



ANTIRACISM, ACCESS, AND EQUITY POLICY

A Vision of Diversity, Community, and Openness

Delaware Shakespeare’s vision is a world where people from all walks of life are welcome to celebrate and explore their shared humanity through the lens of Shakespearean works. The celebration of shared humanity is greatest when a diverse cross-section of our community engages together. But to truly draw people from all walks of life, those individuals must be free to be their fullest and best selves whenever they interact with Delaware Shakespeare. Racism is one of the strongest forces limiting this full expression, and we are committed to eliminating its influence. Delaware Shakespeare aspires to be an antiracist theatre, which, in the words of Nicole M. Brewer, promotes “antiracist ideas, values, and policies that counter the oppression of any people” during every aspect of our work.

We acknowledge the need for an intersectional approach to diversity, as there are many interconnected factors such as race, gender expression and identity, age, ability, nationality, socio-economic status, and the many other composite forms and life experiences that span these differences.

Fostering an environment of openness, Delaware Shakespeare aims to find community within diversity and inclusion throughout every aspect of our organization and during all our work.

A Word on Shakespeare and Theatre

We recognize and acknowledge that William Shakespeare’s body of work reflects a traditionally white and Euro-centric perspective that is neither fully inclusive nor reflective of the community that we serve. There are elements of his work, like those of his peers, that are racist, xenophobic, sexist, and misogynistic. In spite of those elements, Shakespeare has been placed as a, if not THE, standard by which theatre writing is measured, and has been used as a tool to devalue other voices.

We further understand and acknowledge that professional regional theatre in America has historically promoted traditionally white and Euro-centric perspectives. As a company that presents the theatre works of Shakespeare, we acknowledge that we are part of an ecosystem that traditionally has not created equitable space for BIPOC artists and community members.

While continually examining the negative elements of Shakespeare’s work, we also take inspiration in how Shakespeare began. The raucous audience in the Globe Theatre, where most of Shakespeare’s plays were originally presented, was a cross-section of Elizabethan society (admittedly, mainly white and Christian), made up of individuals ranging from a day laborer to royalty. Thus, at their point of inception, Shakespeare’s plays had to provide a meeting ground for a broad societal mix, or those plays would fail his audience. This is our measure of success as well, and the grounding principle of our work on Shakespeare. We aim to tell Shakespeare’s stories to audiences that reflect the full spectrum of humanity in our community, with artists that express a diversity of voices, experiences, and perspectives. In our history, the most thrilling work we have done has occurred when those elements were most in place.

As Delaware Shakespeare expands its offerings, we acknowledge the need – and the freedom – to feature stories told by other voices that will similarly cultivate a meeting space for individuals from all walks of life.

Definitions - adapted from the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#)

Antiracism: the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate individual, institutional, and systemic racism.

Individual racism: pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual racism includes both privately held beliefs, conscious and unconscious, and external behaviors and actions towards others.

Institutional Racism: occurs within institutions and organizations that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.

Structural (or systemic) racism: encompasses the history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions and society. It refers to the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that perpetuate a system of inequity that is detrimental to communities of color.

Delaware Shakespeare and Antiracism – Additional Context

Please see delshakes.org/antiracism for additional documents detailing Delaware Shakespeare’s approach to antiracism, including:

- Antiracism Policy Development Process Overview and Key Findings
- Antiracism Action Plan

Commitment and Purpose

Delaware Shakespeare is committed to a work and audience environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Delaware Shakespeare expects that all persons working, performing, or otherwise conducting business connected to our activities will strive to be free of racial bias and prejudice, and be committed to an environment that reduces and stops racial harassment or racial transgressions.

We are committed to combating systemic racism, unconscious or conscious biases, white supremacy, and discrimination within our organization and the populations we serve.

Personal and institutional racism have historically existed and continues to exist in the organization. (A list of specific instances of racism identified through research done during policy development can be found in the Process Overview & Key Findings.) The purpose of the policies contained in this document is to eliminate all forms of racism from the organization.

To BIPOC artists, colleagues, and patrons, we commit to implementing the following policies and to pursuing the evolving strategies detailed in the Delaware Shakespeare Antiracism Action Plan.

ANTIRACISM POLICY REGULATIONS

These regulations are designed to dismantle the individual, institutional, and structural racism that exists in the organization. Delaware Shakespeare directs the following action:

Policy Communication

1. A statement against racism shall be posted in a location visible to staff and artists. The organization will also post a statement on the organization's website and in production programs. The statement will be read at first rehearsals and reviewed at the annual board meeting. The statement shall be: "Delaware Shakespeare is committed to a work and audience environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Delaware Shakespeare expects that all persons working, performing, attending, or otherwise conducting business connected to our activities will strive to be free of racial bias and prejudice, and be committed to eliminating racial harassment or racial transgressions. We reject all forms of racism as destructive to our mission, vision, values, and goals. We will pursue ongoing antiracism dialogue so that all can continue to grow."
2. This policy shall be included on the Delaware Shakespeare website, linked to in the annual report, and shared with board, staff, volunteers, and production personnel.

Leadership and Administration

The Board shall annually assess progress towards becoming an antiracist theatre by annually engaging in an Equity Needs Assessment to identify processes and practices that cause or contribute to inequitable outcomes and/or race-related harms. The Assessment shall also include an inventory of what equity-related data are currently collected by the organization. Following the annual assessment, the ongoing Antiracism Action Plan will be revised/further developed and implemented to address the identified issues.

Policy Enforcement

1. Staff shall collect, review, and provide an annual report to the Board, including data related to each area outlined by the antiracism policy and diversity goals. The written reports shall also be made available to the public.
2. The Producing Artistic Director and two committees of the Board, Governance and Programming & Audience, shall be responsible for implementation and evaluation of the organization's strategies for implementation. The Finance and Development Committees will strive to secure and appropriate adequate resources.
3. The organization shall ensure there are various, including anonymous, means for artists and staff to report racism and other forms of discrimination.

POLICIES

Governance

Delaware Shakespeare is committed to achieving representation of the diversity of the Delaware community on its Board of Directors by ensuring that it has an equitable and transparent nomination process, that this process is communicated to all members, and that members are committed to outreach beyond the current membership to achieve this goal. The following policies support our commitment to antiracism:

- Continue current policy of no mandatory financial minimum board giving requirements or “give or get” requirements.
- Publish transparent listings of board member’s employer, role, and other board memberships.
- Offer a land acknowledgement of the land’s Tribal Nations at all performances, first rehearsals, and annual board meeting.

Employment

Delaware Shakespeare is committed to achieving representation of equity-seeking groups on its staff, production teams, and casts by ensuring that BIPOC communities have equitable access to employment. This includes recruitment, casting, selection, staff development, performance evaluation, retention, promotion, and termination. The following actions support our commitment to antiracism:

Compensation

BIPOC workers have historically earned less than their peers of white/European descent. This systemic barrier has contributed to a racial wealth divide. Delaware Shakespeare acknowledges this divide and commits to equitable compensation practices. As such, there will be compensation transparency:

- Annual report shall include a note that salaries are available upon request.
- Continue the policy and practice of compensating artists for appearances at donor events, audience engagement events, and any other appearances or work that falls outside of their position as detailed in their contract or employment agreement.

Safe working conditions

Delaware Shakespeare is committed to establishing and maintaining an environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect and are free from all forms of discriminatory treatment, behavior, or practice. Discrimination, harassment, violence, and any other form of discriminatory practices will not be tolerated by Delaware Shakespeare. Discrimination does not have to be intentional, as it can result from practices and/or policies that on the surface level appear to be neutral but, in reality and implementation, have a negative impact on groups or individuals based on race, religion, gender, etc.

- Require all persons in leadership, supervisory, authority, or governance positions, whether paid or unpaid, to take part in yearly Diversity and Antiracism training.

Programmatic Offerings

Delaware Shakespeare is committed to ensuring that its offerings, productions, and programs are accessible to diverse communities. This involves the ongoing evaluation of communications, audience development, program planning and evaluation, to ensure the goal is being met. The following policy supports our commitment to antiracism:

- Programming & Audience Committee will annually assess Delaware Shakespeare’s efforts to offer inclusive programming made accessible to diverse communities, most especially those traditionally underrepresented in professional theatre audiences.

Training and Education

Delaware Shakespeare is committed to ensuring that those involved in the delivery of services and programs have the knowledge, understanding, and skills to work with and provide equitable access to services to members of diverse communities, particularly equity-seeking/BIPOC communities. Diversity, Inclusion, and Antiracism training will be mandatory for all persons falling in the following categories:

- **Organizational Leadership (board and staff)**
- **Artistic Leadership (directors, stage managers)**
- **Cast and Crew**
- **Volunteers**

Training modules and timing will vary, but could potentially include: antiracism, cultural responsiveness, implicit bias, micro/macro-aggressions, bystander intervention, and de-escalation.

ANTIRACISM COMPLAINTS PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

Definitions

Complainant: the individual alleging the discriminatory treatment or behavior

Respondent: the individual against whom the allegation of racism or discrimination is made.

Worker: for the purpose of this policy, the term worker includes employees, artists, board members, volunteers, contractors, and consultants working with Delaware Shakespeare.

Avenues of Complaint

The Producing Artistic Director shall address complaints. Where appropriate, the Producing Artistic Director will consult with the President of the Board of Directors and the Governance Committee.

All situations in which the Producing Artistic Director has been named in a complaint will be dealt with directly by the President of the Board of Directors in consultation with the Governance Committee.

Right to Complain

Individuals have the right to complain about situations they believe to be racist, discriminatory, or harassing in nature.

This policy prohibits reprisals against employees because they have complained or have provided information regarding a complaint. Alleged reprisals are subject to the same complaints procedures and penalties as complaints of discrimination.

Reporting a Complaint

If an individual believes they have been subject to racist, discriminatory, or harassing behavior, they may address the situation directly and immediately to the individual demonstrating this behavior, if possible.

If the inappropriate conduct does not cease, or if the complainant is unable to or uncomfortable with addressing the respondent directly, they should report the complaint to the Producing Artistic Director. Complaints can also be made to a designated board member or a designated BIPOC production liaison, who will bring the complaint to the Producing Artistic Director to begin the investigation.

Although individuals may first choose to initiate a complain orally, a written summary of the incident will be required (which can be drafted by the investigator based on the initial complaint, and approved by the complainant). Complaints should be reported as soon as possible, so that Delaware Shakespeare can best facilitate repair of harm and a restorative process for all parties. While complaints will be accepted at any time, if the complaint is delayed beyond six months, the complainant should outline the reason for the delay in reporting the incident(s).

The written summary should contain a brief account of the offensive incident(s), when it occurred, the person(s) involved and the names of witnesses, if any. The letter should be signed and dated by the complainant.

Investigation

Within three business days of receiving a complaint, the Producing Artistic Director and/or President of the Board of Directors must initiate the investigation process. [This person is referred to as “the investigator” in the remainder of these protocols.]

As soon as possible after receiving the complaint, the investigator will notify the individual(s) being named in the complaint. All individuals named in the complaint have a right to reply to the allegations against them.

Individuals named in the complaint as witnesses will be interviewed.

Resolution and Mediation

With the consent of the complainant and the respondent, the investigator may attempt to mediate and resolve a complaint at any point prior to or during an investigation.

Every effort will be made to reach a resolution that is satisfactory to the complainant and the respondent.

Confidentiality

All individuals involved with a complaint must ensure the matter remains confidential, unless disclosure is required by law/court order or to prevent imminent harm.

The investigator will release information only on a need-to-know basis. Whenever possible, investigation reports are presented in a summary format without the names of witnesses.

Findings and Recommendations

Once the investigation is complete, the investigator will prepare a written report summarizing investigation findings.

Final Decision

The individual(s) who filed the complaint and those named in the complaint have the right to review and comment on the investigation findings with the Producing Artistic Director or the President of the Board of Directors.

Remedy

A response to a founded complaint could include remedial action ranging from:

- Participating in a moderated, restorative justice conversation;
- Requiring the respondent to provide a verbal or written apology;
- Giving a verbal or written reprimand with a copy to the respondent's personnel file; or
- Dismissal of the respondent.

If the findings do not support the complaint, Delaware Shakespeare might:

- Make a recommendation for training or better communications;
- Recommend that no further action is necessary; or
- It may be that no action is taken against the respondent, but there might be a need for some management or systemic activity.

A person who is found to have made a frivolous or vexatious complaint may be subject to disciplinary action.

Records

When remedial action requires discipline of a worker, a record of the disciplinary action will be placed in an individual's personnel file. All other records of the investigation will be kept separate and apart from the personnel file.

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