

# THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

## Definitions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

OPERA America understands that language has power and that the meanings of words can change and evolve over time. We are providing the definitions below to underscore our own meanings in the “Values Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion,” in order to provide greater context and understanding.

- **Diversity** is the breadth of representation within the opera field. It can mean diverse cultures and ethnicities, gender identities, ages, geographies, budget sizes, or works presented.  
*When we speak about wanting to diversify our staffs or boards, it is important that we be explicit about whether we’re talking about people of color, women, artists or other groups.*
- **Inclusion** is the invitation and the welcome. Inclusion doesn’t just mean representation at the board table, but also whose voices are heard. It moves beyond numbers and urges us to think about how we create a space where everyone feels comfortable and safe.  
*When a staff or board has increased diversity with additional people of color, does this new group feel empowered to speak up? Are long-time staff or board members open to new ideas and new ways of thinking?*
- **Equity** means recognizing that not everyone is starting from the same point, but ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. Universal policies and practices, while equal and accepting, may not be equitable. Equity requires additional, purposeful effort to ensure that those who are oppressed can reach the same levels of success as those with power. Equity is not the same as diversity, nor is it the even the same as equality.  
*Our organizations may have hiring policies that offer equal access. Yet, job postings, support for staff and the “culture” of an organization may not be equitable in that they don’t take into account the root causes of lack of representation.*

**When OPERA America refers to “people of color,”** we mean people from ALAANA backgrounds. ALAANA stands for African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American individuals and communities. We acknowledge that both identities and languages are fluid, and we strive to increase our own understanding and update our language as cultures and needs change.