

# **WE SEE YOU WAT**

## **OUR RESPONSE TO WE SEE YOU WHITE**

### **AMERICAN THEATRE**

Statement Published: August 25, 2020

To the We See You White American Theatre Organizers and the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color theatre community:

In early June, we released a statement outlining Woolly Mammoth's commitment to struggle against racism and anti-Blackness in the American Theater, in alignment with the #BLACKLIVESMATTER responses to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many other Black individuals. Soon after, the We See You White American Theatre collective released its own statement regarding the harmful and exclusionary practices of our industry, and followed up with a list of demands calling for "long overdue change."

We at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company hear your demands. We understand that we have been put on notice. We want to first express our sincere gratitude for the tremendous labor that went into the creation of the list of demands, which serve as clear and present evidence of the harm Black, Indigenous, and People of Color theatre artists and administrators experience in our field. Woolly acknowledges its complicity in upholding and benefiting from the white supremacist structures that cause so much suffering. As we work to root out these oppressive practices, we cannot and will not erase the fact that they have happened, and are still happening. We must do better.

To hold ourselves publicly accountable, Woolly Mammoth is taking the following actions in direct response to We See You White American Theatre demands. This response is not comprehensive of all the anti-racist practices and actions we are working towards, as we believe being anti-racist results from the consistent conscious decision to make equitable choices in our daily lives.

We share this response as an intentional and forward-looking public step towards transparency and accountability to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our community. We plan to roll out more next steps in the months to come.

1. Woolly Mammoth commits to centering the work of badass Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our commissions, new work development, season planning, and productions.
2. Woolly Mammoth continues to be committed to having at least 50% representation from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color on all creative teams for our productions. This was an established practice communicated to artists already working with us, and we are proud to state it publicly here.
3. Woolly Mammoth commits to a dedicated budget line item for equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism work at the organizational level. These funds also allow artists and part-time, seasonal, and contract employees to join the full-time staff for work on these initiatives.
4. Woolly Mammoth is currently experimenting with affinity spaces and racial caucusing at the Board level, with professional facilitators versed in the work of anti-racism. One space, entitled "Analyzing and Mobilizing White Privilege," is for white-identifying Board members. The other space will include Black, Indigenous, and People of Color from the Woolly Board as well as Board members of color from other DC-area theatres, as an invitation to coalition-build across organizations in our local community. These spaces are intended to foster trust and shared learning, and the outcomes of each group will be determined by their respective participants. We expect 100% participation from Woolly Board members in this effort.
5. Effective immediately, Woolly Mammoth is eliminating the "10 out of 12" technical rehearsal span of day.
6. Woolly Mammoth commits to exploring models of power sharing in artistic programming. Our current prototype involves employing Black artists, thinkers, educators, and activists. They will be given the same financial parameters, access to resources, and final decision-making authority as the Artistic Director would typically have. This prototype will be announced in more detail this coming fall.

7. Woolly Mammoth commits to creating a more robust fellowship program for early-career Black, Indigenous, and People of Color with entry level salaries and benefits. This new program will be announced in early 2021.
8. Woolly Mammoth commits to centering local businesses owned and operated by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, as well as companies with publicly stated anti-racism principles. We are creating a Preferred Vendor list culled from each department in the organization.
9. Earlier this year, Woolly Mammoth launched the Connectivity Core Partner Program. With an emphasis on long-term mutually beneficial relationships, the Core Partner Program is grounded in mutually beneficial, equitable, power-aware relationships that intentionally combat extractive or tokenist practices enacted in the name of community engagement. These partner organizations in the DC area largely serve communities of color and/or share a commitment to inclusion, anti-racism, social justice, and the power of art as a tool for advancing those values.
10. Woolly Mammoth is re-evaluating and re-imagining our recruitment, hiring, onboarding, feedback, performance evaluation, and retention processes to foster a more equitable and inclusive staff. This includes explicitly stating our organizational culture and values around anti-racism within every job description to foster personal and collective accountability to these principles within our staff.
11. Woolly Mammoth commits to using our physical assets for the civic engagement of our local community, especially in the continued struggle against anti-Blackness and racism in our country. Whether it is opening the building as a safe haven during Black Lives Matter protests or using our media platforms to amplify the work of Indigenous activists erased by the media surrounding the name change for the Washington Football Team, Woolly Mammoth is a civic institution in the heart of our nation's capital, ready to support justice and the collective liberation of all people.
12. Woolly Mammoth commits to listening to our Black staff, artists, audiences, board members, and other stakeholders to better understand not just how we can fight anti-Blackness, but how we can actually become a pro-Black organization.

We view the work of anti-racism as foundational and integral to Woolly Mammoth and how we operate. It is not separate from the work we do on our stages or elsewhere. We look forward to publicly adding our future actions and commitments to this list as we continue to work toward “a truly sustainable, antiracist theatrical ecosystem.”

Thank you for holding us accountable..