



LEARN. DO. LIVE.

To: Our students, professional and academic colleagues, the CWU and Ellensburg community, and our friends:

The Department of Theatre Arts apologizes for the racialized trauma fostered in the past by some of our productions, and in our classrooms. We want to share our commitment to do better.

We realize we never apologized or resolved issues raised by students and colleagues in winter 2017 and would like to do so now. Thank you for offering this gift, a mirror, through which to hold each other accountable for our actions and examine ourselves, our department, and our field. We are committing to take the time to reflect on this gift.

In the academic year 2016/2017, the faculty and staff of Central Washington University's Theatre Arts department were not actively working to dismantle racist structures in our department and in our teaching. That lack of awareness, we now realize, perpetuated and upheld such structures. And for that we are sorry.

To those of you who spoke up: we regret it is only now we are able to hear your pain. We are sorry we didn't listen more closely and act more specifically to address concerns raised by students and faculty. We are sorry for our parts in causing harm to our students, faculty, and audiences. We also acknowledge some of the shows we've produced had problematic and harmful racial interpretations.

Being called on our racism stings. It stings because it challenges our self-image of being good people and good professors. It stings because we often think racism is found in big, towering acts of violence that we can directly point to. It stings because we often think racism requires a deliberate action. We now recognize none of this is accurate. Racism is mundane. It's built into the fabric of our society on every level. And as beneficiaries to that racist system, we have an obligation to unlearn the lies our education, our narratives/stories, and our mythologies have told us and led us to believe.

We acknowledge this process, when undertaken thoughtfully and intentionally, will take more time and be more painful than we may desire. Individuals may make significant changes swifter than the institution.

As Provost Michelle DenBeste said in a recent letter to the campus, it is important that we develop concrete actions so that we move forward, learn from one another, and change harmful structures. With that in mind, we commit to making these changes and will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of each change.

Theatre Arts

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We also commit to making our department a safe space for BIPOC students and students from all diverse identities. We recognize we will never be finished with this task as it is a daily practice to unlearn racism. We know we may fail as we try. Still, we commit to the work. Change might take time, but change can't wait.

We know an apology will not take back the hurt. Listed are the concrete steps we have taken to address racist bias and a range of issues revealed to us in 2017. It encompasses our plans for the future, which include a broader and deeper investigation of racism present in our classrooms, department, productions, institution, and industry.

We invite you to hold us accountable by checking-in with us in a quarter, and in a year, to evaluate our progress. We hope this will start to rebuild lost trust and forge a stronger Theatre Arts Department.

We have heard the voices of those we ignored for too long and promise that we will do better.

Theatre Department Faculty

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