold us accountable to this plan.

-Dr. Jennifer Katona, Board Chair & Mitch Mattson, Board Chair Elect

Understanding Who We Are

Anti-Racism/Racial Equity Statement

AATE believes that theatre and theatre education is stronger and enhanced because of the inclusion of the voices, perspectives, and experiences of people who have been left out. If you represent what is known as “diverse” we wholeheartedly want to theatrically imagine and theatrically educate with you. We long for more participation of people who have been marginalized, oppressed or targeted because of race, socioeconomic class, color, national origin, religion, diverse perspectives, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, neurological or physical ability, veteran status, legal status, or education level.

Framing the Conversation Ahead

Message from our Executive Director

AATE embarked on a journey of reflection a year ago, to look at how we MIGHT HAVE contributed to racist ideologies and practices. I, a woman of color, the Executive Director of this organization have found our work on becoming an anti-racist organization inspiring and personally rewarding. I am so encouraged to see the organization begin to shift and make change through the cultivation of spaces and programming for the BIPOC/GM community within AATE. I have learned so much from the hard conversations and have enjoyed inviting in and listening to new voices in our Community. AATE has always been about Community and I am inspired to see it begin to reflect what a well-rounded and whole community should be.

- Alexis Truitt, Executive Director

Message from Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access Directors

“To be anti-racist is to believe in the word *now*.¹” This statement, written by renowned anti-racism scholar Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, is our call to action. As he notes in his book, *How to Be an Antiracist*, “One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an anti-racist.”² Antiracism is a verb, not a concept, for it takes our individual and collective actions to change our relationships, culture, and language to establish the way our world should function. The dangers of gradualism have brought our nation, time and time again, to tragic moments that remind us of the inequity many of our loved ones and neighbors experience daily. As theatre practitioners, researchers, and educators, we have an obligation to lead this charge, knowing that culture reinforces social norms.

AATE’s Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access has reflected on the needed actions to transform our communities and has cultivated resources to be a support service to our colleagues who are leading this change at home. Our youth must see their identity and lived experiences reflected in leadership, creative works, and research. Therefore, the Antiracism Task Force and this committee have agreed that there must be a prioritization of greater representation by our Global Majority colleagues in the work we center at AATE, a practice that must be embraced by all of us to ensure that our creative, scholarly and relational work reflects the equity we seek. Along with these steps, we have re-rooted our work as the **Committee for Anti-racism, Anti-Oppression, Equity and Justice**, in recognition that we must actively identify the forces that hinder our growth in order to move towards equity and justice. We begin this work by actively listening and responding to the needs of our Black and Indigenous colleagues whose history and lineage was dramatically impacted by imperialism and colonization. Through this examination and subsequent action, we will be able to craft future

¹ Kendi, Ibram X. “Patience is a Dirty Word,” *The Atlantic*, July 23, 2020.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/john-lewis-and-danger-gradualism/614512/>

² Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. One World, 2019.

action plans that better support the needs of intersectional communities that are impacted by white supremacy. Our vision is to extend the reach of our anti-oppression efforts to include those who identify with the LGBTQIA+, Disability, Immigrant and/or Rural communities through specific action plans through facilitated dialogue.

As the AATE community takes these steps forward together, we are yet again urged and strengthened by Dr. Kendi's words in his notable 2020 article from *The Atlantic*. "A century from now, when almost all of us are dead, if we don't act with urgency and boldness, I can only

imagine what our descendants will be saying about us. *How could we allow the evil of racial inequity to live another hour? How could we not support a scorched-earth policy to eliminate racial injustice?* The revolutionaries of today will age well, as those revolutionaries of yesterday aged well."³

This is no longer the *rehearsal* for the revolution. The revolution is here. Thank you for the labor and love you bring to answer this call.

-Elena Velasco and Joel Jason Rodriguez Co-Chairs EDIA

³ Kendi, Ibram X. "Patience is a Dirty Word," *The Atlantic*, July 23, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/john-lewis-and-danger-gradualism/614512/>

Beginning Our Work

Black Lives Matter Statement was first published to our AATE membership on June 4, 2020. This statement was a watershed moment for the organization as we began to speak openly about the injustices in the world and how we as an organization were committing to the action of the work ahead.

Black Lives Matter.

We write this statement as an organization of educators, students, community leaders, and advocates who mark this history-making time of unrest and uprising as one where we prioritize our communities and assess our action-based steps as an organization.

AATE will no longer tolerate the institutionalized hatred that has led to the murder of countless innocent lives in the United States. AATE grieves the lives murdered in our nation, which has excused racist terrorism more than it has offered fairness, justice, or equality to people who are Black, Brown, Indigenous, people of color, people who are [trans](#), queer, gender non-conforming.

We hold George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Botham Jean in our hearts as we say their names along with the [1,252](#) Black lives who were shot and killed by police workers since January 1, 2015.

As an education advocacy organization, we advocate for our members to educate themselves about the United States' history of structuralized terrorism against Black and Brown peoples.

AATE believes that intentional—individual and organizational—confrontation with our past and present, coupled with actionable civic engagement, is the only way to find reconciliation in our organization, our fields, and our nation. AATE calls its members to action and those in positions of power to always use their privilege to initiate informed change in their communities.

We call on our members to perpetually commit to honoring Black and Brown excellence, brilliance, joy, and resilience past and present through representation in our classrooms, and theatres.

We recognize that as an organization, AATE must do more to be effectively anti-racist; We will through visible, collective action.

The Action Plan

AATE Anti-Racism/Race Equity Actions

The plan provides External and Internal action steps in both a short term and long term schedule for enactment in three areas: Board/Committee, Operations, and Programming.

EXTERNAL - Immediate (3 – 6 mos.)

Board/Committee - 2021

- To ensure that everyone who engages with AATE knows of its commitment to anti-racism/racial equity, the AATE board will create an Internal/External anti-racism/racial equity statement to lead gatherings, convenings, meetings, for the website, job postings, etc. by Conference 2021.

Operations

- To ensure that incidents of harm are documented and tended to, both to hold individuals accountable and to identify opportunities for learning and growth, AATE will create a racism incident report by Conference 2021.
- To promote zero tolerance and achieve zero incidents of racist behavior, AATE will create Internal/External Community Anti-Racism Agreements to be added at point of purchase for membership, requests for proposals, read at events/meetings/gatherings, etc. by Fall 2021.
- To honor and acknowledge past harm, bring awareness to the potential for future harm, and to reduce erasure, AATE will Adopt/Create official Indigenous Peoples' Land Recognition (in partnership with indigenous people) to be posted on the website, read at events/meetings/gatherings, etc. by Fall 2021.
- To ensure that AATE's anti-racism/racial equity culture is communicated to all current and future members and partners, AATE will add anti-racism/racial equity info and learning to all communications (link to website, in email, e-blasts, etc.) by Fall of 2021.
- To support and follow through on the Internal/External Community Anti-Racist Agreements and honor past harm and preventing the potential for future harm, the EDIA Committee will be charged with creating a repair/restorative justice process and accountability measures by January 2022.

Programming/Membership

- To support BIPOC/GM members, AATE will create BIPOC/GM affinity spaces that meet quarterly by Fall 2021.

EXTERNAL - Long Term

Board/Committee - 2022

Operations

- To promote transparency and racial equity in hiring, AATE will post salaries in and eliminate "othering" in job announcements, annually.

- To achieve stated goals and outcomes of this plan, center the valuable work and perspectives of BIPOC/GM to the field, AATE will budget for the labor and duties dedicated to antiracism/racial equity work , annually.
- To maintain and promote accountability to BIPOC/GM and the general constituency to the goals and outcomes of this plan, AATE will build an Anti-Racism Plan tracking document and present quarterly reports to the membership starting January 2022.
- To support BIPOC/GM members throughout the year, promote Belonging, and provide visibility, the AATE anti-racism website page will include names/contacts of current BIPOC members (who volunteer to be listed), and current and upcoming AATE events for BIPOC/GM members and non-members in January 2022.
- To share anti-racism/racial equity resources, AATE will consult and/or partner with EDTA, TYA/USA, TCG, and other professional organizations to add resource lists and directories on the AATE anti-racism website page in January 2022.
- To promote transparency in racial pay equity, AATE will correct salary and benefits to staff which reflect industry standards, racial equity and years of service by Summer 2022.

Programming/Membership

- To center BIPOC/GM voices and encourage greater participation in conference planning, AATE will host one BIPOC/GM affinity space conference focus group with the conference planning committee, annually.
- To uplift and center BIPOC/GM voices, AATE's conferences will have equal BIPOC/GM representation as major partners, annually.
- To center and uplift the work of BIPOC/GM, AATE will assure that there is equal BIPOC/Global Majority representation of Playwrights in the Playwriting/Publisher Showcases and Playwright Slams, annually.
- To ensure the perspective of BIPOC/GM and inform and impact programming, AATE will appoint a BIPOC/GM as a network and conference co-chair, annually.
- To uplift and show the value of the racial diversity of our field, AATE will have equal BIPOC/GM representation in ALL awards presented annually.
- To educate and support members and non-members in their knowledge and implementation anti-racist/racial equity practices, AATE will offer at least two non-conference anti-racism/racial equity training workshops starting in Fall of 2021.
- To reflect the value of BIPOC/GM voices, AATE in partnership with journal leaders will create a BIPOC/Global Majority writer's mentorship program by January 2022.
- To provide time and space for processing and critically-engaged dialogue for BIPOC/GM constituents and their co-conspirators AATE will build in daily facilitated reflection space that address anti-racism/racial equity by Conference 2022.
- To uplift BIPOC/GM institutions, AATE will include and promote a list of recommended BIPOC/GM institutions/organizations/companies near conference venues in the host city starting Conference 2022.
- To increase BIPOC/GM attendance at AATE conferences, AATE will provide financial support (comp, discount, sliding scale, hotel buddy, car pool, etc.) for first time conference attendees who become members by Conference 2022.

- To ensure BIPOC/GM representation and uplift and prioritize BIPOC/GM presenters and attendees, AATE will encourage all applicants to define/identify their race/ethnicity for Conference 2022.
- To inform and impact programming and provide BIPOC/GM perspectives, AATE will have equal BIPOC/GM representation on session selection committees for Conference 2023.
- To increase and prioritize representation of BIPOC/GM presenters, AATE will have equal BIPOC/GM representation of its presenters by Conference 2023.
- To reflect the value of BIPOC/GM voices, all articles published by AATE-affiliated editorial boards will have equal BIPOC representation by Fall of 2023.

INTERNAL - Immediate

Board/Committee

- To expand the commitment of the work of advancing racial equity and dismantling white supremacy, the board will rename EDIA committee to be more specific and inclusive of Antiracism, Representation, Equity, Diversity, Belonging, Access, and Anti-Oppression by Fall of 2021.
- To hold the board accountable to the commitment of anti-racism/racial equity, the EDIA committee shall have veto power on significant board decisions affecting racial equity, starting Fall of 2021.

Operations

- To perpetuate the culture of anti-racism/racial equity, AATE will add “advancing race equity” to ALL job descriptions and annual evaluations for board/staff/volunteers/committees/network chairs, etc.) by Fall of 2021.

Programming/Membership

- To reflect the culture of racial equity and multiculturalism, AATE will review, revise, add to and adapt the titles for all awards by June 1, 2022.

INTERNAL- Long Term

Board/Committee

- To perpetuate the continued culture, focus and commitment of anti-racism/racial equity work, all AATE board, leadership and staff, and committee members will complete anti-racism/racial equity training, annually.
- To reflect our love/care of our BIPOC/GM constituents and that anti-racism/racial equity remain important and central to the work of AATE, the board and staff will assess, review and update institutional anti-racism/racial equity goals, outcomes and governance documents, annually.
- To ensure that AATE’s governance and policies prioritize our BIPOC/GM constituent needs and that all parts of the organization reflect the commitment to anti-racism/racial equity, the governance committee will Review all board governance documents to eliminate policies, practices, procedures that hold racism in place by Summer of 2022.

- To ensure that a culture of anti-racism/racial equity is perpetuated, center the needs of the BIPOC/GM and affirm that governance and oversight of AATE will have a racial equity lens, AATE will have equal BIPOC/Global Majority representation on the Executive Committee, the board, and all committees by Summer 2023.

Operations

- To ensure a culture of Anti-racism/racial equity, AATE will audit all vendors to make sure they align with AATE's anti-racism/racial equity culture, replace vendors that do not align and hire BIPOC/GM vendors for new vacancies by Fall of 2023.

Programming/Membership

- To continue building on AATE's anti-racism culture and build sector-wide BIPOC/GM leadership, AATE will continue the Leaders of Color Institute's mentor/mentee annually.
- To promote a culture of anti-racism/racial equity, AATE will require all partners, vendors and host sites to have an anti-racism/racial equity ethos statement by Conference 2022.

Conclusion

We are excited to have launched AATE's Anti-Racist Plan. However, this is not the end. It is just the beginning. We want your help getting this out to the world. We will continue to revise it and add to it as our organization, society, and lives change and develop. Thanks for being a part of our Community and for continuing to push us to be the best we can be.

This PLAN is a working document and new Action Steps will be added often.

This PLAN is also the beginning of our response to the Anti-Racism organization #WeSeeYouWAT demands for change.

This plan uses A Framework for Action in Response to Moments of Outrage & Crisis created by OF/BY/FOR/ALL and S.M.A.R.T Outcome Goals developed by Peter F. Drucker



Contributors to the Creation of the Plan

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