

Great River Shakespeare Festival - June 9, 2020 (See the original [facebook post here](#))

As a company, we mourn the death of George Floyd and call for justice on his behalf. Racism is a blight on our communities, state, and country. As artists we cannot fully express our own stories or the stories of others when black Americans are consistently being ignored, beaten, and killed - there is no art in that. Black lives matter.

In a time when theater after theater is releasing statements of solidarity and pledges to be better allies, we know that for many BIPOC artists, these statements are ringing hollow. We also know that the Festival's silence on how we plan to improve our practices has signalled complicity, or a hope not to be held accountable for our role in upholding white supremacy. We see this, and acknowledge that transparency about the internal work we are doing is necessary, and will be more transparent in the future.

While we have been proactive about equity, diversity, inclusion, and allyship within the company as a whole, we recognize that it has not been enough. We still do not have people of color in design, directing, or administrative roles. Often, that is where the most decisions happen. We have begun discussions as a management team about how we might rectify that as we plan our next season. We welcome feedback from the community as we form a plan.

Some of the steps we are currently taking internally include reallocating our budget to better compensate consultants and associate artists (artists who advise outside of their Equity or design contract), reserving time for frank discussions among the leadership staff about our complicity in white supremacy, and formalizing the artist groups who guide our artistic choices throughout the year.

The staff slated to join the festival in 2020 have all been given the right of first refusal for Season 17 (which has now been postponed until 2021); we will have BIPOC artists and administrators at all levels of the Festival before then. As we further solidify these plans and set concrete/measurable goals, we will update and add them to our website.

If you have suggestions or questions for the Festival, please feel free to reach out at boxoffice@grsf.org.

At GRSF, words matter as does being clearly understood. It is central to our mission. We chose the words expressing that we wish "...to be held accountable for our role in upholding white supremacy" with care, and we stand by them. We also acknowledge that we did not create shared meaning around those words. We use the words white supremacy not to pass judgment on any individual or community or to accuse ourselves or anyone else of being white supremacists. We choose the words to acknowledge our responsibility for and participation in a system that wittingly or unwittingly reserves for white people the overwhelming majority of positions of power and authority. If you would like to better understand what has informed our word choice, please see [this article](#). As arbiters of what stories get told and how they are told to thousands of people, we recognize the responsibility that we have and commit to include more Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color in positions of power and authority.