

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

"Happy Holidays"



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 MONTH OF CELEBRATIONS!”

This month's Newsletter will focus on world wide Holidays and important days of celebration to be aware of as we finish out 2020. The first is standing up for Human Rights! **National Human Rights Day** is observed every year on 10 December — the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is the most translated document in the world.



2020 Theme: Recover Better - Stand up for Human Rights

This year's Human Rights Day theme relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the need to build back better by ensuring Human Rights are central to recovery efforts. We will reach our common global goals only if we are able to create equal opportunities for all, address the failures exposed and exploited by COVID-19, and apply human rights standards to tackle entrenched, systematic, and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion and discrimination. December 10th is an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights in re-building the world we want, the need for global solidarity as well as our interconnectedness and shared humanity. Under UN Human Rights' generic call to action "Stand Up for Human rights," we aim to engage the general public, our partners and the UN family to bolster transformative action and showcase practical and inspirational examples that can contribute to recovering better and fostering more resilient and just societies. **[CLICK HERE TO VISIT THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS WEBSITE](#)**

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY UTILIZING THEATRE

New Tactics in Human Rights

"The power of theater as a way for people and communities to share their experiences, generate conversation, and enable new insights to emerge. The power of theatre to break down isolation and building hope. It is also an excellent tool for education and awareness raising. Lastly, these insights can be used to advocate for policy and legislative changes."

[**CLICK HERE TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE**](#)

Eastern Arts Ensemble

A Zimbabwean theatre troupe dedicated to using theatre as a way to promote human rights in local communities. Theatre is "a tool that works across all sectors of the society. It's cost-effective and it encourages community participation."

[**CLICK HERE TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE**](#)

The Red Room Theatre Company

A UK production house that has produced numerous documentaries "that challenge social injustice and promote human rights."

[**CLICK HERE TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE**](#)

Red Mountain Theatre Company

Hosts a Human Rights New Works festival every year, a four-day festival that with powerful, inspiring new theatre, panel discussions, dramatic readings of new works, and lectures from prominent advocates.

[**CLICK HERE TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE**](#)

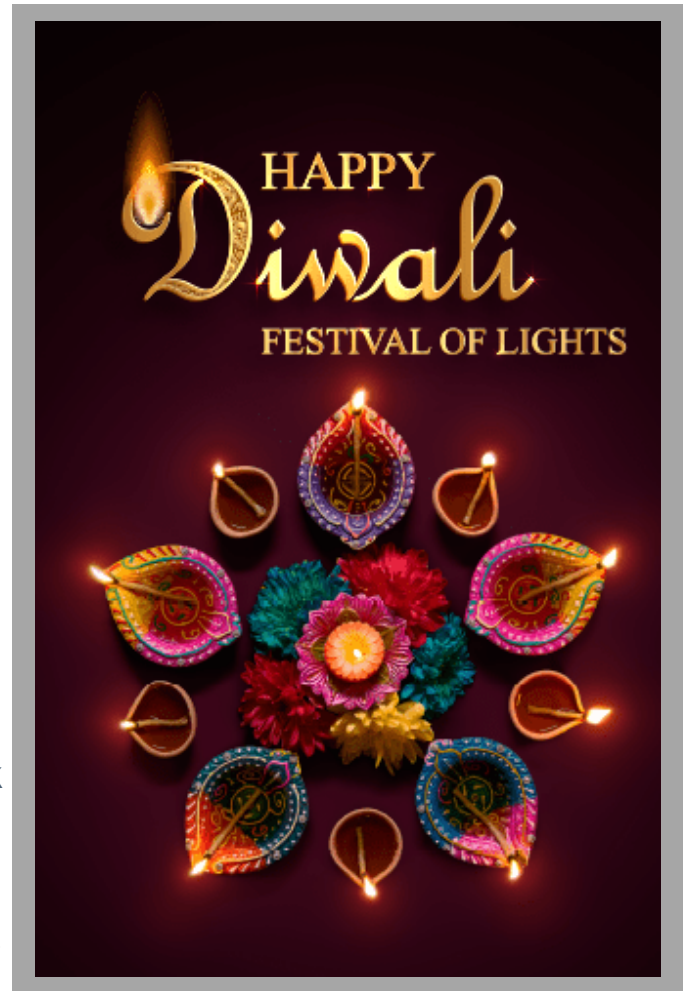
Ice & fire Actors for Human Rights

"We believe that through theatre we can bring unparalleled understanding and empathy to some of the world's most urgent issues. We want to empower people and communities to express their rights through the power of sharing stories and transporting performance. It is our mission to inspire artists and audiences to create positive change in the world through human rights."

[**CLICK HERE TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE**](#)

CELEBRATING DIWALI

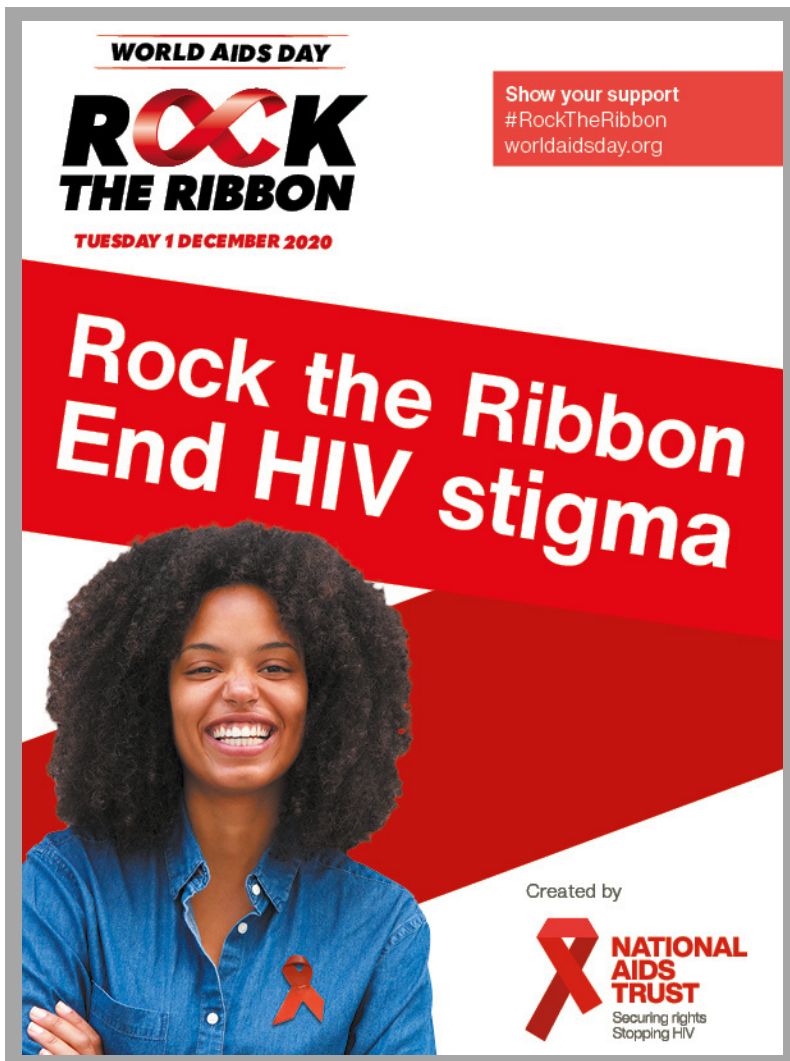
Diwali, also known as Deepavali, was celebrated across India on November 14th with great enthusiasm as it symbolises the victory of good over evil. Derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dipavali', which means a row of lights, Diwali has been celebrated since time immemorial. This five-day festival starts with Dhanteras, which celebrates and welcomes good luck, wealth and prosperity. On Dhanteras people buy jewellery and utensils because any kind of metal is believed to ward off bad luck and usher in wealth and prosperity. Dhanteras is followed by Chhoti Diwali, Diwali, Govardhan Puja and finally, Bhai Dooj marks the end of this festival.



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CELEBRATING DIWALI BY CLICKING [HERE!](#)

WORLD AIDS DAY - DECEMBER 1, 2020

World AIDS Day takes place on December 1st each year. It's an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day. Over 103,800 people are living with HIV in the UK. Globally, there are an estimated 38 million people who have the virus. Despite the virus only being identified in 1984, more than 35 million people have died of HIV or AIDS, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history. Today, scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition.



Despite this, each year in the UK over 4,450 people are diagnosed with HIV, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with the condition. World AIDS Day is important because it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education

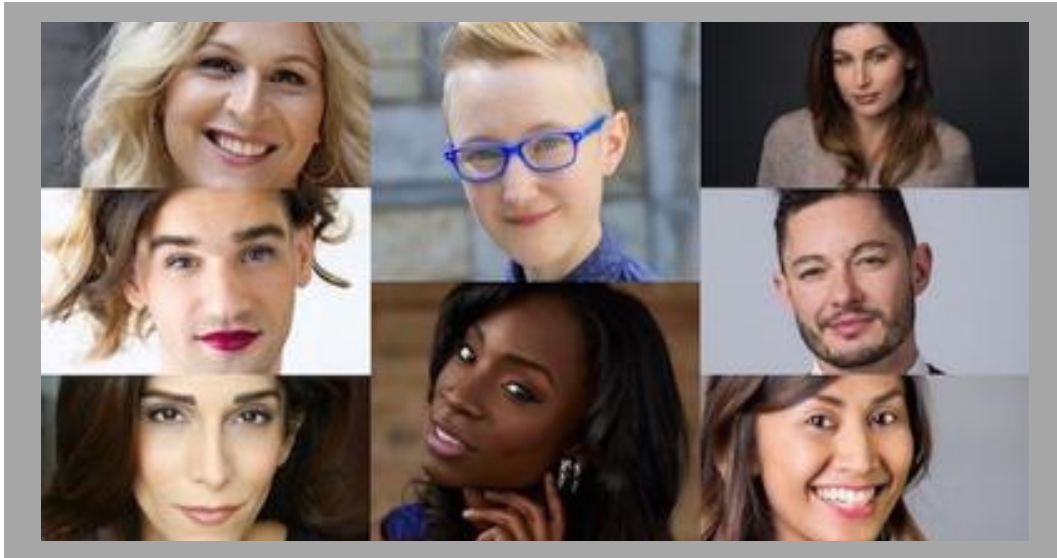
TO READ MORE ABOUT WORLD AIDS DAY VISIT [THIS WEBSITE](#).

TRANSGENDER AWARENESS WEEK (NOV. 13-19)

Transgender Awareness Week is a week when transgender people and their allies take action to bring attention to the community by educating the public about who transgender people are, sharing stories and experiences, and advancing advocacy around the issues of prejudice, discrimination, and violence that affect the transgender community. Each year between November 13 – 19, people and organizations around the country participate in Transgender Awareness Week to help raise the visibility about transgender people and address issues members of the community face. The week before Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20, people and organizations around the country participate in Transgender Awareness Week to help raise the visibility of transgender people and address issues members of the community face

FIND MORE INFORMATION ON TRANS AWARENESS WEEK [HERE](#).

15 TRANSGENDER ACTORS YOU SHOULD KNOW!



Check out this [Backstage article](#) written by Em Grosland.

"Start insisting that there are trans people involved when telling our stories. Take the extra time and effort to seek out trans* actors, especially for trans* roles. Put trans* people on the other side of the table. We are everywhere. We are directors, designers, artists, stage managers, and writers, and our involvement in telling our stories is essential if the goal is truly honest and empowering storytelling."*

"Trans Performers are finally making it to Broadway!" By Raven Snook

"Peppermint, who stars as the oracle Pythio in Head Over Heels, agrees. "This role would not have existed even 10 years ago," she says. A quirky Elizabethan romantic romp written in rhyming verse and built around hit pop songs by the Go-Go's, the musical allows Peppermint to show off the



skills she acquired at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy: "I'm a true Broadway queen at heart." And the character of Pythio has greatly evolved since Head Over Heels' San Francisco tryout in the spring. "They asked my opinion on many things, from the look and feel of moments down to the actual lines," Peppermint says. "It's important to allow people with lived experience, who can speak authentically, to give their input in the creation of these roles."

READ THE REST OF THIS ARTICLE IN [TIMEOUT HERE.](#)

CELEBRATING ACTORS WITH DISABILITIES

December 3rd is **United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities** (IDPD). On this Day WHO joined partners to celebrate "a day for all". This theme reflects a growing understanding that disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life. Despite this, few countries have adequate mechanisms in place to respond fully to the needs of people with disabilities.



"9 THEATER COMPANIES CELEBRATING ACTORS WITH DISABILITIES"

"Diversity in casting extends beyond ethnicity, age, and gender orientation. These nine theater companies create opportunities for artists with a variety of physical, intellectual, and emotional disabilities, illuminating the human experience for actors and audience alike."



Deaf West Theatre

CLICK ON THE THEATRE'S NAME TO BE TAKEN TO THEIR WEBSITE!

Deaf West Theatre

This Los Angeles-based theater company made history last year when its award-winning production of "Spring Awakening" moved from California to Broadway. The groundbreaking musical was the first of its kind on the Great White Way, pairing deaf and hard-of-hearing actors with hearing counterparts for a thoughtfully choreographed collaboration between spoken word, song, and American Sign Language.

"9 THEATER COMPANIES CELEBRATING ACTORS WITH DISABILITIES"

National Theatre of the Deaf

This Tony Award-winning theater company has been touring the country for almost 50 years, and gives both deaf and hearing artists the chance to work side by side on accessible productions. Funded by the Department of Education during its original conception, the NTD performs full productions in American Sign Language while also incorporating spoken lines. The arts organization has brought ASL to thousands of audiences throughout the country—and has even made appearances on Sesame Street.



National Theatre of the Deaf

Detour Company Theatre

Based out of Phoenix, Arizona, Detour brings artists with developmental and certain physical disabilities together to make theater under the direction of a nurturing community of coaches. The company has a huge impact on the local community and beyond, performing shows like “Mary Poppins” to packed houses of fans.

Identity Theater

This NYC-based group of “differently abled” artists creates works that inspire discussion and exploration of the whole human experience. Its mission is to create more performance opportunities for professional actors with disabilities, both by putting a variety of actors on its own stage and by opening the minds of theatergoers at large.

Theater Breaking Through Barriers

Originally known as “Theater by the Blind” before altering its mission in 2008 to include actors with a wide range of disabilities, this Off-Broadway theater aims to show “the exuberance and independence as well as the challenges of lives lived with disability.” TBTB earns critical acclaim for its inclusiveness and its contributions to the New York theater scene.



Apothetae

Apothetae

Named after a pit in Ancient Greece where weak babies were said to be discarded, this New York-based theater company creates new plays that make the disabled experience visible. Inspired by the lack of “collective history” in the physically and mentally disabled community, Artistic Director Gregg Mozgala leads the charge in affecting change through theatrical performance.

That Uppity Theater Company

Known for innovative pieces that confront a variety of hot topics (gay rights, gender issues, and racial justice to name a few), this Saint Louis-based theater company began the “DisAbility Project” over 20 years ago to create more inclusion for artists with disabilities. The project now tours to various communities, sharing a message of openness and understanding with its audience.

InterAct Theater

Based out of the University of Minnesota, the InterAct Center is a “radically inclusive” not-for-profit company that gives voice to the disabled population and expresses the arts as essential to humanity. The center focuses on visual and performing arts, and creates full-time opportunities for artists with disabilities. InterAct’s theatrical component is ensemble-based, and produces fully staged new works along with smaller projects that are based on community collaboration.

Phamaly Theatre Company

Phamaly, which stands for the Physically Handicapped Actors and Musical Artists League, has been producing full-scale theater since 1990 and has had a major impact on the inclusion of handicapped artists nationally and internationally. The Denver-based company inspires audiences to “re-envision disability” through its high-quality plays and musicals, including this season’s “Fuddy Meers” (through Feb. 28) and “Taking Leave” by Nagle Jackson.

6 PLAYS BY DEAF AND DISABLED PLAYWRIGHTS

A NERVOUS SMILE by John Belluso

Another play from the playwright of *The Rules of Charity*, a wealthy New York couple, strained to the breaking point by caring for their severely disabled daughter, Emily, weigh their own happiness against that of their child—with shocking consequences.

ULTRASOUND by Adam Pottle

Ultrasound tells the story of a couple, Miranda and Alphonse, and what they go through when they attempt to conceive a child. The play explores the consequences of eugenics through the Deaf experience, and asks the question, “In what circumstances would someone not want a child that’s different than them?”

THE THINGS WE CARRY by Oya Mae Duchess-Davis

Ultrasound tells the story of a couple, Miranda and Alphonse, and what they go through when they attempt to conceive a child. The play explores the consequences of eugenics through the Deaf experience, and asks the question, “In what circumstances would someone not want a child that’s different than them?”

SCHISM by Athena Stevens

Failed architect Harrison has plans to make tonight the last night of his life, when Katherine, a young student, breaks into his house in her wheelchair and begs for his help. As their chaotic first encounter turns into the beginning of a twenty year relationship, the unlikely couple grow to realize that they are capable of either building something great together – or absolutely destroying each other.



6 PLAYS BY DEAF AND DISABLED PLAYWRIGHTS CONT...

PEELING *by Kaite O'Reilly*

An epic, post-modern production of *The Trojan Women: Then and Now* is in progress. Stuck at the back-unlit, but onstage—are the Chorus: Beaty, Coral and Alfa, three performers rendered almost immobile in their multi-layered, preposterous frocks. They spend most of the production waiting to say a few lines so that the management feel they have done their bit for “social inclusion”. While they wait, they gossip and bitch, lie and heckle.

HOLY WATER (formerly PREYING HANDS) *by Howie Seago*

A new workshop version of a play by Howie Seago, *Preying Hands* is a drama inspired by actual events. A group of Deaf students in 1960s Milwaukee, grow up to seek justice from the Catholic priest who abused them and the church that ignored their plight.

HOLIDAY SHOWS WRITTEN BY UNDERREPRESENTED ARTISTS

BLACK NATIVITY *by Langston Hughes*

Black Nativity is a Christmas gospel play that was created by the amazing poet and novelist Langston Hughes. *Black Nativity* retells Christianity's famous story of the birth of Jesus with an entirely African-American cast. Traditionally the play is performed in a gospel style, which includes Christmas carols. *Black Nativity* is designed for the directors to add the music of their choice (from spirituals to traditional carols or your original compositions) and dance. It has a roller coaster of emotions but is meant for the audience to rejoice and leave the theatre changed. Hughes has written several plays and musicals before creating what he calls "the Gospel Song-Play" which is known as *Black Nativity*. It was first performed in 1961 at the York Theatre and then at President Kennedy's International Jazz Festival, it went on to cause a sensation at the Festival of Two Worlds at Spoleto, Italy. In London, Oslo, Brussels, Copenhagen, and Rotterdam, *Black Nativity* triumphed before its return to New York where it premiered off-Broadway.

[PURCHASE THE PLAY HERE](#)

HOLIDAY SHOWS WRITTEN BY UNDERREPRESENTED ARTISTS CONT...

JINGLE JANGLE: A CHRISTMAS JOURNEY by David E. Talbert

Jingle jangle is a Christmas musical written and directed by David E Talbert that came out on Netflix on November 13th of 2020. Talbert has crafted an upbeat eye-ful, set in a Dickensian toy store where steampunk gizmos with shiny brass gears whistle and whirl and all but overwhelm the senses, to say nothing of the pinwheel pleasures of all those splendid, spinning faux-Victorian costumes. Most of the songs follow a fairly conventional show-tunes model, amped up with hip-hop and Afrobeat elements. While Hollywood has often put a spotlight on white tween girls in films like "The Parent Trap" and "13 Going on 30," Black girls are still often relegated to the sidekick roles in big family films — think "A Little Princess" — or erased altogether. Adult films like "Eve's Bayou," 2014's "Annie" and "Crooklyn" have all showcased Black girls, but they feature the adulthood of these girls, as they are forced to mature quickly in these narratives, putting their girlhoods in the rearview. By Talbert bringing this musical to young black audiences, it brings more representation and celebration to the black community during the holidays.

WATCH THE TRAILER [HERE](#).



CELEBRATING OMISOKA

Omisoka is the last day of the year in Japanese culture (New Years Eve). Traditions include Osoji, preparing for a new year by purifying the homes and cleaning it from top to bottom, Joya no Kane, a Buddhist tradition of ringing the temple bells 108 times to symbolize the 108 earthly desires that keep people from reaching enlightenment, eating Toshikoshi Soba (Japanese long noodles) to symbolize a long life, Kadomatsu, the green decoration placed on the front door to bless the household and symbolize a fruitful life, Hatsumode, the first visit to a temple or shrine of the year, hearing the Emperor's greeting that occurs every New Years, and more!



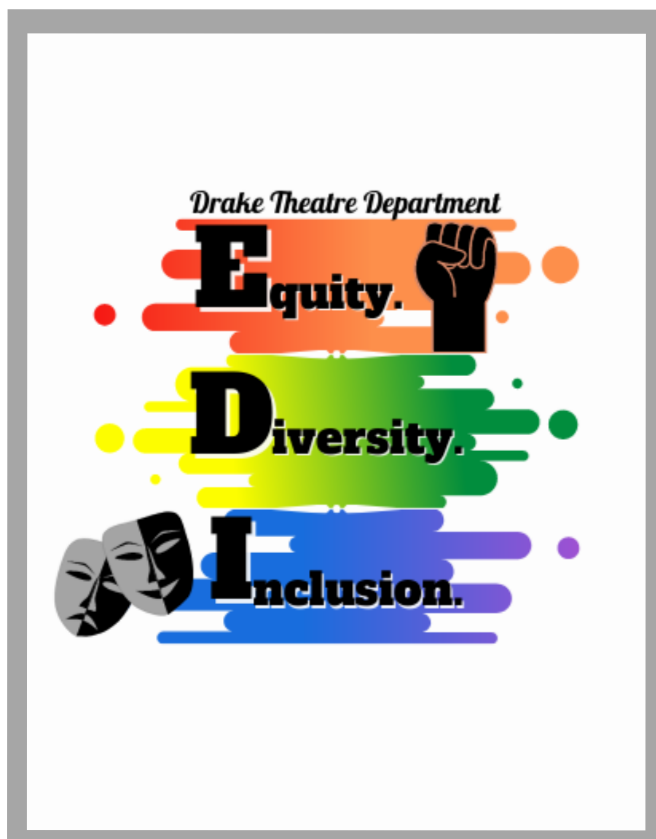
CELEBRATING KWANZAA



Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African-American culture which is held from December 26 to January 1, culminating in gift-giving and a feast of faith, called Karamu Ya Imani. It was created by Maulana Karenga and first celebrated in 1966. American Maulana Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 during the aftermath of the Watts riots as a specifically African-American holiday. Karenga said his goal was to "give Blacks an alternative to the existing holiday and give Blacks an opportunity to celebrate themselves

and their history, rather than simply imitate the practice of the dominant society." For Karenga, a major figure in the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the creation of such holidays also underscored the essential premise that "you must have a cultural revolution before the violent revolution. The cultural revolution gives identity, purpose, and direction."

DRAKE THEATRE EDI COMMITTEE UPDATES!



- Check out our NEW LOGO created by the oh so talented Antonesia Williams!
- We now have a page on the Drake University Theatre Arts Website. Please check it out by clicking [here](#)!
- We intend to hold a Department Wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion workshop in the Spring. Please watch for updates on this, as we hope you will ALL attend.

- 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](#).

**BEST OF LUCK WITH THE LAST 2 WEEKS OF SCHOOL.
WE HOPE YOU HAVE A HAPPY HOLIDAY BREAK!**