

## Letter from the Editor

By Kamryn Dehn

Throughout history, humans have turned to theatre, acting, song, and other forms of artistic expression to channel emotions, tell stories, and engage people with difficult topics and events. We have also turned to theatre to find hope and draw inspiration. However, theatre can be utilized to promote political change and raise awareness about the social injustices in our communities via storytelling. This year, we saw a drastically increased emphasis on the Black Lives Matter movement, fueled by the unjust, public murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Elijah McClain, amongst countless more. The BLM movement has prompted us as a society to stop and question our actions, behaviors, and subconscious thoughts, making us question not if we are racist, but how we are racist. In this moment in history, we are also being asked to consider the experiences of the Black community in America. We need to analyze what existing colonial and racist structures still exist in our politics, economics, environmental regulations, community organizations, and educational opportunities.

Tasia A. Jones is a professional director, actor, and theatre educator. Her most recent directing credits include *Intimate Apparel* (Northlight Theatre), *Small Mouth Sounds* (UCCS Theatreworks), *Voyeurs de Venus* (Northwestern University), *The MLK Project* (Writers Theatre), *Seussical the Musical* (Jean's Playhouse), and *No Child* (Northwestern University). She has appeared in such works as *Saturday Night/Sunday Morning* (The Lyric Stage Company), *Good Television* (Zeitgeist Stage Company), and *The Bluest Eye* (Company One). She holds a BFA in Theatre Arts from Boston University and an MFA in Directing from Northwestern University. She has taught in the prestigious theatre programs of University of Illinois at Chicago and Northwestern University. She is also an artistic associate for Black Lives Black Words International Project and the recent Artistic Fellow at Northlight Theatre. Tasia's artistic mission is to create civic engagement and conversation through theatre and to promote positive societal change at the individual and community level.

Jones incorporates the experiences, perspectives, and stories of the Black community into her works, namely *In the Blood*, *Intimate Apparel*, and *The Inside*. Jones's work on *In the Blood* incorporates the intersections of politics, sexuality, and poverty to showcase how discrimination is still prevalent in today's times and disproportionately impacts people of color. *Intimate Apparel* focuses on the untold stories of Black individuals throughout history whose names are not known and never reached the textbook, highlighting how historic experiences are often whitewashed and assumed. A multi-generational piece, *The Inside* draws upon the perspectives of three different generations of black women, all who had a hand in writing the play. *The Inside* delivers a dynamic piece that voices how experiences as a black woman have changed with time and stayed the same.

In all, her works help the audience better understand and connect with the Black experience in America and how this has changed temporally. The pieces allow us to pause and reconsider our biases, thoughts, and actions, and how our behaviors and understanding can change for the better moving forward. The goal of this issue is firstly, to challenge biases and behaviors, but also introduce readers to moving theatric productions relevant to this moment in time, the perspectives of Tasia Jones, and how theatre productions come together to create meaningful experiences. In this issue, you will find a detailed discussion of several of Jones's works including *In the Blood*, *Intimate Apparel*, and *The Inside*, as well as a timeline of *In the Blood* that walks readers through the various steps required to create a production. Included in this issue is also a piece detailing Tasia Jones's reaction to BLM and her thoughts on how to move forward. This is the first-ever volume published for the Purdue Honors College Visiting Scholars series and I hope you enjoy the pieces students have put together.

Kamryn Dehn is a senior at Purdue University studying Interdisciplinary Agriculture: Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences and Anthropology. She is a student editor for this volume of the Purdue Visiting Scholar Series. As a student, Kamryn is also involved in chimpanzee behavioral research, a photography internship, and clubs including the Student Chapter for Environmental Education (SCEE) and the Purdue Anthropology Student Society (PAST).