

Summer of the Arts Supports the Black Lives Matter Movement

The Summer of the Arts supports the Black Lives Matter movement. We condemn all acts of police brutality and government-sponsored violence, perpetrated against people of color and specifically, most recently, the murder of George Floyd. The violence and death inflicted on countless other Black individuals points to 400 years of systematic attempts to enforce racist social, political, and economic controls and White Supremacist ideologies. We say their names: Dion Johnson. Breonna Taylor. Tony McDade. Ahmaud Arbery. Nina Pop. Tamir Rice. Sandra Bland. Mike Brown. Rekia Boyd. Philando Castile. Trayvon Martin. Eric Garner.

We recognize that many marginalized communities experience similar oppressive policies and inequities, including our Latinx and Indigenous communities in Iowa.

Black Lives Matter. We acknowledge that we can do more to support the black community and communities of color in Iowa City and surrounding areas. We pledge to put considerable creative and monetary resources towards improving the way our organization interacts with these communities. We promise to prioritize making the communities we serve more just, equitable, and inclusive places to live, work, or enjoy the Arts.

As we develop a detailed action plan, we have identified the following steps to begin immediately to support the Black community and uphold anti-racist principles in our organization:

- 1) Summer of the Arts, in concert with the Iowa City Downtown Arts Alliance, have agreed to meet with leaders from the Iowa Freedom Riders, and other Black Arts community groups and individuals as well as other groups and individuals of color, to discuss how arts programming in downtown Iowa City can support and celebrate Black culture and the cultures of people of color regularly.
- 2) Summer of the Arts will make a greater effort to increase the diversity of our musical performers, artistic talents, and vendors at each of our events and festivals, as well as in the Board of Directors and committees.
- 3) We are committed to having conversations with any members of the Black community that would like to share their experiences, talents, ideas and concerns with us. We acknowledge that every person's experience is different, and we want to provide enjoyable and engaging opportunities for the entirety of the Black community and other marginalized communities.
- 4) Even though COVID-19 concerns preclude our ability to hold our annual Soul & Blues Festival in person, we will continue to celebrate Black culture by providing this programming on virtual platforms. We are committed to ensuring that the festival remains a vital and essential part of our programming.
- 5) We will strengthen and diversify our public concert series, including the Friday Night Concert series, the Oaknoll Concert series, and currently, we're in the final stages of implementing a neighborhood concert series featuring Kevin Burt in conjunction with GreenState Credit Union and Deery Brothers. Kevin will be playing a series of live, socially-distanced concerts in area neighborhoods throughout the Iowa City area. When final details are confirmed, those will be available on our website and social media platforms.
- 6) We will work to strengthen partnerships with community action organizations, diversify our pools of volunteers, and increase mentorship programs for students of color and more.
- 7) Lastly, following a two-year strategic planning process, a new vision statement for the Summer of the Arts was adopted in January 2020: *"Summer of the Arts inspires generations of artists and engages rich diverse cultural traditions through dynamic and engaging events, creative and vibrant programming, and high quality productions from a diverse range of talent."* This vision will be at the forefront of our minds moving forward.

The Summer of the Arts will build off of this list to form a cooperative framework to challenge biases and improve our organization, including developing and implementing ethical standards for community engagement, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We believe that true change will come through a commitment to engage in on-going discussions with members of the Black community, educate our Board of Directors and committee members on how to better support and advocate for needed change, and continually evaluate our programming for its cultural relevance to our local community. We look forward to starting and establishing an ongoing dialogue with communities of color to strengthen what we do for years to come.

We see you. We hear you. We will listen. And more than ever before, we stand with you.