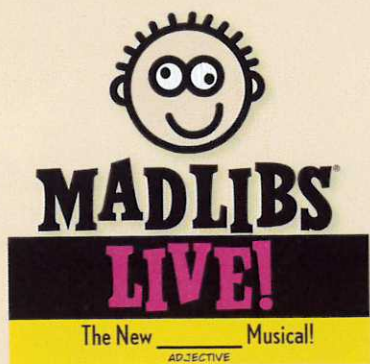


# R&H TYA COLLECTION!

THEATRICALS



MUSIC BY Jeff Thomson  
BOOK AND LYRICS BY Robin Rothstein



BASED ON A STORY BY Cedella Marley  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY Bob Marley  
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY Michael J. Bobbitt  
ARRANGEMENTS, ORCHESTRATIONS, ADDITIONAL  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY John L. Cornelius, II



FROM THE BOOK | CONCEIVED BY  
Marlo Thomas & Friends  
ADAPTATION WRITTEN FOR THE STAGE BY  
Douglas Love and Regina Safran



Based on the Comic Strip "GARFIELD" by Jim Davis  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY John L. Cornelius II  
BOOK BY Michael J. Bobbitt & Jim Davis

## ADDITIONAL TYA TITLES AVAILABLE TO LICENSE FROM R&H THEATRICALS



MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
Alan Schmuckler  
BOOK BY David Holstein



MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
Neil Bartram  
BOOK BY Brian Hill



BOOK AND LYRICS BY  
Jake Brunger  
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
Pippa Cleary



BOOK, MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
Janet Yates Vogt and Mark Friedman



# A CALL TO CHANGE

## Anti-racist Practices in TYA Organizations

Buster, Alex, and their 4th grade helpers travel on a wild bus ride through space and time back to Little Rock, AR as Little Rock Central High was first desegregated in Creative Action's interactive performance residency, *The Courage to Stand*. Austin, TX. Photo by Tyler O'Neill.

As a community, we in the Theatre for Young Audiences field directly impact young community members who will ultimately shape the future of our country and our world. It is our duty and in our best interest to practice, share, and work with young people in the most inclusive and equitable ways to create the world for which we hope and dream. In the current political administration, it becomes increasingly necessary for our theatre companies and practitioners to dedicate their work to fight against the oppressive hegemony that obliterates our institutions. Simultaneously, we must create new spaces and practices that push our world forward and model to our young people the right thing to do: make space for everyone at the table. If the table does not work for everyone, make a new one.

While we focus on race in this article, racism does not exist in a bubble but rather in an oppressive cacophony of white-, male-, hetero-, cis-, upper middle class-, Christian-, able bodied-normative culture. It is up to those in positions of power and privilege to open up historically oppressive spaces and make them multicultural spaces where marginalized voices and experiences are centered. If not, historically white spaces perpetuate white supremacy in our own communities, and therefore across our country. In this article, we examine three institutions in which leadership is mostly, if not all, white, as is typical in US TYA theatres. We spoke with their executive leaders, staff members, and board members to learn how they are taking steps towards racial justice in their organizations. We, Cortney (white female) and Mateo (Latinx male) have devoted our own life's work to equity and inclusion across spaces that we control and those in which we collaboratively work. What follows are our discoveries from these companies within the lens of our own work alongside communities of color and young people.

Learn more at [www.rnh.com/tya](http://www.rnh.com/tya)

La Shone Kelly, Arvin Jalandoon, Glenn Obrero, Brandon Rivera, and Gaby FeBland in *Akeelah and the Bee* by Cheryl L. West. Adventure Stage Chicago. Chicago, IL. Photo by Doug Haight.



## ADVENTURE STAGE CHICAGO

**ADVENTURE STAGE CHICAGO (ASC)** “creates and tells heroic stories about and for young people.” As a program of the 126-year-old Northwestern Settlement, ASC operates within a larger organization that aims to disrupt generational poverty in Chicago’s West Town neighborhood. This organizational and geographical context greatly influences the work commissioned and produced by the theatre company. “The primary product that we are creating are the stories that are told,” explains Executive Director Mary Kate Barley-Jenkins. “One of the prime objectives is to make sure that the stories that are told are reflective and inclusive of the community in which we reside and the community that the settlement house serves.”

To this end, ASC began creating original works with inspiration and input from their neighbors in West Town, a majority of whom are people of color. In 2016, playwright Carlos Murillo joined the ASC staff through the National Playwright Residency Program funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. With Murillo’s artistic lens and fresh perspective, the company has devoted the next three years to exploration of critical topics – including hunger, literacy, and shelter – through inquiry and participatory performance. Their new play process, recently rebranded as “Community Crossings,” involves West Town residents in every part of the process – from conception to production.

Agency and inclusivity are not limited to the stage at ASC, however. “[As a staff member], there is so much ownership, and you do feel really empowered,” says board member and former Marketing & Communications Coordinator Mariaelena Morales. “I don’t know which came first – I don’t know if it’s because of the art that we create this environment that is very equitable or if there was this environment and that led to the art.” This working environment defined by ownership and collaboration points to an organization that values difference.

ASC’s dedication to racial justice is reflected in the boardroom, too. Barley-Jenkins steps outside of her own “traditional, white” network to recruit a board of trustees that mirrors the community ASC serves. “You can’t just put something out there and hope it reaches a wider net,” she says. “You have to take responsibility and committed action to reach that wider network that goes beyond your own.” Morales offers that ASC’s firm stance to inclusion and community participation makes it easier to identify potential staff and board members. “You have to believe in this company,” she says, “and that becomes the main recruitment point. It never feels like they’re trying to fill a quota, but it just happens because they cast a wide net in terms of who can come in these doors and be part of the experience.” At ASC, inclusion is the foundation of a towering commitment to community, the settlement house mission, and artistic excellence.

**“YOU CAN’T JUST PUT SOMETHING OUT THERE AND HOPE IT REACHES A WIDER NET. YOU HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMITTED ACTION TO REACH THAT WIDER NETWORK THAT GOES BEYOND YOUR OWN.” – Mary Kate Barley-Jenkins**

**"IT'S CRITICAL, AND I THINK IT'S URGENT, BECAUSE I DON'T THINK OUR FIELD IS DOING ALL IT SHOULD BE DOING." – Peter Brosius**

In 2013, **CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY (CTC)** in Minneapolis, MN announced its ACT One initiative, described as a "cohesive platform for access, diversity, and inclusion in our audiences, our programs, our staff, and our board." Executive Director Kimberly Motes explains that ACT One codified pre-existing efforts throughout the organization and cast vision for the future: "It was a way of saying, 'what is the stake in the ground, what is the commitment we're making, and how do we articulate that very clearly?'"

This conversation began far before 2013, however, when Artistic Director Peter Brosius began his tenure at CTC, creating work reflective of the community was a high priority. Now in his 20th year at the company, Brosius continues to hold a commitment to connect the work of CTC more deeply to the community and to commission more artists of color to write plays for young audiences. "We are a nation that is strong because of its diversity, strong because of its immigrant history, strong because of the differences between us that create a kind of energy, friction, combustibility that make this country alive and vital and unique in this world," Brosius remarks. He continues, "So how do you make sure that the work on stage and who's making the work and who's on the board and who's on the staff reflects the nation and the community you live in?"

CTC is dedicating money, resources, and time to exploring this question. CTC has joined forces with other large cultural organizations in the Twin Cities, including the Minnesota Zoo, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Minnesota Children's Museum. These organizations have met consistently over the past 10 years to address disparity and inequity in the cultural sector of Minnesota's economy,

collectively and individually committing to making their staffs representative of their state by 2020. As a part of this city-wide effort, 40-100 staff members of each institution have gone through multiple training sessions, and CTC also offers regular brown bag lunch trainings for staff on topics related to equity and inclusion. LGBTQIA employees and employees of color have formed employee resource groups, and the company will not close a job posting until a diverse pool of finalists has been interviewed. Additionally, CTC works with Howard University and Augsburg College to create paid internship opportunities for emerging leaders. Finally, the company has recently created a Director of Community Partnerships and Inclusion position, restructuring a previous position to allow for a senior leader in the company to fully focus on the ACT One initiative.

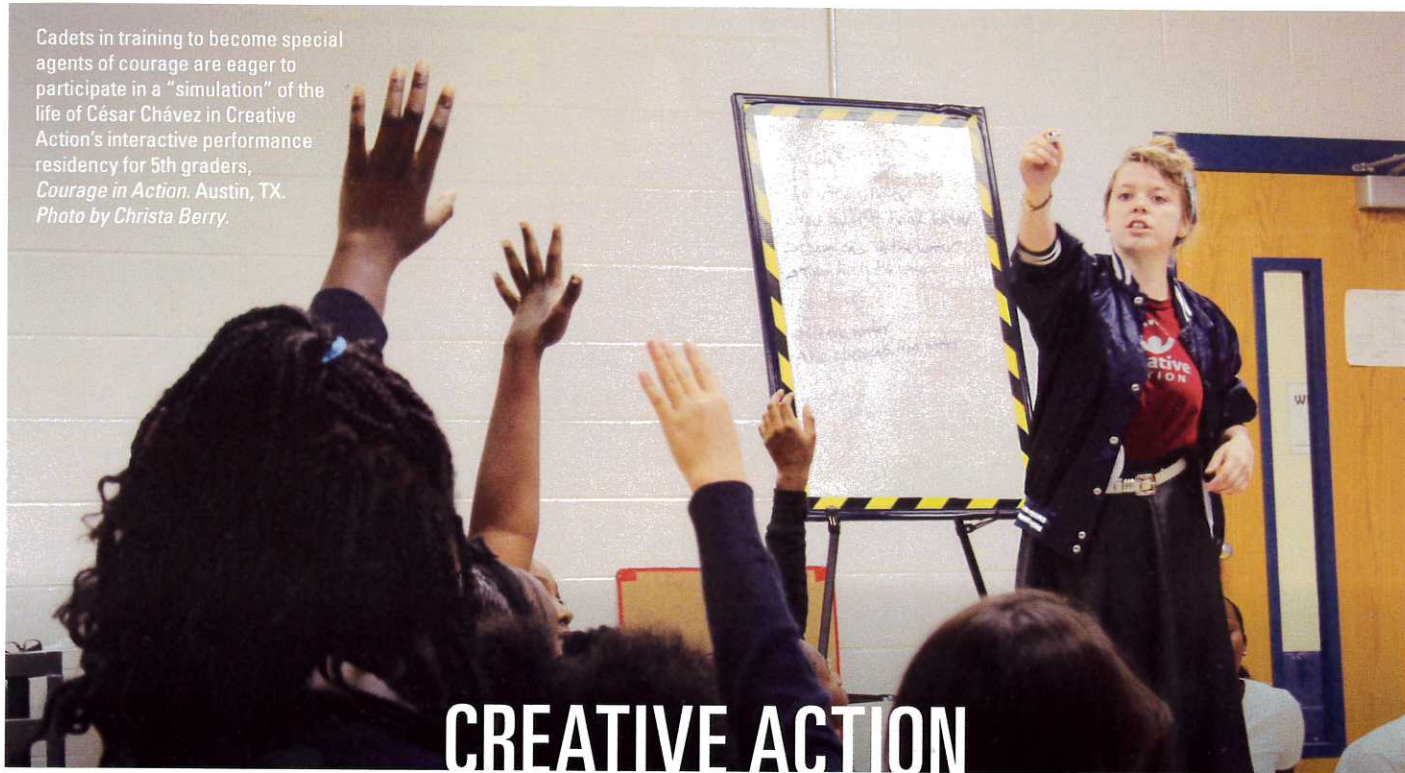
The "T" in "ACT" refers to "Transform," indicating CTC's commitment to transform into "a more diverse and inclusive organization." But transformation is an ongoing process. Each year, CTC uses a survey to assess their progress in becoming a more equitable workplace, gathering information from all employees and guest artists. Employee performance reviews also incorporate a question regarding each individual staff member's role in carrying out ACT One goals, and job descriptions have been edited to include staff responsibilities pertaining to equity in the organization. Motes explains that each of these small tactics are a part of a larger exploration: "How do you drive home to staff that this is of critical importance, and how do we make sure that everyone feels like they can bring their authentic self to the table?" Brosius agrees, adding, "It's critical, and I think it's urgent, because I don't think our field is doing all it should be doing. Particularly in these fractious and divisive times, I think it's more important than ever that we are leaders."

## CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY



Meghan Kriedler as Tiger Lily in *Peter Pan the Musical*, Children's Theatre Company, Minneapolis, MN. Photo by Dan Norman.

Cadets in training to become special agents of courage are eager to participate in a "simulation" of the life of César Chávez in Creative Action's interactive performance residency for 5th graders, *Courage in Action*. Austin, TX. Photo by Christa Berry.



## CREATIVE ACTION

**CREATIVE ACTION** is a multi-disciplinary arts youth development organization serving young people in Austin, TX. This organization is committed to fostering “4c students” in which the students they engage are Creative artists, Critical thinkers, Confident leaders, and Courageous allies. Natalie Goodnow, school-based programs director, shared that this concept of an ideal Creative Action is informed by their core values of working towards outcomes in creative expression and social-emotional development, as well as a commitment to social justice and twenty-first century skills. Goodnow shared, “We’re really looking at ways that young people can use their critical thinking skills to recognize injustices and be courageous allies and use their leadership skills and creativity to stand up and do something about it.”

In the summer of 2015, as a response to the political climate (shortly after the Charleston terrorist attack), Karen LaShelle, executive director, called together staff from across the organization to ask them to think about what more Creative Action could say and do to strengthen their work through anti-oppression and anti-racist lenses. In the fall, LaShelle called these staff members and others to create a diverse group along racial, experiential, and departmental identity markers to form a so-called Social Justice Planning Group that would strategize how these ideas could infiltrate the work Creative Action does. This group worked with social justice consultant Renée Watson to facilitate workshops with full-time and part-time staff. In January of 2016, LaShelle was very intentional to have members from across the organization lead this charge - both because of the plurality of voices that this work calls for as well as breaking traditional

hierarchical power dynamics in the organization. This group focused their anti-oppression work on anti-racism, as that was the most tangible for the communities in which they worked.

A large goal for LaShelle in this work is giving people of color a way to see themselves enter the work that Creative Action does with young people. Their work with teaching artists in and out of school contexts is of particular note with their commitment to becoming an anti-racist multicultural organization. With close to 100 teaching artists, the training and recruitment of this size group is the bulk of the work because they are the direct link to the young people with which Creative Action engages. Trainings for staff include knowledge around various social justice topics as well as separate affinity spaces for people of color and white allies. LaShelle shared with us, “Often times when these issues come up, historically and in other organizations that I have been a part of, or for even here, we end up talking a lot about staffing and we end up talking about ‘oh well we need more people of color working here.’ And I felt very frustrated by that as the solution to this problem because I felt like it’s much more of an ecosystem than that, you just don’t get more people of color and that solves the problem ... That’s not actually going to solve the problem. If you don’t have enough people of color working for you then you need to understand well, why don’t you? Well there’s a lot of external factors but there can also be internal factors. Are we a place where people of color want to work? That they feel safe, they feel included, that they feel welcomed, that they feel like they belong. And if not, then what do we need to do in order to make sure they feel that way?”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Learn from others, but also find others to help.** We can only do so much learning from each other, literature, and online resources before we need another human who can help us to dissect and analyze our practices. Creative Action invited a consultant to assist them in their work, while Adventure Stage is working with a playwright who is committed to community. You aren't limited to these options, however; external perspective can come in the form of an equity/diversity/inclusion consultant, a community member active in the social justice fight, colleagues from other institutions, community partners, etc.

**Leadership matters.** Support from the executive and senior leaders of an organization is necessary for change, but it's okay to make room for other staff to lead efforts towards racial justice. At Creative Action, LaShelle recommended that employees collaboratively design goals and conversations around racial justice without her guidance because, as Goodnow explains, "of the power relationships that exist." Two areas of focus subsequently emerged from a staff planning committee: ongoing education and structural interventions. A separate staff facilitation committee leads trainings for employees, while LaShelle works to implement recommended structural interventions from her position of power in the organization. Additionally, LaShelle makes space for her staff members to do this work. Social justice is core to Creative Action's mission - not an add-on - and LaShelle makes sure that staff have capacity to carry this out both internally and in their externally-facing programs.

**Get the board on board.** Executive leadership in the TYA field must be more representative of our communities and of our nation as a whole. In non-profit organizations, this can only be carried out by active and anti-racist boards of trustees. In a recently published open letter, members of the Black Theatre Commons exhorted trustees: "For far too long, the executive leadership of many theatre organizations has remained predominantly white and male. There is a large pool of diverse, talented, capable leaders who should be considered as candidates for available leadership roles at your organization." Organizations must prepare for the opportunities found in leadership changeover by recruiting trustees with a relentless dedication to equity and representation.

**Put it in the budget.** Motes from Children's Theatre Company warns, "If it's not in the budget, it's not going to happen." Hiring consultants, assessing staff experience, paying translators, finding new avenues for staff recruitment - it all costs money. Prepare for both expected and unexpected costs, and make it a part of your annual, general operating budget.

**Plan for responsiveness.** As the saying goes, write your plans in pencil. Particularly as your organization moves intentionally towards racial justice, and as staff members grow in awareness, goals will shift and change. At Creative Action, the long-term plans include

maintaining a social justice leadership team to help implement plans and facilitate training, but different employees with fresh perspectives will rotate on and off of this team. Goodnow adds, "At this point, some of those [original] plans are a couple of years old, so they don't feel relevant any more. We're always making plans in this organization, so hopefully if we're doing a good job with that ongoing learning and education then we're just taking that lens and that awareness to all the plans that we're making."

**Build more pathways to power.** This includes but is not limited to paid, entry-level positions, fellowships, etc. The Fellowship Program at Steppenwolf, The Bill Foeller Fellowship at Williamstown Theatre Festival, and The Rising Leaders of Color Program at Theatre Communications Group are models of transparency in their clearly stated goals for people of color to fill these positions and gain entry to these institutions. Other theatres followed these examples and began to create entry-level fellowships and early-career positions for people of color. This model directly enacts the change that leadership want to see, and it exists as a form of reparations to our communities of color. For so long, people of color did not have a clear path to working in a theatre, did not see themselves on or off stage, and were excluded from formal training spaces. CTC has adopted this kind of model in its relationship with Howard University, where paid internships and fellowships are giving these young professionals a way in. As a way of amends for violence done to our communities of color, forging new pathways and pipelines to more power is how we will see a true change in the racial makeup of our staff and leadership.

**Assess the current situation regularly.** CTC distributes an annual ACT One survey to all staff and guest artists, assessing employee experiences and work through an EDI lens. After staff-led trainings for employees, Creative Action used a notecard strategy to receive feedback about what was most impactful and most useful to them. Assessment tools should document where your organization stands and direct your next steps. Find multiple ways to assess what you and your staff know, practice, and speak constantly.

**Articulate your commitment frequently and loudly.** Tom Arvetis, artistic director at Adventure Stage, wrote a poignant response to the 2016 Presidential Election, addressing the Adventure Stage community. He reminded them of what Adventure Stage stands for, insisted that would not change, and acknowledged that the fight would become even more challenging. Reminding yourself, your staff, and those you serve of your promise to fight for justice and equity is a concrete way to ensure everyone is on the same page, especially when jarring experiences and crises occur in our world. For some, this kind of proclamation may be new and provoke some hesitation, but it is by our willingness to be outspoken that we will be held accountable. We can help to shepherd our communities into this work alongside us.

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## CAUTIONS

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**Authenticity is key.** The work to become an anti-racist multicultural institution requires an authenticity that passes the smell test. Particularly because communities of color have been exploited and tokenized by countless institutions in our nation's history, the effort we need to put into the invitation, caring, and uplifting of these communities is monumental. While this level of engagement may seem daunting, it is the only way to truly and honestly become a multicultural institution. Goodnow from Creative Action reminds us that this authentic work takes time and if done quickly, only creates more mess. So please, allot the necessary time, resources, people, and effort to do this work authentically or do not attempt at all.

**This work never ends.** "While I feel really confident about the work that's on stage and our work with artists," Barley-Jenkins from Adventure Stage says, "we can *always* do a better job." You may complete your initial goals, but those goals should lead to new awareness, which should produce new goals. Stay in the fight, and practice resilience along the way.

**This is not just about our young people and artists of color.** LaShelle from Creative Action reminds us of the work we do with our young people and how these conversations should be had with all of our young people, across identity markers. If anything, our young white people need knowledge of privilege and racism more than our young people of color who live on the oppressive end of systems and institutions everyday. When the word "diversity" is raised we immediately rush to thoughts of access and engaging our communities of color, rightfully so. But let us not forget that in our strides towards a more just world, everyone must be educated on the injustices and violence perpetrated on all of our communities of color.

**Don't rely on marginalized staff members to educate their oppressors.** While hiring people of color is important, employees of color should not bear the responsibility to fix problems stemming from institutionalized barriers and injustices. Ensure that people of color in your organization are not expected to take on this labor, unless they are paid to provide consultation or education.

**Find a balance between urgency and thoroughness.** "This work takes time," reminds Motes, "so allow for you and your staff to take time, but also [consider] how you can move it as quickly as possible." Goodnow agrees, saying, "Move slow to go fast." Assessment tools can help to measure and articulate success when change seems unnoticeable.

**Cultivate and nurture an anti-racist working environment.** Workplace culture is a key indicator of an organization's commitment to dismantling oppression. In *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun provide a list of qualities that characterize white supremacy in the workplace, including perfectionism, urgency, defensiveness, individualism, and power hoarding. Generate multiple ways for staff to give feedback or point out issues, then take their experiences and emotions seriously.

**Folks of color, take care of yourself.** William Smith of The University of Utah coined the term "racial battle fatigue" in the early 2000s with his research on students of color in a traditionally white university setting. When conversations of race and racism arise, people of color are going to experience fatigue from being reminded of the trauma they hold because of their race as well as from speaking of their experience as a person of color. People of color, please take the time and resources to take care of yourself and even step away if needed. White folks, please do your best to recognize that this fatigue is real and honor the hard work that we all, especially our people of color, are doing in these conversations. Spaces of healing can and should be setup to detox from these tough and immensely heavy forums.

**White folks, embrace discomfort.** The actions necessary for a more just world will be uncomfortable for white people who always benefit from racial injustice. White staff members must acknowledge privilege and work against fragility, taking advantage of every opportunity and tool for self-education. "Being in a leadership position is never comfortable, or at least it shouldn't be if you're constantly striving to be your best and push your organization forward," Barley-Jenkins asserts. "You have to be willing to be uncomfortable." Notions of comfort and safety can often be conflated and manipulated in dialogue around racial inequity. It's important to notice who is claiming discomfort and what voices are silenced in the name of safety.

**If we want to inspire young people to change the world, let's start in our own organizations first.** Let's do it together, anticipating mistakes, practicing humility and integrity, owning our impact as well as our intention, and centering the folks of color who have been marginalized in our field since its recorded beginnings. If you've been waiting for a reason to do something, let this article be your reason. If you've been waiting to start this work because of a fear of discomfort, because of possible negative reactions from trustees and donors, because you aren't sure it will be financially worthwhile,

the work needs to start with you first. Check out the resources we've included here and begin to educate yourself on your own power and privilege. If you are working for an organization that needs to make changes, but you are not in a position of power to do so, find something you can do. Can you organize an employee resource group? Can you consider how equity is at play in the programs you run or the emails you write? Can you mentor a college student or young professional? Find the steps that are possible for you, and then report the positive outcomes to your supervisors and leadership. Create a culture of storytelling in your offices as well as on your stages – tell the stories of marginalization, of silencing, of oppression; tell stories of action and justice.

The work of Adventure Stage, Children's Theatre Company, and Creative Action is exciting, thoughtful, and forward-moving. We are grateful to their staff, leadership, and board members for speaking with us and sharing their challenges as well as their progress. However, the bar can always be moved higher. Our field can learn from the history of crippling racism in our institutions and our nation, thus allowing that learning give

rise to action. In a year, we hope to write an article centering on racial reconciliation, redistribution, and reparations across the field of TYA. We hope we will write about staff-led movements and leadership-supported revolutions. We hope that every system, structure, habit, and routine will be interrogated with a recognition of the harmful and oppressive contexts in which they were often birthed. And finally, we hope you will write us, invite us to learn more about your efforts, and keep pushing to learn more, to experiment more, and to change more.

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**Cortney McEniry** is an applied and community-based artist currently working as the Director of Community Engagement at Milwaukee Repertory Theater. You can reach her at [cortney.mceniry@gmail.com](mailto:cortney.mceniry@gmail.com).

## RESOURCES

- > Racial Equity Tools  
[racialequitytools.org](http://racialequitytools.org)
- > *Confronting Racial Bias at Work*, Race Forward  
<https://www.raceforward.org/system/files/pdf/reports/RacialBiasAtWork.pdf>
- > *Moving the Race Conversation Forward*, Race Forward  
<https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/moving-race-conversation-forward>
- > *Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book for Social Change Groups*, Western States Center  
<http://www.westernstatescenter.org/tools-and-resources/Tools/Dismantling%20Racism>
- > *Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks)*, Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun  
<http://www.dismantlingracism.org>
- > *Don't Miss this Opportunity to Diversify Your Leadership*, Black Theatre Commons  
<https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/09/27/dont-miss-this-opportunity-to-diversify-your-leadership/>
- > artEquity's Resource Database  
<http://www.artequity.org/resources>