

Heartbeat Opera
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism
July 30, 2020

STATEMENT

We are making art in a society where Black people are murdered on the street with impunity. We are making art in an opera industry where Black artists have been sidelined, pigeonholed, and stepped over—an industry that has often perpetuated the injustices found in our society at large, and that has a long way to go when it comes to diversity, not just onstage, but on our creative teams, in our administrative offices, and in our audiences.

Our canonical pieces celebrate big ideas like love, justice, freedom, heroism, and investigate complicated human situations involving violence and hatred -- and yet our industry tolerates and perpetuates blatant discrimination, stereotyping, and hidden and open aggressions towards Black artists.

An opera career is hard under any circumstances, but our Black colleagues are not just dealing with the demands of a difficult profession, they are also navigating the straits of a system that puts up additional barriers at every turn - and then, when they step off the stage, or out of the office, they walk into an America which is profoundly, lethally racist. How can we support our Black colleagues better? How can we educate ourselves more deeply, and evaluate our own practices and choices, so that the power structures in our rehearsal rooms and offices do not blindly replicate those of the world outside? This has been the focus of many of our discussions.

The uprising we have witnessed in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks and others has been groundshaking. This moment in history can bring lasting transformation, if we all work together. There is no going back. Heartbeat Opera wants to advocate loudly and clearly for change in our industry. We are publishing this list of commitments today. There will be more. Anti-racist work is an ongoing process, and we expect that we will sometimes succeed, and sometimes fall short. But we are driven by the desire to be part of the solution. Let's continue the work!

COMMITMENTS

- We will incorporate anti-racist practices in our rehearsal rooms and processes, including but not limited to: disseminating educational resources, requiring all collaborators to sign Community Agreements, and posting our anti-racist principles in rehearsal rooms.
- We have a zero tolerance policy for racist behavior and language, and we will hold ourselves and all of our collaborators and partner organizations to that policy.
- We are creating an EDI Fund to support anti-racist trainings, forums, resources for BIPOC artists, and other needs as they arise.
- We will produce the work of Black composers and librettists, and we will study their work in order to expand the canon from which we draw our material.

- We will hire significantly more BIPOC collaborators -- onstage and offstage -- this season and every season.
- We will hold monthly EDI Forums for company and community members to share ideas and hold each other accountable.
- We will invest time, energy, and resources in educating our board members and leaders about EDI and anti-racism.
- We will continue and deepen the work on our FIDELIO this fall through the creation of new virtual content and performances which respond to the Black Lives Matter Movement and a robust education program which establishes semester-long relationships with three public high school groups. This work will be supported by the [Eric H. Holder Jr. Initiative for Civil and Political Rights](#).

Signed by:

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