

Dear Friends,

Our cities are full of protesters incensed about the murder of George Floyd and so many others. Protesters country and world-wide are raising voices to end racism from all corners of our lives. We passionately agree with the protesters — both their aims and right to peacefully assemble.

Frederick Douglass said: “It is not light that we need, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

Arena Stage opened in 1950 with a commitment to all audiences, white and black, in a time when other theaters in Washington, D.C., closed their doors in segregation. A dedication to all voices has been in Arena Stage’s bones from its creation. Arena’s production history and relationships with artists are examples of this dedication. Are we susceptible to our own prejudices and bias? Yes. Our minds are working to uncover prejudices and to fix them. We strive constantly and are in a sense buoyed by public response and outrage today to be part of the beginning of something new, and better, for America.

Within the last year, Arena Stage updated its mission statement. Some important words were added.

Arena Stage is the voice of American theater resident in our nation’s capital. Focused on American artists, our productions are innovative and representative of stories from across the country. We nurture new plays and reimagine classics. We celebrate our democracy and diversity through a multitude of voices in our productions and community engagement programs to inspire people to action. We produce all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, entertaining, deep and dangerous in the American spirit.

Democracy and diversity, deep and dangerous. There were many discussions about these words. In light of recent events, it will be more important than ever to go to the deep and dangerous places — to create the change we want to see in the world.

Black lives matter. All lives cannot matter until this no longer has to be said.

August Wilson said: “Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing.”

Arena Stage vows again to always do this. Arena Stage will always be a champion for American voices and values.

Sincerely,



Molly Smith
Artistic Director



Edgar Dobie
Executive Producer



Decker Anstrom
Chair, Board of Trustees



Beth Newburger Schwartz
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees



Judith Batty
*Immediate Past Chair,
Board of Trustees*



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