



Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, & Accessibility

Throughout my life I have long been an advocate for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I take this work very seriously and find it of utmost importance so that my current and future students can walk into my classroom knowing that they are in a safe space where they will be recognized, valued, and given the utmost respect. I make sure race and culture are honored by recognizing and discussing it in all the text and materials we work with together. The desire to recognize and support underrepresented communities started with my examination into our prison system when I first started community college. Though I was young at the time, my interest in helping these communities really began with observing the youth in the juvenile detention system in the town I grew up in. I quickly recognized many of these kids needed a mentor that would listen to them and give them the support they needed that they were not getting at home. I was lucky enough to sit and talk with many of them and hear their stories. As a former drag performer, I consistently raised awareness and money for children living with HIV/AIDS. The drag community was always a loving family to me growing up, and because of that love and support I am a much more powerful human being than I could have ever imagined.

Anti-Oppressive Classroom

Even though I identify as queer, I am aware that I am also a white cisgender male which places me in a privileged hierarchy. I am transparent about this to my students as part of my professor introduction. I acknowledge this because I do not want to limit my students' academic learning because of my own race and positional status in the classroom. I disrupt that positional power and instead distribute that power towards my students for their own self-direction and self-growth. If I am asking my students to be brave and bring their own authentic selves into the classroom, it must start with me, the teacher, being honest with who I am. This includes reframing any standard language ideology (white language supremacy), which has had a long history of unbalanced authority and approach that extensively inhibits the student from bringing their own vernacular into the classroom. Just a small example of changing up the language is I try to avoid using the word "technique" as technique sets a standard to the actor that it must be done in an exclusive way that blocks their own exploration. I instead use "approach" because, I believe, a good teacher, even one who created a technique, is still open to reframing and improving their work. Much of this foundational work is credited to Theatrical Intimacy Education.

The learning environment I set in my classroom is primarily one that has been agreed upon and set in motion from our community agreements on day one. These community agreements honor each voice in the classroom. My curriculum will be under constant examination as I collaborate with my students and am attentive to their needs for learning. I know at many teaching institutions there is an expectation for grades, and I understand that expectation. I, however, find grades to be a block for our students as they place unnecessary emphasis on objective "excellence" instead of finding themselves augmented into the exploration of their work. Grades will never be the focus of my classroom, and, in fact, I would continue to explore the opportunity of an ungraded system. This is part of my ongoing work to open a classroom that is more inclusive so that the student is examining, growing, and evaluating their own work rather than being judged on a history of a hierarchical rewarded system of grades.

Educating

I have made a commitment to continuing my education of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Over the past two years, I have been in the room listening and learning from many voices, especially people of the global majority. I have attended events with organizations that have deepened my knowledge:

- Black Acting Methods Studio Los Angeles Intensive (eight-hour workshop with Black Acting Methods Studio teachers Kashi Johnson, Dr. Sharrell D. Lockett, & Rahbi Hines)
- Black Acting Methods University (Acting Methods for the 21st Century)
- Anti-Racism & Black Acting Methods (Approaches to Liberatory Theatre Practices)
- Black Acting Methods University (Acting While Black: Essential Tools to Thrive, Diversifying Approaches to Acting, Acting & Directing McCraney)
- Center Theatre Group (Resilience & Change, Going Pro Career Fair 2021)
- Diversity + Theatre (Inclusivity & Theatre: Strategies for Teaching & Practice)
- American Society for Theatre Research (Season selection with an Anti-Racist Approach)
- Association for Theatre in Higher Education (Anti-Racism and Allyship, Re-Imagining the Acting Classroom with Anti-Racism Principles)

Institutional Action

In my final year of graduate school I made it my mission to incorporate textbooks, plays, and scene work written by authors of the global majority in my classroom. I will continue to be involved in research, talking points, and resume my involvement in EDIA causes within my university and beyond.

First year Graduate Student

- Researched and authored a paper entitled "A White Practitioner's Reflection on Black Acting Methods." This paper encourages all practitioners to bring Afrocentric performance methodologies into the classroom.

Second year Graduate Student

- Selected to serve on our theatre department's EDIA Committee.
- I was selected for a panel discussion that recommended pedagogical strategies that serve the global majority at the Comparative Drama Conference along with a presentation of my research paper "A White Practitioner's Reflection on Black Acting Methods."
- Joined Actors' Equity Association LGBTQ+ Community.
- I taught Beginning Acting for Non-Majors where students read, analyzed, and performed final scenes from the play *Everybody* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins.

Third year Graduate Student

- I am under the mentorship of instructor Dr. Anna Winget, and am the teaching assistant in their course, here at LMU, titled Queer Theatre, with the goal of teaching a similar course of my own in the future.
- I have begun incorporating exercises from Black Acting Methods into my classes and workshops.
- I have sought to bring in guest speakers of the global majority in my final thesis class.
- I am the first graduate student to receive the Arrupe Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award from Loyola Marymount University.

The higher calling of my pedagogical work, and as a new professor entering the higher education setting, I strive to continue my work of building an anti-racist theatre and classroom environment. This requires that I show up each and every single day for my students and do the work it takes to provide an equitable space for all. My classroom community is always one of real listening, learning, and supporting each other's voices and needs.