

# DRAKE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

"Celebrating Black History Month"



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Drake University Theatre Department Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee includes faculty and student representatives. This committee aims to promote and develop a culture of collaboration and inclusion in the department, college and university. The committee interprets diversity as embracing and respecting all races, nationalities, colors, creeds, religions, ages, disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preference. The committee works towards greater representation of those currently underrepresented in the department and in the theatre community.

## VISION

We strive to cultivate a safe and supportive environment that celebrates the diverse, unique and multifaceted group of students and faculty in our department. We actively work to understand the complex and rich identities of self and those around us, and lean into difficult conversations related to equity, diversity and inclusion. We envision a department and university where equity, diversity and inclusion are recognized as core values that drive the development of all policies and practices. We believe in creating learning environments where hate, discrimination and microaggressions are not tolerated.

# A TRIBUTE TO MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Welcome to the first EDI Newsletter of 2021! As we start this new spring semester we also begin celebrating Black History Month. We can't do that without acknowledging one of the greats, Martin Luther King Jr.



**Martin Luther King Jr.** was a scholar, leader, and activist. King was born in Atlanta, Georgia and grew up very involved with the Baptist church. His father and his grandfather were both Baptist preachers. King's parents did the best to make sure he was sheltered from the racism that ran throughout the streets and states of America. Although they weren't able to protect him from all of the dangers they made sure that he was able to get the best education he could while growing up. King went to Morehouse College and while he felt passionate about studying medicine and law, he pursued ministry like his father, and his father's father. Soon after, he met his wife, Coretta. Together they participated in the Montgomery Bus Boycotts and that sparked the beginning of an activist career that we all have learned about throughout the years. Unfortunately, on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated while standing at a hotel he was staying at. His courage and strength continue to inspire people every single day.

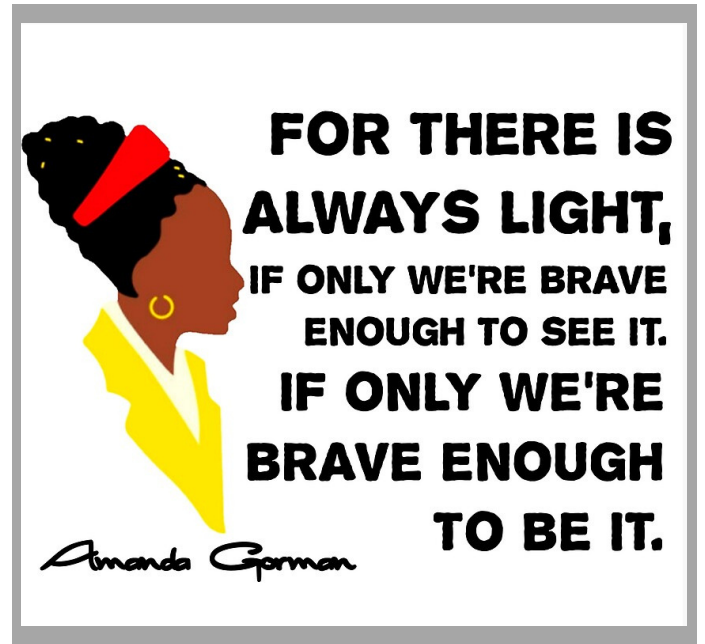
Our lives  
begin to end  
the day we  
become silent  
about things  
that matter.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

# INSPIRING ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW!

## AMANDA GORMAN

**Amanda Gorman** is an American poet and activist. Gorman is recently noted for her poem, "The Hill We Climb," that she wrote and recited at Biden's Presidential Inauguration. She is the youngest poet to be asked to speak at a Presidential Inauguration. A lot of the work she creates tends to be centered around oppression, feminism, and African diaspora. Gorman was born in Los Angeles, California. She was raised by her mother, who was a sixth grade teacher, and also lived with her two sisters. She said she was inspired to become a young delegate in 2013 after she saw Malala Yousafzal giving a speech. In 2015, Gorman released her first poetry book, *The One for Whom Food Is Not Enough*. Gorman also founded a nonprofit organization called "One Pen, One Page," a youth writing and leadership program.



**CLICK [HERE](#) TO WATCH AMANDA GORMAN RECITE HER POEM, "THE HILL WE CLIMB" AT THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION.**

## MYKAL KILGORE

**Mykal Kilgore** is an American R&B singer and actor. He was born in Orlando, Florida and moved to Nashville, Tennessee when he decided to pursue a career as a singer and songwriter. While auditioning for a production, Kilgore ran into Billy Porter. Porter saw so much potential in Kilgore that he decided he would mentor him and help him get acclimated into the New York City theatre scene. This opened a bunch of doors and opportunities for Kilgore. Some shows he's been in since that opportunity include: *Hair*, *Motown: The Musical*, and the revival of *Songs for a New World*.



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## JANET MOCK



**Janet Mock** is an American director, producer, and writer. She's mostly known for the well renowned show, *Pose*. Mock was born in Honolulu, Hawaii and stayed there until she moved to New York City to study at New York University where she got her Masters in Journalism. As a transgender woman, Mock uses her own experiences and those of others to uplift the transgender community and bring light to the transitioning process. Mock is the first trans woman of color hired as a writer for a TV series in history.

# COMPOSER SPOTLIGHT

**Eubie Blake** was one of the most important figures in early-20th-century African-American music, and one whose longevity made him a storehouse of the history of ragtime and early jazz music and culture. Born in Baltimore in 1887, Blake began playing piano professionally when he was 16; he wrote his first composition, "Sounds of Africa," (later retitled "Charleston Rag") around the same time. His career took off when he met Noble Sissle in 1915. Together, Blake and Sissle wrote many hits.



**Noble Sissle** was born in Indianapolis on July 10, 1889. After attending Butler University, he toured with the Thomas Jubilee Singers and became a protege of James Reese Europe, the great band leader. In 1915 Sissle met James Hubert "Eubie" Blake; they formed a songwriting partnership with Blake focusing on music and Sissle on lyrics. Their first song, "It's All Your Fault" was introduced by Sophie Tucker and became a hit.

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# MUSICAL SPOTLIGHT

***Shuffle Along*** was the musical sensation of 1921--guaranteeing Blake his place in music history. The musical was significant not only for single-handedly reviving the moribund genre of the black musical, but also for helping launch several young performers and composers on their successful careers. Among these notables were Josephine Baker, Florence Mills, Paul Robeson, and William Grant Still, who was in the pit orchestra. Many songs from *Shuffle Along*, such as "I'm Just Wild About Harry," "Love Will Find a Way," and "In Honeysuckle Time" became great hits, were recorded dozens of times, and retain their freshness and charm more than 80 years later.

**CLICK [HERE](#) TO LISTEN TO SISSLE AND BLAKE SING FROM SHUFFLE ALONG.**

# COSTUME DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT

## ”BLACK AND DESIGNING COSTUMES FOR BROADWAY.” INTERVIEWS WITH TWO COSTUME DESIGNERS

By Jasmine Fox-Suliaman



Over a tenure of 25+ years, **Paul Tazewell** has brought his magic touch to every production he’s been a part of, so it’s no surprise that this man has won both a Tony and an Emmy. He’s been behind some of Broadway’s and television’s buzziest shows, including *Hamilton* and *The Color Purple*. More recently, Paul created costumes for the play *Ain’t Too Proud—the Life and Time of The Temptations*, the film *Harriet*,

which hits theaters this November, and is currently on set for Steven Spielberg's film adaptation of *West Side Story*.



"It's not just about making beautiful clothes that look great on beautiful people, but It goes beyond that by also making specific character choices that enhance and affect how the character is played."

- PAUL TAZEWELL

## COSTUME DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT CONT...

This September, **Jeromé Lamaar**, a fashion designer who has been at the helm of his own line as well as designed custom pieces for Beyoncé, branched into costume design for the first time, designing for *As Much as I Can*. The off-broadway show was written by Sarah Hall and was inspired by the fact that if infection rates don't change by 2020, one out of two black men who have sex with men will contract HIV in their lifetime. In order to bring this conversation to the forefront, the play followed the lives of four black gay men to not only explore the relationships they have to all aspects of their life but to destigmatize the taboos around treatment and HIV itself.



"I simply hope my perspective on the costume will highlight the many flavors of being a gay male of color. We are complex, lovalbe and creative. Everything we wear should be a reflection of ourselves."

- JEROME LAMAAR



[CLICK HERE](#) TO CONTINUE READING THIS ARTICLE.

# DRAKE THEATRE EDI COMMITTEE REMINDERS!

- The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee has set up an anonymous submission link in an effort to allow students, staff, and faculty to share comments and questions about these issues. The committee will do our best to address your concerns and answer your questions. Additionally, if you have any ideas for events or topics you would like us to include in the EDI Newsletter submit them via the same link. You can find that submission link [here](#).
- Don't forget to visit our page on the Drake Theatre Department's website. You can find that link [here](#)!

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## SAVE THE DATE - EDI OPEN FORUMS!

Friday, February 19th at 12:30

Friday, March 19th at 12:30

Friday, April 9th at 12:30

*Hate cannot  
drive out hate.  
Only Love  
can do that.*

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

