

OXFORD CULTURAL ANTI-RACISM ALLIANCE

A Manifesto for Radical Change

Racism in Oxford is a historic and ongoing, institutional and systemic issue. We, the arts and cultural sector of Oxford come together to acknowledge the deep-rooted extent of this problem and our own accountability, and to express our shared determination to make radical change. We acknowledge the roles we have played in upholding white privilege and racial power dynamics. We recognise that, while many of us have taken action to improve equality and diversity, exclusive and prejudicial practices persist. People from the Global Majority¹ who make up 80% of the global population are still under-represented in our programmes and audiences, and at every level within our organisations from volunteers to management and boards. We understand that, to those outside of our organisations, we are gatekeepers for the status quo by keeping others out.

We have come together to say 'enough' and to commit, individually and collectively, to dismantle systemic racism which is a shameful and abhorrent feature of our sector and wider society. This involves urgent but sustained action on a personal, structural and generational level. It requires self-examination and a concerted effort to recognise and unlearn racial bias, behaviours and assumptions, and the stamina and determination to make real and lasting change. Acting together, we commit to this process of radical change by becoming anti-racist organisations, and to collectively shift the mindset and practices of our sector to one where diverse representation and anti-racism is the norm. We aim to provide exemplary leadership on anti-racism and in doing so, to act as a catalyst for other sectors to take action towards long-term change.

This commitment is underpinned by a compelling shared vision of Oxford in which the art and culture of the city, our audiences, and the workforces of our organisations, reflect and are enriched by the diversity of the people who live in it, and the wealth of histories and stories that exist in the world. Culture is an agent for progressive social change and through our collective work we will bring about greater equity and democracy in this world-renowned city, and use our influence to advocate for change within the arts and wider cultural sector. We will ensure that people of the Global Majority are properly celebrated in our programming, contribute through all levels of our organisations, and play leading roles in curating and creating internationally acclaimed art and culture in Oxford, one of the world's great centres for education and learning.

¹ *People of the Global Majority are ethnically diverse people who make up 80% of the world's population and include people of the African Diaspora, people of the South, East, and South East Asian diaspora, and Middle Eastern and North African people.

The values and vision we express here are of an Oxford, where, in five years' time, the mindset, outlook and landscape of the arts and cultural sector have drastically shifted. This is determined by a commitment to action across our organisational cultures and practices, through education and training, a review of our language and data collation, and in the form of new schemes to support artistic development and leadership and to widen audiences. We commit our expertise, influence and resources to a programme of radical change to enrich the cultural life of the city. We do this as an anti-racist coalition of cultural organisations who believe in the transformational agency of culture as a progressive agent of social change.

Actions

Organisational Culture & Practices

We will examine our working practices and organisational cultures to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming for people from the Global Majority. **We will listen to all communities** acting with humility and openness in order to dismantle institutional barriers to employment, participation and engagement. **We will educate ourselves and leverage white privilege** to act in alliance with those who experience discrimination and racism. As anti-racist, pro-equality organisations, **we will enforce a zero tolerance attitude to racism and discriminatory behaviour and language.** **We will address the historic under-representation of people from the Global Majority within our organisations and in our audiences,** and **we will increase support for existing and emerging leaders from the Global Majority in our sector.**

Education & Training

We commit to a process of ongoing education and learning as individual organisations and as a sector, acknowledging Britain's colonial past and reeducating ourselves as part of **anti-racism training for all cultural organisations** in the city. **We will embed this as an ongoing working practice** and ensure that anti-racism training is an integral part of staff and Board induction and ongoing personnel development. We will do this through **sharing resources and learning as peers,** and through **the creation of an anti-racism toolkit, developed in partnership with local communities.**

Language

We understand that the language we use is a powerful act of solidarity or 'allyship' with people who experience racial discrimination and that it is important to learn from how individuals and communities identify themselves. Accordingly, **we will no longer use reductive and disrespectful abbreviations and collective terms** (e.g. BAME) that are centred on whiteness and do not recognise the rich complexity of individual

self-identification. **We commit to continue to listen and learn with sensitivity and respect** in what is an evolving discourse. Currently we take our lead from the [Inc Arts Statement](#) and we will be specific in the language we use and remain open and receptive, actively contributing to the national debate taking place.

Data & Reporting

In order to ensure our efficacy and transparency in reporting on progress to our stakeholders, **we will introduce a shared methodology for data collection and undertake data research** to establish a baseline from which we can set meaningful targets around programming, career pathways into senior management, leadership positions and board recruitment. **We commit to annually review and publicly publish our progress with relevant data.** For this purpose, we will work towards using the same Equal Opportunities Form across organisations for staff and artists and adopting the same audience data collation.

Recruitment

Addressing the lack of representation of people from the Global Majority within our organisations is an essential feature of becoming a more inclusive, anti-racist sector. Therefore, **we will change our recruitment processes to reduce barriers** due to race, socio-economic background and other discrimination and commit to take positive action in order to diversify our teams and Board.

Artistic Development & Leadership

In order to ensure that we are harnessing the widest creative potential and appealing to the widest possible audience, **we commit to increasing the presence and influence of artists from the Global Majority within our programming and in leadership roles.** In order to do this, **we will form a paid working group of artists of the Global Majority** from different art forms to work with us to drive new initiatives. **We will also create a new rolling scheme of Associate Creatives**, for practitioners who would benefit from leadership experience, networks and visibility. These roles will be hosted by different venues and will include several new curator and producer roles, as well as a resident company scheme. As we develop this new initiative, we will explore how these practitioners can connect to national and international networks.

Audiences & Spaces

We will ensure that our public spaces are welcoming places for people of the Global Majority and that our programming celebrates a wealth of histories and cultures relevant to a diverse audience. Widening our audiences is a priority for all arts organisations in

Oxford. In order to increase the diversity of our audiences and participants, **we will develop a new paid Community Connectors' Scheme** to consult our communities and inform our programming and initiatives.

This is the time. The time for change.

All of us who have signed this manifesto commit to act in relation to racism and discrimination, working to support and challenge each other, and to make the radical change necessary to achieve our vision of an Oxford free of racism and discrimination through the leadership of its arts and cultural sector.

Date 01/02/2021

Signed

Ark-T Centre

Arts at the Old Fire Station

Cowley Road Works

Creation Theatre

Film Oxford

Fusion Arts

Justice in Motion

Kuumba Nia Arts

Mandala Theatre Company

Modern Art Oxford

Music at Oxford

OVADA

Oxford Playhouse

Story Museum

Ultimate Picture Palace

Unlock the Chains Collective

Pegasus Theatre

Oxford Age Friendly Creative Network

Oxford Contemporary Music