Dear TA Students and Alumni,

We live at a crossroads in every sense of the word, one that will shape our lives and work as artists and scholars going forward. The faculty wanted to take a moment and reflect on this Spring term and how our world is changing. Within the COVID-19 pandemic we all had to figure out how to carry on with theatre education even as theatres around the nation closed their doors temporarily. We were then devastated by the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, Riah Milton, and so many other Black people at the hands of police\* and the clear message that white supremacy and racism is alive in our land. While supporting Black Lives Matter and acknowledging our heartbreak and outrage about the excessive violence on the local, national and global scale, we also want to do three things:

First, we thank and honor you – for continuing school online while caring for friends, parents, children, grandparents, and your communities during the epidemic – for joining movements of protest across this country to stop racism and violence that a culture of white privilege enacts on people and communities of color.

Second, we want to declare our support for the June 5 aims of Black Student Collective ([https://uomatters.com/2020/06/black-student-collective-issues-list-of-demands-to-uo-trustees-pres-schill.htm](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/uomatters.com/2020/06/black-student-collective-issues-list-of-demands-to-uo-trustees-pres-schill.html__;!!C5qS4YX3!Q7c6wNZLNUFjok_u7_YPzRJ6l-poW4EoysVPisumOGQP4HcgCJdy75mySuhnBn3NfIU$)) as well as students of color both in our department and across UO in calling on the University to do more to reverse racism in our campus community.

Third, we want to engage with you, our students. We know that ending racism and inequity is not just the job for those who feel its pain, but the job for all of us. To begin this process, we invite you to join with us in questioning what Sarah Bellamy, Artistic Director of Penumbra Theatre in Minneapolis has called “the performance of whiteness” as we look for ways that our art form can foster increased empathy and social justice going forward.

To continue this process, we are planning a Week 1 community conversation between faculty and students in Theatre Arts to start exploring these questions directly so that we can chart a way forward together, working in partnership. As a starting point, we are each looking ahead to fall term with the following ideas:

* Reviewing course content with anti-racist and anti-oppressive strategies in mind.
* Committing to faculty conversations about cultural competencies that expand our production processes, including representation guidelines for season selection.
* Engaging in dialogue with students about these efforts.

These are challenging times for all of us, but the theatre opens space for dialogue, creative self-examination, empathy building, challenging the status quo, and sharing stories about our collective humanity. The fight for social justice has taken generations but, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right.” We hope that the coming year will provide all of us with ample opportunities to use our time creatively to do what is right.

Signed by the TA Faculty: Bradley Branam, Jeanette deJong, Jerry Hooker, Theresa May, Michael Najjar, Tricia Rodley, Janet Rose, John Schmor

\*The following list is not comprehensive, but it names many black Americans who have died at the hands of police in the U.S. since Eric Garner’s death in 2014. (NPR’s Code Switch: “A Decade of Watching Black People Die” May 31, 2020: <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/29/865261916/a-decade-of-watching-black-people-die>)

Eric Garner, John Crawford III, Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Dante Parker, Michelle Cusseaux, Laquan McDonald, Tanisha Anderson, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, Rumain Brisbon, Jerame Reid, George Mann, Matthew Ajibade, Frank Smart, Natasha McKenna, Tony Robinson, Anthony Hill, Mya Hall, Phillip White, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, William Chapman II, Alexia Christian, Brendon Glenn, Victor Manual Larosa, Jonathan Sanders, Freddie Gray, Joseph Mann, Salvado Ellswood, Sandra Bland, Albert Joseph Davis, Darrius Stewart, Billy Ray Davis, Samuel DuBose, Michael Sabbie, Brian Keith Day, Christian Taylor, Troy Robinson, Asshams Pharoah Manley, Felix Kumi, Keith Harrison McLeod, Junior Prosper, Lamontez Jones, Paterson Brown, Dominic Hutchinson, Anthony Ashford, Alonzo Smith, Tyree Crawford, India Kager, La’Vante Biggs, Michael Lee Marshall, Jamar Clark, Richard Perkins, Nathaniel Harris Pickett, Benni Lee Tignor, Miguel Espinal, Michael Noel, Kevin Matthews, Bettie Jones, Quintonio Legrier, Keith Childress Jr., Janet Wilson, Randy Nelson, Antronie Scott, Wendell Celestine, David Joseph, Calin Roquemore, Dyzhawn Perkins, Christopher Davis, Marco Loud, Peter Gaines, Torrey Robinson, Darius Robinson, Kevin Hicks, Mary Truxillo, Demarcus Semer, Willie Tillman, Terrill Thomas, Sylville Smith, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Terence Crutcher, Paul O’Neal, Alteria Woods, Jordan Edwards, Aaron Bailey, Ronell Foster, Stephon Clark, Antwon Rose II, Botham Jean, Pamela Turner, Dominique Clayton, Atatiana Jefferson, Christopher Whitfield, Christopher McCorvey, Eric Reason, Michael Lorenzo Dean, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, David McAtee, and George Floyd