

Theatre and higher education are both undergoing long-overdue but slow reckonings when it comes to diversity and inclusion. While some questions will always be debated, such as where to draw the line for actors portraying other identities, we're making progress in who's in the room, who gets to tell what stories, and increased agency in representation. As an essentially white, able-bodied, cisgender male, I've struggled with questions of appropriation of styles or techniques, how to best support students of color and international students, and best ways to accommodate student challenges (including physical limitations, neurodiversity, and language barriers) – but it begins with opening the conversation to all interested parties. I've studied theatrical and movement traditions from Europe, Asia, and to some degree Africa and the Americas, and share them as a librarian might books, knowing the authorship is not my own and that the lineages and traditions have their own intrinsic values and history. That said, we cannot follow traditions rote and stay relevant in a constantly evolving culture, and many canonical approaches and works have problematic elements that need careful framing and discussion if taught or produced.

I've been fortunate to be able to learn from diverse teams at Karamu House (the oldest African American theater), Cleveland Public Theatre, Cleveland Play House, many media projects, and elsewhere, seeing first-hand how underrepresented voices enliven the project and the industry at large. Working an early production of Larissa Fasthorse's *What Would Crazy Horse Do?* accidentally highlighted establishment theatre's Eurocentric biases, through the eyes of native first-time actors. Those cultural exchanges were illuminating and productive.

On the SAFD Development Committee I worked to expand training opportunities for underserved/underrepresented communities, including free certification courses, and caretaker scholarships for the SAFD Nationals through the Parent Artist Advocacy League. We can't be inclusive towards people who can't make it into the room, so these early-training initiatives are vital.

It starts with exposure. In Cleveland, I and some of my students were able to work on multiple Dominique Morisseau shows, and meet both her and Henry David Hwang. Teaching on Zoom also allowed me to highlight more diverse productions in class, like streaming versions of *Pipeline*, *American Moor*, and *Where Did We Sit on the Bus?*, and to Zoom in (and pay) colleagues for topics including African martial arts, and theatrical intimacy and gender identity. It's important to provide a range of opportunities for students to see themselves and their passions reflected in the industry.

Formal diversity training I've had over the years includes a semester-long faculty seminar (the "Advancing Internationalism, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Teaching & Learning Collaborative") and training focused on issues affecting specific communities: Safe Zone LGBT, Veteran-friendly, Native Issues, Anti-racist theatre, and a range of general Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion programs. My takeaways from these many experiences include specific adjustments (thoughtful pronoun use, casting surveys at the beginning of classes focusing on performative identities in a professional, non-invasive manner, providing do-rags when using masks, having more diverse examples and anecdotes to use), a general heightened awareness of the importance of a supportive, safe, consensual and trauma-informed classroom, and of when to question my self, sources, or students versus when to listen to or amplify the voices of others. Continuing self-reflection and communication will hopefully help me open the doors a bit wider, and then adapt to best serve the needs of those in the room.