

Dear Muhlenberg Theatre & Dance Community —

The faculty and staff of the Theatre & Dance Department have watched with horror and fury as George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis. It is not the first time this has happened. We have felt, individually and collectively, the need to express that outrage. We have struggled with the anguish of speaking aloud the truth about the American system of policing: that it is white supremacist, that it is brutal, and that it continues to kill Black people. The protests gripping our nation are showing us the way: now is the time to be brave in our anguish, to overcome our discomfort in naming the ugliness. As artists, we've never been that concerned with being polite. And now, none of us can afford to.

Black lives matter. Black voices matter. Black loves matter. Black ambitions, Black work, Black thoughts, Black movement, Black words — they matter, deeply. We believe this. We work to live that belief; we can, will, and must do better.

We believe that stories matter, that the stories we tell have an impact. As a Theatre & Dance Department, we must be committed to amplifying the voices of artists of color — the artists whose stories we present, and the students, faculty, and staff who are members of our Theatre & Dance community. We do not congratulate ourselves here. What we have done so far is important, but it's not as important as what we do going forward.

The Theatre & Dance Department is committed to anti-racism, and we are committed to making a plan to live that commitment as an artistic institution. That means seeking and providing training for students and faculty in ethical practice. That means squaring off with the historic racism of canonical works of theatre and dance. That means scrutinizing our casting practices. It means looking around the room and acknowledging that far too few of the people in the circle are people of color. It means having difficult conversations. It means putting our money where our mouth is. It means asking you to share the insight of your lived experience with us — even and especially if that insight speaks to dissatisfaction with the department.

We already see truth spoken to power every year at Muhlenberg through the Sedehi Diversity Project, a student-led activism-as-art initiative that helps our college grapple directly with its ongoing crisis of whiteness. The SDP fosters honest conversations about power and oppression, and serves as a leadership institute for students from historically underrepresented communities, and students with otherwise marginalized identities. These students are among our most valuable leaders and teachers in this fight. Support them. Sign up to participate at muhlenberg.edu/diversityproject.

If you feel moved to learn more, or to contribute to the cause of demanding equality in policing and justice, this is a tool that we have found valuable: joincampaignzero.com

The college has also made available a list of anti-racist resources and links to racial justice organizations: muhlenberg.edu/diversityatmuhlenberg/anti-racistresources

We join you in saying “Enough.” #blacklivesmatter