

A word from the Artistic Director

As many organizations and institutions are reexamining the impact of our nation's history of racism, Actors' Shakespeare Project is not immune. ASP has a long way to go to achieve racial equity and anti-racism in all areas of its business and artistic practices. We understand that in many ways we have been complicit in and the beneficiary of a culture of white supremacy in the American theatre. We also understand that many Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) have shouldered the harmful and destructive nature of racism through silencing, exclusion, and erasure.

Through hours of listening, self-learning, mentorship and consultation, ASP has developed this anti-racism action plan. A great deal of thanks goes out to our Anti-racism, Inclusion Diversity, and Equity Committee that worked to develop this document. As an organization we have long been allied philosophically with the basic tenets of anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion. However, we have not taken many of the practical steps, aside from hiring BIPOC artists, that are needed to align our mission and policies with our values. This document is the first step in our endeavor to synchronize what we believe with our actions. This document is organic and we expect there to be changes, upgrades and evolutions in the future.

This plan focuses on anti-racism as it applies to BIPOC, and is in no way meant to exclude other communities that are also faced with the ills of intolerance and non-equitable treatment that currently exist in our theatre community and society. We acknowledge that the challenges and conversations around race in the United States are complicated and that there are many factors of intersectionality that contribute to the inequality. We also stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ community, and the gender expansive community; we see you, we hear you and we acknowledge that the work is not yet finished.

ASP will make mistakes, and we will do all that is in our power to rectify those mistakes through leadership, listening, transparency, ally-ship and accountability. We are stronger together -- all of us together.

With love, and humility,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Edwards', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher V. Edwards

What is an anti-racist organization?

“To be anti-racist is to acknowledge the permanence of racism through organizations, industries and communities, and to recognize that racism is a system of disproportionate opportunity and penalties based on skin color....”

- [Laura Morgan Roberts](#) - University of Virginia professor, author and speaker.

An anti-racist organization:

- Acknowledges the threat of systematic racism within the workplace at all levels of employment.
- Acknowledges that wealth inequality in society is interconnected with racism, and that it affects the organization’s workforce and bottom line.
- Acknowledges that the organization can actively mitigate existing systems of oppression by opening up opportunities to people who have not had historical access to their organization or the products they produce.

Anti-racism starts with:

- Acknowledgement and ownership of the problem.
- A commitment to continue including productions that highlight the experiences and stories of minority groups and challenge our audiences to examine their own experiences from new perspectives.
- A commitment to work to rectify the imbalance that racism has created over time.
- Engagement of the organization’s leadership (Board, executive staff).
- Listening to the staff and artists we engage with.
- Examination of the connection between racism and our industry.
- Examination of the structures that have been put in place as a function of perceived best business practices that are contributing to racism in the organization.
- Ongoing anti-racism and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) education for all aspects of the organization.
- Listening to the organization’s audiences.
- Listening to the local community the organization is located in, or produces in, and the communities that have been affected by racism.
- Implementing short-term and long-term strategies that are measurable and achievable, and continually assessing our results.

Anti-racism Statement

Actors' Shakespeare Project (ASP) is committed to actively examining and combating the multifaceted nature of racism in our company, our community, the theatre industry and the United States. Racism is dehumanizing to everyone it touches and creates an environment that is not conducive to creative expression. Actors' Shakespeare Project seeks to dismantle organizational systems, processes, structures, and cultures that discourage any person from engaging with us. We pledge to foster diversity, inclusivity, and equity across all of our Board, staff, artists, productions, educational programming, and business operations. The stories of all people will be reflected in all the work that we do.

Anti-racism Action Plan

Board of Directors Actions

Immediate External (1-12 months)

- ASP's Board will work in conjunction with the staff to create and implement an Anti-Racism / Diversity Statement and Action plan that will be shared with all of our constituents.
- ASP's Board will seek out options and commit to an anti-racism/anti-white supremacy/bystander intervention training that can be administered for all Board members.
- ASP will commit to diversifying the membership of the Board with the goal of helping to make the Board a reflection of the region we serve as it applies to racial and cultural make-up.
- ASP's Board will reach out to all BIPOC staff, Resident Acting Company (RAC) members, and teaching artists through an anonymous questionnaire offering them the opportunity to share their personal experiences of racism during their tenure as members of ASP.
- ASP's Board will formalize channels for addressing incidents of bias affecting all BIPOC populations affiliated with ASP.
- ASP's Board will create a formal set of guidelines or "norms" for Board meetings with input from the staff and RAC.

Long-Term External (1-3 years)

- The Board will work with the staff and RAC to revise ASP's mission, vision, and values statements to incorporate IDEA and an anti-racism commitment.

Immediate Internal (1-12 months)

- ASP will create an IDEA /anti-racism advisory committee to alert the company to intended or unintended racism and to strengthen the company's commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity:
 - Its purview will be reviewing Board charters and policies and recommending any changes necessary to assure that ASP continues to include goals relating to IDEA and anti-racism among its actions and mission. The committee will be in conversation on a regular basis with the Managing Director, Education Director, and Board about planned programming. Topics may include but not be limited to season productions, workshops, artist hiring, teaching artist hiring, and audience engagement.
 - It will include 1 Board member, the Artistic Director, 1 member from the staff, and 1 member from the RAC. This committee will also seek to include a community partner member, and appoint a staff member dedicated as a meeting "process observer."
<https://community-development.extension.org/what-is-a-process-observer/>.
- ASP is committed to working towards equal wages for actors and artists of all races. To that end, we will actively monitor our wages and benefits.

Long-Term - Internal (1-3 years)

- Board will work towards increasing BIPOC representation in its membership more reflective of the community that we serve. We commit to developing metric goals, with a 4-year goal of at least 50% BIPOC representation on the board.
- ASP's Board will expand its anti-racism learning so that all members are required to take Anti Racism/Anti-White Supremacy/Bystander Intervention training.
- Board meeting will periodically focus on strategizing to expand, evolve or deepen our understanding around the systematic oppression our company has engaged in and how to move past systems that we have created that support racism or white supremacy.

Operational Actions

Immediate External (1-12 months)

- ASP's leadership team will seek out options and commit to anti-racism/anti-white supremacy/bystander intervention training that will be administered for all staff and RAC members. This should include part time House Management staff, volunteers and interns.
- ASP will actively seek out BIPOC vendors, partners, and performance venues.
- ASP will create a safe work policy that includes intention of a 0% tolerance policy on discrimination, harassment, and oppression. This policy will include steps on how to take action against offenders and will be posted at all performance venues, staff meeting areas, and rehearsal spaces.
- ASP will seek out and engage with arts organizations locally and/or nationally to create an anti-racism/diversity affinity group that will help our organization to live up to its promises and help to create accountability support from other trusted organizations.

- ASP will reach out to BIPOC businesses and organizations and offer them at a discount unused advertising space in our production programs and a monthly e-blast BIPOC business spotlight.
- ASP will include its anti-racism/diversity statement and its action steps in all collateral moving forward for the company.
- ASP will include at least 1 BIPOC person among its house management team for every performance.

Long-Term External (1-3 Years)

- ASP will research equitable membership models as a possible replacement for the current ticketing subscription models.
- ASP will research a general admission seating policy with reserved seating available for those with accessibility needs in the hope of adjusting from the current practice.
- ASP will share our new initiatives with our constituents openly through collateral.
- ASP will seek out community events that lift anti-racism causes and work to have active representation at these events.

Immediate Internal (1-12 months)

- ASP will seek to increase BIPOC staff members in the immediate future.
- All existing staff and new hires will be required to take anti-racism and bystander intervention training.
- ASP will assure that advancing racial equity and learning about race equity is part of every staff member's job description and annual evaluation. This may include but is not limited to training, regular racial equity discussions, and regular check-ins.
- ASP will aim for all pay scales to become internally transparent.

Long Term Internal (1- 4 years)

- ASP will aim for increased BIPOC representation on the administrative team and support staff (ushers, house managers, etc.). Acknowledging that we have limited turnover for positions, ASP will develop diversity metrics for hiring pools to ensure that we consider as diverse a pool of potential staff as possible. The organization is also dedicated to expanding funding resources to improve the cultural representation of our staff.
- ASP will aim for accountability in its marketing policies in looking for new audiences. This should involve consciously tailoring additional marketing for specific audiences for certain shows.

Programmatic Actions

Immediate External (1-12 months)

- ASP's leadership team will seek out options and commit to an ongoing anti-racism/anti-white supremacy/bystander intervention training that can be administered for all artistic and education teaching artists.

- ASP commits to incorporating BIPOC playwrights, narratives, and/or interpretations for each season, with a goal of 40% representation annually.
- ASP will hire non-homogenous creative and production teams. (Actors, Directors, Designers, Dramaturgs, and Choreographers).
- ASP commits to producing a wide range of BIPOC narratives, and will engage experts in the field of restorative and social justice to support these productions to help give context, differing BIPOC perspectives, and mentorship as it applies to racial and cultural sensitivity.
- With an awareness that artists and artistic staff are often not adequately compensated for the full time they give to their organization--a significant burden which may particularly be increased for BIPOC members, and that their time has historically often been undervalued--ASP will continue exploring ways to provide more predictability and equity in its operations. This includes but is not limited to paying artists to attend donor events and post-show talkbacks; sharply decreasing the number of technical rehearsals; and instituting a 5-day work week.
- ASP will acknowledge the tribal land that we occupy and the Native peoples who have lived and continue to live on that land.
- ASP will hold auditions in Boston-area neighborhoods with a high population of BIPOC and underserved community members.

Long-Term External (1- 3 years)

- ASP will commit to increasing BIPOC representation in all of its artistic hiring.
- ASP's Artistic Director, Artistic Associate, Production Manager and Casting Associate will create a new strategy for nurturing and creating relationships with directors, playwrights, designers and actors of color--locally and nationally.
- ASP's Artistic Director and Director of Education will create annual Shakespeare and Theatre Training Workshops that focus on engaging early career actors and students of color who are interested in theater. This workshop will be a free offering to the local BIPOC community.

Immediate Internal (1 -12 months)

- ASP will require all artists who work with us to sign off on racial equity, anti-racism and anti-white supremacy policies and partake in anti-racism training to work with our company.
- ASP will create a minimum casting, creative and production team hiring policy that focuses on increasing BIPOC representation.

Long-Term Internal (1 - 3 years)

- ASP will aim for at least one cultural partner for every play we do and at least one long term cultural partner for the season and beyond. These organizations should be social justice, racial equity, or services organizations.
- ASP will research the budgetary possibilities and the changes that need to be affected for complete equitable pay when it applies to actors and designers who are union and non-union

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References for the Action Plan

- <https://www.racialequitytools.org/plan/action-plan/action-plan-examples>
- https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-07-2017/resilient_boston.pdf
- https://dallascityhall.com/government/Council%20Meeting%20Documents/hsn_5_equity-implementation-update_combined_031819.pdf
- <https://www.weseeyouwat.com/>
<https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/baltimore-center-stage-we-see-you-white-american-theatre-respons-71365/>
- <https://www.ofbyforall.org/>
- <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/bostoncitymassachusetts>
- <https://momentum.medium.com/the-7-hallmarks-of-an-antiracist-organization-e815d2d8dd68>

Anti-racism References for Personal Growth

Articles

“How to be anti-racist: Speak out in your own circles,” by Kristen Rogers

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/04/health/how-to-be-an-anti-racist-wellness/index.html>

“What is systemic racism? Here's what it means and how you can help dismantle it,” by N'dea Yancey-Bragg

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/06/15/systemic-racism-what-does-mean/5343549002/>

“What critical race theory is — and isn't,” by Faith Karimi

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/01/us/critical-race-theory-explainer-trnd/index.html>

“5 Journaling Prompts To Guide Your Anti-Racism Inquiry,” by Ibram X. Kendi

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/5-journaling-prompts-to-encourage-antiracism-from-ibram-x-kendi>

Why the term “BIPOC” is so complicated, explained by linguists,” by Constance Grady, Vox

<https://www.vox.com/2020/6/30/21300294/bipoc-what-does-it-mean-critical-race-linguistics-jonathan-rosa-deandra-miles-hercules>

Books

See “Anti Racist Reading List,”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/29/books/review/antiracist-reading-list-ibram-x-kendi.html>

See “A Reading List On Race For Allies Who Want To Do Better,” by Arielle Gray

<https://www.wbur.org/news/2020/06/17/reading-list-on-race-for-allies>

Podcasts

“These must-listen podcasts are raising marginalized voices,” by Christi Scott
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/23/us/podcasts-social-justice-medium-trnd/index.html>

Theater, TV, and Film

“New York Knows Its Arts Organizations Have a Diversity Problem. Now What?” by Julia Jacobs
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/29/arts/design/diversity-new-york-culture.html>

“13 TV episodes can help you teach your kids about racism, prejudice, and privilege,” by Ni’Kesia Pannell
https://apple.news/AHLeYC07fQsG7Ban_Ec_oA

“10 Black History Movies and Docuseries to Educate Yourself on Anti-Racism: Works to remind us of how far we’ve come—and how much further we have to go before everyone is truly equal,” by Shammara Lawrence
<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/g32961462/black-history-movies-anti-racism/>

Support and Political Action

“The World’s Most Basic Guide to Contacting Your Reps: If you want to take action against police brutality, this is an easy place to start,” by Hannah Smothers
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/935bye/basic-guide-to-finding-and-calling-your-representatives>

“168 Ways to Donate in Support of Black Lives and Communities of Color,” The Editors of New York Magazine
<https://nymag.com/strategist/article/where-to-donate-for-black-lives-matter.html>

Another Full List of Anti-racist Resources

“A Detailed List of Anti-Racism Sources,” by Katie Couric
<https://medium.com/wake-up-call/a-detailed-list-of-anti-racism-resources-a34b259a3eea>

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