

WEBVTT

1

00:00:00.140 --> 00:00:04.740

<v 0>Welcome everyone. Thank you for giving us your time and your energy.  
Um,</v>

2

00:00:04.880 --> 00:00:06.820

and for agreeing to be in community with us,

3

00:00:07.360 --> 00:00:09.460

I'm actually going to pass it to mark first,

4

00:00:09.780 --> 00:00:12.020

to officially welcome us all into this space. Uh,

5

00:00:12.021 --> 00:00:14.220

and then we'll continue with today. Go.

6

00:00:14.340 --> 00:00:18.060

<v 1>For it. Oh, thanks so much. And I will thank you in a second,</v>

7

00:00:18.080 --> 00:00:22.850

but I wanted to welcome everybody to this first racial justice opera  
forum.

8

00:00:22.990 --> 00:00:27.650

And I call it the first because I hope we follow up with more such work

9

00:00:27.651 --> 00:00:32.370

across our community to make the opera world, the world. We want it to be.

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00:00:33.130 --> 00:00:37.850

I first wanna start out by thanking members of the racial justice opera  
network.

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00:00:38.770 --> 00:00:42.800

Uh, they have been meeting for, uh, a few you years now, and I,

12

00:00:43.080 --> 00:00:47.840

I just think they have been tremendous in guiding some of our work, um,

13

00:00:48.060 --> 00:00:49.840  
in the direction that we needed to take.

14  
00:00:50.060 --> 00:00:53.080  
It started when Brandon grind was here at opera America.

15  
00:00:53.180 --> 00:00:56.480  
And I just want to thank Brandon, uh, Brandon, if you're not watching,

16  
00:00:56.920 --> 00:00:59.120  
I hope we're gets to that I, that I call you out.

17  
00:00:59.121 --> 00:01:03.590  
And thank you for getting us started in this direction. Uh, again,

18  
00:01:03.591 --> 00:01:06.070  
supported by members of the racial justice opera network.

19  
00:01:06.820 --> 00:01:11.550  
Then I wanna turn to quo and thank quo for putting together an  
extraordinary

20  
00:01:11.650 --> 00:01:14.830  
set of sessions for these next few days.

21  
00:01:15.180 --> 00:01:17.910  
That include great panel discussions,

22  
00:01:18.100 --> 00:01:22.780  
time for reflection time in between to really ponder what we've heard and  
what

23  
00:01:22.781 --> 00:01:24.180  
we've learned, um,

24  
00:01:24.780 --> 00:01:29.060  
quo has a depth of insight and a grace that is

25  
00:01:29.230 --> 00:01:31.140  
absolutely extraordinary.

26

00:01:31.520 --> 00:01:36.380

We are blessed to have her as part of the opera America team and so

27

00:01:36.620 --> 00:01:39.820

grateful for her guidance through the material that she's planned for us  
this

28

00:01:39.821 --> 00:01:44.290

week, she's asked us to be fully present, to be ourselves.

29

00:01:45.410 --> 00:01:46.330

Um, and,

30

00:01:46.690 --> 00:01:50.010

and I interpret that as just being open to learning and being on the  
journey

31

00:01:50.400 --> 00:01:53.810

that she has mapped out for us. So quo. I, I really,

32

00:01:53.811 --> 00:01:57.850

from the bottom of my heart, I thank you. And, uh, I put it in your good  
hands.

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00:01:59.430 --> 00:02:03.980

<v 0>Thank you again. Thank you all for, uh, showing up in the space. This  
is,</v>

34

00:02:04.050 --> 00:02:06.490

is how the work starts. This is how the work matters.

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00:02:07.330 --> 00:02:12.050

I do want to introduce my fabulous and wonderful co-host Jessica

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00:02:12.280 --> 00:02:14.610

John amazing costume designer,

37

00:02:14.790 --> 00:02:18.250

as well as a steering committee member of the justice opera network.

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00:02:19.920 --> 00:02:20.920

Jessica, you wanna tell about, hello?

39

00:02:21.900 --> 00:02:25.520

<v 2>Hello you today.</v>

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00:02:26.440 --> 00:02:27.273

<v 0>No problem.</v>

41

00:02:27.440 --> 00:02:32.320

I also want to give a shout out to OA staff to jam to Noelle and to

42

00:02:32.600 --> 00:02:33.070

Megan,

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00:02:33.070 --> 00:02:37.520

because they are assisting us with our journey throughout the entire week.

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00:02:37.620 --> 00:02:39.000

And it's not easy work.

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00:02:39.060 --> 00:02:42.120

So always wanna express gratitude for the hard work that they do,

46

00:02:42.910 --> 00:02:46.390

Jessica and I will be walking every Friday three today.

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00:02:46.400 --> 00:02:49.310

She's my co-host for today. We'll have a different cohost every time we meet.

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00:02:49.450 --> 00:02:52.630

So that's a co-host today, cohost on the third cohost on the fifth.

49

00:02:53.010 --> 00:02:55.190

So I'm gonna hand it over to Jessica to kick us off.

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00:02:56.480 --> 00:03:01.480

<v 2>Hi, welcome everybody. Um, so just to let everyone know today, uh,</v>

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00:03:01.481 --> 00:03:06.280

the purpose of the forum today is to bring the opera field together for a jour

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00:03:06.281 --> 00:03:11.160

journey of intentional learning engagement and practical application

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00:03:11.420 --> 00:03:13.640

for racial justice work. Uh,

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00:03:13.690 --> 00:03:17.000

today will be about the journey that we just talked about,

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00:03:17.001 --> 00:03:21.110

which is an ongoing that will not end with absolute.

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00:03:21.320 --> 00:03:23.870

There are no absolute answers, um, to,

57

00:03:24.090 --> 00:03:28.390

to a system that has been placed for centuries here in this nation. Um,

58

00:03:28.610 --> 00:03:31.350

the other thing that today will be about is learning.

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00:03:31.530 --> 00:03:33.150

And we talk about intentional learning.

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00:03:33.530 --> 00:03:36.590

So this is not about getting it right or being right.

61

00:03:37.020 --> 00:03:41.740

This is about prioritizing what is right through action and our

62

00:03:41.741 --> 00:03:45.100

commitment. We all have things to learn every day.

63

00:03:46.040 --> 00:03:50.300

And part of this learning is acknowledging that tools are very important,

64

00:03:50.840 --> 00:03:54.180

but tools can also be very dangerous if you don't know how to use them.

65

00:03:54.280 --> 00:03:57.660

And so today we are going on this journey of understanding the tools that we

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00:03:57.661 --> 00:04:01.450

have been given so far and earning some new ones quo.

67

00:04:01.451 --> 00:04:03.090

Would you like to do the land acknowledgement?

68

00:04:03.710 --> 00:04:08.530

<v 0>Yes. I acknowledge that not everybody participates in the practice of land</v>

69

00:04:08.531 --> 00:04:10.570

acknowledgements and for different reasons.

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00:04:10.650 --> 00:04:14.450

I do want to honor that because the impact is different depending on your

71

00:04:14.770 --> 00:04:15.603

identity.

72

00:04:15.610 --> 00:04:19.650

I want everyone to know that in racial justice work truth telling is absolutely

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00:04:19.651 --> 00:04:22.520

important, and it is crucial in the work that we do.

74

00:04:22.720 --> 00:04:25.480

It is crucial in the healing that is necessary.

75

00:04:25.940 --> 00:04:30.040

So I do want to start all of our sessions off after the welcome with a land and

76

00:04:30.160 --> 00:04:33.440

a people acknowledgement. We in the United States,

77

00:04:33.460 --> 00:04:35.640  
we in this nation are on stolen land.

78  
00:04:35.670 --> 00:04:39.960  
That has been cultivated since time I Memorial by hundreds of tribal nations and

79  
00:04:40.320 --> 00:04:43.070  
community communities of human beings who loved,

80  
00:04:43.250 --> 00:04:47.590  
who fought connected and created in their humanity, humanity.

81  
00:04:47.780 --> 00:04:50.150  
That was intentionally dismissed through policy,

82  
00:04:50.190 --> 00:04:53.230  
allowing for horrible conditions, erasure,

83  
00:04:53.570 --> 00:04:56.830  
and genocide communities and nations that are here,

84  
00:04:57.170 --> 00:05:00.950  
and that will not be silenced. And we will not participate in an act of,

85  
00:05:02.740 --> 00:05:07.100  
I also acknowledge that people were stolen from their homes in Africa and

86  
00:05:07.101 --> 00:05:11.700  
brought to this stolen land dehumanized enforced into free and enslaved labor.

87  
00:05:12.360 --> 00:05:16.420  
The entire nation benefits from stolen land, stolen labor and stolen lives.

88  
00:05:17.090 --> 00:05:19.660  
This is a truth at the foundation of our nation.

89  
00:05:19.840 --> 00:05:23.290  
In a part of the conditions we have inherited as my last name is Johnson.

90  
00:05:23.950 --> 00:05:25.690  
Not because my ancestors name's Johnson,

91  
00:05:26.110 --> 00:05:28.090  
but because I'm a descendant of those stolen people,

92  
00:05:29.420 --> 00:05:32.830  
this is not just in the past, but it is present.

93  
00:05:33.130 --> 00:05:37.630  
And before us every day, but along with this inheritance comes the ability,

94  
00:05:37.770 --> 00:05:39.550  
the opportunity, the honor,

95  
00:05:39.890 --> 00:05:43.620  
and the responsibility to disrupt the systems of dehumanization,

96  
00:05:44.320 --> 00:05:48.740  
to connect and heal the harm as we move forward in truth and community.

97  
00:05:49.620 --> 00:05:53.660  
I also honor the ancestors who cared for and labored on this land whose

98  
00:05:53.661 --> 00:05:57.890  
experiences continue to live with us. May we all continue to work,

99  
00:05:57.891 --> 00:06:01.370  
to build a better world and the path forward for our descendants who will come

100  
00:06:01.371 --> 00:06:02.204  
after us.

101  
00:06:02.850 --> 00:06:06.090  
I thank you for joining us for this land and this people acknowledgement.

102  
00:06:08.970 --> 00:06:13.110  
<v 2>The other thing we want to do today is start with our group agreements. Um,</v>



103

00:06:13.210 --> 00:06:16.630

you will probably have gotten these group of agreements through the email,  
uh,

104

00:06:16.631 --> 00:06:21.060

with this racial opera forum. Um, but they're also available online, um,

105

00:06:21.240 --> 00:06:24.860

as well on the opera America website for this forum. Um,

106

00:06:25.400 --> 00:06:29.300

and these are important so that we all are starting from the same place as  
a

107

00:06:29.301 --> 00:06:32.420

group, and that we're committing, um, in this space together.

108

00:06:33.640 --> 00:06:34.940

The first acknowledgement,

109

00:06:35.040 --> 00:06:39.370

the first of the group agreements is centering truth and connection in

110

00:06:39.870 --> 00:06:44.690

racial justice must be rooted in truth to disrupt the incomplete and

111

00:06:44.691 --> 00:06:49.290

false narratives that support the fallacy of racial human hierarchy.

112

00:06:50.430 --> 00:06:54.890

We are agreeing that I will always center the truth with the goal of

113

00:06:54.891 --> 00:06:58.730

connecting, to heal the harm and build a better world together.

114

00:07:00.990 --> 00:07:02.150

<v 0>Be explicit about race.</v>

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00:07:02.900 --> 00:07:06.990

Race is often the most difficult conversation for many to have in the United

116

00:07:06.990 --> 00:07:07.530

States.

117

00:07:07.530 --> 00:07:12.110

We agree that I will always be explicit about race in racial justice work.

118

00:07:12.790 --> 00:07:16.790

I will not default to gender identity, sexual orientation or preference ability,

119

00:07:16.940 --> 00:07:18.270

nationality, et cetera,

120

00:07:18.540 --> 00:07:21.660

without being explicit about the impact of race and racism.

121

00:07:22.820 --> 00:07:27.100

I will be explicit about racial groups and always mindful that no one group is a

122

00:07:27.101 --> 00:07:27.934

monolith.

123

00:07:29.300 --> 00:07:33.520

<v 2>Intent does not outweigh impact good intentions,</v>

124

00:07:33.660 --> 00:07:37.640

and a desire for change are important. Impact is most important.

125

00:07:38.600 --> 00:07:41.520

I will be an accountable for the impact of my,

126

00:07:43.470 --> 00:07:46.830

if my impact does not align with my intention and causes harm,

127

00:07:47.510 --> 00:07:52.190

I will work to correct my impact without silencing those who I'm,

128

00:07:52.420 --> 00:07:54.670  
whom I have in inadvertently harmed.

129  
00:07:56.590 --> 00:08:01.070  
<v 0>There space. Everyone is harmed by racism and a fallacy of racial hierarchy.</v>

130  
00:08:01.790 --> 00:08:02.560  
I acknowledge the,

131  
00:08:02.560 --> 00:08:05.820  
at some racial groups experience disproportionate harm under various

132  
00:08:05.821 --> 00:08:06.654  
circumstances,

133  
00:08:07.190 --> 00:08:11.180  
there is enough space for each of us to acknowledge the harm and healing

134  
00:08:11.210 --> 00:08:12.940  
necessary to enact racial justice.

135  
00:08:13.900 --> 00:08:17.660  
I also acknowledge that this work requires all of us and that no one is entitled

136  
00:08:17.661 --> 00:08:20.180  
to intimate spaces amongst other racial groups.

137  
00:08:22.210 --> 00:08:26.060  
<v 2>Use. I state, we all have experiences.</v>

138  
00:08:26.510 --> 00:08:31.460  
There is power in taking ownership of my experiences and individual commitment

139  
00:08:31.480 --> 00:08:32.313  
to racial justice.

140  
00:08:33.340 --> 00:08:38.340  
I will use I statements and speak from my own personal experiences when

141

00:08:38.341 --> 00:08:39.860  
sharing in group discussions.

142

00:08:41.810 --> 00:08:46.760  
<v 0>Practice self care and collective care, racial justice work is hard.  
You know,</v>

143

00:08:47.040 --> 00:08:47.873  
we, that's why we're here.

144

00:08:48.400 --> 00:08:51.320  
I will be mindful of my own needs and the needs of others,

145

00:08:51.390 --> 00:08:53.640  
including the need for truth and connection.

146

00:08:54.480 --> 00:08:56.920  
We'll be together for a limited amount of time during this forum.

147

00:08:57.300 --> 00:09:02.040  
So collective care also means that I will actively move forward to speak  
when

148

00:09:02.041 --> 00:09:04.720  
necessary and move back to allow others to speak.

149

00:09:06.830 --> 00:09:10.090  
<v 2>Be fully present. This is your journey.</v>

150

00:09:11.170 --> 00:09:12.130  
I am here by choice,

151

00:09:12.270 --> 00:09:16.280  
and I agree to be fully present for the work and learn in this space.

152

00:09:17.320 --> 00:09:20.000  
Progress can only take place when I do the work,

153

00:09:20.210 --> 00:09:22.400  
which starts with my own personal journey.

154

00:09:23.240 --> 00:09:28.200

I acknowledge that my progress is directly related to my effort and my

155

00:09:28.260 --> 00:09:30.320

prioritization of this work.

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00:09:31.930 --> 00:09:36.060

<v 0>Embrace discomfort and enclosure. This space will be uncomfortable.</v>

157

00:09:36.810 --> 00:09:40.450

I will lean into my discomfort and challenge myself to experience learning that

158

00:09:40.451 --> 00:09:44.050

does not prioritize my comfort with discussions about race.

159

00:09:44.810 --> 00:09:48.730

I acknowledge that I will not receive a packaged set of tools or answers to

160

00:09:48.731 --> 00:09:51.650

solve a century's old problem. Within a short amount of time,

161

00:09:52.110 --> 00:09:54.730

change cannot happen at the rate of my own comfort.

162

00:09:56.950 --> 00:10:01.950

<v 2>Turn to one. I will suspend judgment during the forum.</v>

163

00:10:02.790 --> 00:10:07.590

I will turn to wonder and consider what my own reactions are telling or

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00:10:07.650 --> 00:10:11.350

my own reactions are telling me when I have an emotional response,

165

00:10:12.070 --> 00:10:17.070

I will work to explore those emotions and experiences in my own, on my own,

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00:10:17.130 --> 00:10:21.420

and in a healthy manner while remaining in community with the forum

167

00:10:21.421 --> 00:10:22.254  
participants.

168

00:10:23.870 --> 00:10:28.230  
<v 0>And of course, we established this as a compassionate and a  
courageous space.</v>

169

00:10:29.110 --> 00:10:31.790  
I will work with others to ensure a space of compassion,

170

00:10:32.180 --> 00:10:35.710  
hearing the collective harm and healing in our shared experiences.

171

00:10:36.310 --> 00:10:38.910  
I will also work with others to ensure a space of courage,

172

00:10:39.720 --> 00:10:43.100  
boldly disrupting the system of false racial human hierarchy.

173

00:10:47.500 --> 00:10:51.980  
<v 2>Um, so today's agenda. Uh, we will be starting out with, uh,</v>

174

00:10:52.700 --> 00:10:55.740  
uh, we just did our welcome and introduction. Yay. Um,

175

00:10:55.890 --> 00:10:59.860  
next we will be starting with a presentation, um, about race,

176

00:11:00.140 --> 00:11:04.250  
identity and opera. That will be from 1250 to one 15. Um,

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00:11:04.470 --> 00:11:07.650  
we will then have an active break for about 10 minutes,

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00:11:08.170 --> 00:11:12.610  
followed by a panel in group discussion at 1 25 to two 15.

179

00:11:13.650 --> 00:11:18.010  
Um, then we will have lunch, um, which is also a working break. Yay.

180

00:11:18.110 --> 00:11:19.570

We like eating. Um,

181

00:11:19.790 --> 00:11:23.600

and then we'll have a following that we will have a disrupting white

182

00:11:24.470 --> 00:11:26.960

supremacy culture workshop from three to four.

183

00:11:27.330 --> 00:11:31.080

We'll take another little bit of a break and then come back to a group to have a

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00:11:31.081 --> 00:11:33.960

group discussion and debrief to end our day at five.

185

00:11:35.660 --> 00:11:37.480

So I will now kick it off to.

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00:11:39.620 --> 00:11:43.640

<v 0>So thank you all again for, uh, walking through the group agreements with us,</v>

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00:11:43.641 --> 00:11:48.070

you should have receive them in your pre four materials will

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00:11:48.420 --> 00:11:51.630

read the group agreements going forward, but just the titles,

189

00:11:51.631 --> 00:11:56.120

but we wanted to speak those things into the space. I would like to introduce,

190

00:11:56.600 --> 00:12:00.800

uh, my co-presenter for today, James Dargan, he,

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00:12:01.060 --> 00:12:05.280

and all of his brilliance will be assisting us with, uh,

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00:12:05.420 --> 00:12:09.360

our next discussion, which is about, uh, race, opera, and identity.

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00:12:10.100 --> 00:12:14.550

So that we know this particular present will focus on

194

00:12:15.120 --> 00:12:19.390

black artists. But the goal is for us to understand,

195

00:12:19.410 --> 00:12:20.990

and we'll get through that as we get through it.

196

00:12:21.130 --> 00:12:24.630

The goal is for us to understand the impacts of race and racism,

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00:12:24.970 --> 00:12:28.390

and then to apply what that means for all racial identities.

198

00:12:28.930 --> 00:12:32.870

So we do want to upfront say that this is not a black and white issue,

199

00:12:33.160 --> 00:12:35.260

as much as this is a human issue.

200

00:12:35.520 --> 00:12:39.860

And we're choosing to go from this human perspective to combat anti-blackness.

201

00:12:40.110 --> 00:12:43.180

We'll talk about that as well. So with that,

202

00:12:43.300 --> 00:12:45.740

I am going to share my screen

203

00:12:47.250 --> 00:12:48.390

and we'll get started,

204

00:12:57.180 --> 00:13:01.460

right? So grounding for everybody, just so that we all know,

205

00:13:02.250 --> 00:13:04.450

uh, race is a social and political construct.



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00:13:04.451 --> 00:13:07.090

This is something that a lot of people know we've been talking about it.

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00:13:07.800 --> 00:13:12.490

However, in the United States, the ways in which the categories of race,

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00:13:12.640 --> 00:13:17.570

they have evolved somewhat into these five categories.

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00:13:17.571 --> 00:13:21.370

There are only five races. That is it behold,

210

00:13:21.550 --> 00:13:25.120

the ways in which our identities are not enough, uh,

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00:13:25.320 --> 00:13:28.320

in the ways in which we cannot truly represent and express ourselves within

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00:13:28.321 --> 00:13:30.960

these five groups. In addition,

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00:13:31.220 --> 00:13:36.120

we look at the ways in which race subsumes ethnicity, nationality, religion,

214

00:13:36.121 --> 00:13:39.160

culture, all of the other things that go a part of our identity.

215

00:13:39.980 --> 00:13:43.750

We often see that this is the,

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00:13:44.170 --> 00:13:48.870

the almost inherent ways in which people of different nationalities are

217

00:13:48.871 --> 00:13:52.710

treated different religions, different cultures, different ethnicities,

218

00:13:53.170 --> 00:13:54.550

but that is not the same as race.

219

00:13:56.510 --> 00:14:00.410

Racism is a system of dehumanization for everyone.

220

00:14:00.990 --> 00:14:04.880

It is built on bias and prejudice, and it has to be supported by power.

221

00:14:05.290 --> 00:14:06.600

There are different levels of racism

222

00:14:10.540 --> 00:14:14.800

as there are different levels of racism. But as we look at the,

223

00:14:15.500 --> 00:14:19.640

the systemic and systematic forms of racism, they have to be supported by power.

224

00:14:20.120 --> 00:14:24.280

I have to have the ability to affect your life on, uh, a meaningful scale.

225

00:14:24.480 --> 00:14:29.390

I have to be have the ability to participate in targeting you every single day.

226

00:14:30.040 --> 00:14:31.650

This is a nuance in racism.

227

00:14:34.690 --> 00:14:39.460

This system supports a fallacy of human hierarchy in this fallacy,

228

00:14:39.461 --> 00:14:44.060

which is falseness, false human hierarchy. We place black at the bottom,

229

00:14:44.110 --> 00:14:45.060

which is why, again,

230

00:14:45.300 --> 00:14:48.540

we are actively going to go from a space of combating anti-blackness.

231

00:14:49.220 --> 00:14:53.920

Black is at the bottom and is anything of black of African descent

232

00:14:54.340 --> 00:14:59.000

is placed at lower value on the larger scale of racism in the hierarchy,

233

00:14:59.730 --> 00:15:04.160

white is placed at the top. Again, these are constructs that people created.

234

00:15:04.620 --> 00:15:09.600

So they created at ways to divide people artificially and then place them

235

00:15:09.601 --> 00:15:13.910

in the matter of part with black at the bottom and whites at the top,

236

00:15:14.410 --> 00:15:18.950

it then forces all other racial groups, native American, Asian,

237

00:15:19.130 --> 00:15:21.870

native, Hawaiian, Pacific island, Islander.

238

00:15:22.010 --> 00:15:26.970

It forces other groups to then move throughout this racial hierarchy

239

00:15:27.190 --> 00:15:30.970

at the whim of those who have the most power in some spaces, it,

240

00:15:31.130 --> 00:15:35.120

Asian identities may have more power, may have more comfort and other spaces,

241

00:15:35.960 --> 00:15:38.400

American Indian may have more power, may have more comfort,

242

00:15:38.940 --> 00:15:43.840

but what it does is still attacks everyone as everyone is trying to find their

243

00:15:43.841 --> 00:15:45.360

space within the white gaze.

244

00:15:45.960 --> 00:15:50.720

Everyone is trying to find their identity that is starting to be attacked within

245

00:15:51.040 --> 00:15:54.350  
this space of D humanization. Again,

246

00:15:54.770 --> 00:15:58.470  
we are doing this particular presentation through a space of anti-blackness so

247

00:15:58.471 --> 00:16:00.390  
that we dismiss this hierarchy.

248

00:16:02.380 --> 00:16:04.870  
This system of dehumanization harms everyone.

249

00:16:05.770 --> 00:16:09.430  
It creates this disconnect between human beings and communities.

250

00:16:09.530 --> 00:16:11.830  
And we are experiencing that in so many ways in opera,

251

00:16:12.080 --> 00:16:14.660  
especially when we're wanting to engage with audience members,

252

00:16:14.661 --> 00:16:17.500  
wanting to engage with our communities. There's a disconnect there,

253

00:16:17.520 --> 00:16:21.180  
and it's there for a reason. And when we say communities, a lot of times, we,

254

00:16:21.280 --> 00:16:24.700  
we also identify the disconnect in racial communities as well.

255

00:16:26.120 --> 00:16:28.690  
This creates disproportionate and different harm.

256

00:16:28.800 --> 00:16:31.490  
Everybody is harmed people harmed in different ways.

257

00:16:32.190 --> 00:16:36.560

And sometimes that comes through vision and distraction under this

258

00:16:37.030 --> 00:16:38.560

idea that white is better.

259

00:16:38.700 --> 00:16:42.880

So everyone else needs to fight each other in order to be supported by the white

260

00:16:43.110 --> 00:16:47.480

gays. If one group does something or calls something out often time,

261

00:16:47.820 --> 00:16:51.680

the tactic is to get everyone mad at that group for starting something for

262

00:16:51.681 --> 00:16:54.710

stirring something up, as opposed to everybody joining to together,

263

00:16:54.890 --> 00:16:59.510

to attack the system in this space for the racial justice opera form,

264

00:16:59.690 --> 00:17:02.190

we will support people. We will disrupt the system.

265

00:17:03.170 --> 00:17:07.070

It also comes from acts of survival because those with power start to then

266

00:17:07.071 --> 00:17:11.750

determine who gets what in this idea of scarcity and this fallacy of scarcity.

267

00:17:12.690 --> 00:17:15.740

And it also comes from the ability to experie dominant culture.

268

00:17:16.240 --> 00:17:19.620

Not everyone experiences things the same way in this nation,

269

00:17:20.000 --> 00:17:23.220

and then not everyone experiences things the same way in the globe.

270

00:17:25.050 --> 00:17:27.030  
So as we move into identity,

271

00:17:27.850 --> 00:17:32.430  
we want to know that identity is multifaceted. So this includes so many things.

272

00:17:32.710 --> 00:17:34.950  
It includes the traits that we receive from our parents.

273

00:17:35.370 --> 00:17:38.780  
It includes how we look. It includes our beliefs, our values,

274

00:17:39.210 --> 00:17:40.500  
what we hold to be true.

275

00:17:40.640 --> 00:17:44.060  
And then the experiences that start to shape whether or not we truly believe

276

00:17:44.061 --> 00:17:47.140  
those things and whether or not we need, start to believe other things,

277

00:17:48.880 --> 00:17:51.680  
but in identity, it is twofold.

278

00:17:52.100 --> 00:17:55.920  
So identity looks at how we present and express or identify ourselves.

279

00:17:56.520 --> 00:17:58.240  
I present myself as such,

280

00:17:58.740 --> 00:18:03.720  
but then how we are identified or perceived racism very much moves on how we

281

00:18:03.721 --> 00:18:04.500  
are identified,

282

00:18:04.500 --> 00:18:08.400  
how we are perceived and the nuance of how we represent ourselves and how we

283

00:18:08.510 --> 00:18:13.350

express ourselves starts to combat those things or to be absorbed

284

00:18:13.351 --> 00:18:17.230

by those things. Again, I can identify myself as one way,

285

00:18:17.770 --> 00:18:21.590

but I am treated a certain way because I am perceived as such.

286

00:18:22.330 --> 00:18:23.750

And because of those perceptions,

287

00:18:23.780 --> 00:18:28.230

there's subsequent treatment associated with the value in this

288

00:18:28.520 --> 00:18:30.420

false hierarchy. So,

289

00:18:30.421 --> 00:18:34.180

because I am perceived as someone who is at the bottom of this racial hierarchy,

290

00:18:34.660 --> 00:18:37.940

I am treated as someone at the bottom of this racial hierarchy,

291

00:18:38.870 --> 00:18:41.100

those of our colleagues, our loved ones,

292

00:18:41.101 --> 00:18:45.260

ourselves who have more of a fluid identity, right? You look at me, I'm black.

293

00:18:45.261 --> 00:18:49.460

There's nothing else. This, this there's no other option. But for the,

294

00:18:49.850 --> 00:18:54.490

those of us and our colleagues and our loved ones who have more of a

295

00:18:54.660 --> 00:18:56.450

fluid identity, if you will,

296

00:18:57.050 --> 00:19:01.090

there starts to become this space where you are treated according to how you're

297

00:19:01.091 --> 00:19:04.770

perceived, but perception matters. And it shifts within different spaces.

298

00:19:05.390 --> 00:19:08.210

So there's the additional harm that comes in that space as well.

299

00:19:09.230 --> 00:19:13.080

It requires at everyone fit with expectations. However,

300

00:19:13.380 --> 00:19:17.160

the issue is that as we look at to this false hierarchy,

301

00:19:17.620 --> 00:19:22.000

it starts to say that to the white identity

302

00:19:22.540 --> 00:19:25.320

is the most important, which is harmful for everyone,

303

00:19:25.321 --> 00:19:28.280

including those who identify and who are racialized as white,

304

00:19:28.550 --> 00:19:31.310

because it becomes a space of, you cannot be a human being,

305

00:19:31.590 --> 00:19:32.550

cuz you have to be better than,

306

00:19:33.170 --> 00:19:36.950

and then it becomes harmful for everyone else because you cannot be a human

307

00:19:36.951 --> 00:19:41.830

being because you need to strive to be better than you are naturally inherently.

308

00:19:42.050 --> 00:19:45.070



You are inferior. And we want to combat that in this space.

309

00:19:45.270 --> 00:19:47.630

We wanna combat that for the entire racial justice opera form

310

00:19:50.000 --> 00:19:52.630

opera right now that we have that grounding we're gonna

311

00:19:54.500 --> 00:19:59.260

opera has and continues to play a role in assigning value based on racial

312

00:19:59.860 --> 00:20:03.500

identity. This is both on stage. This is in the office.

313

00:20:03.690 --> 00:20:05.980

This is in our communities and the work that we do,

314

00:20:06.920 --> 00:20:08.740

I'm gonna pass it to James to,

315

00:20:09.680 --> 00:20:12.500

to help provide context to that. If you will.

316

00:20:13.670 --> 00:20:17.290

<v 3>I'm honored to join the sermon I'm already getting my spirit is  
already getting</v>

317

00:20:17.291 --> 00:20:18.970

excited. I'm I'm ready, I'm ready.

318

00:20:18.971 --> 00:20:21.010

And I'm so glad to see all of y'all virtually.

319

00:20:21.011 --> 00:20:23.610

And I'm so glad to see your face quo. Um,

320

00:20:24.560 --> 00:20:28.220

before I dive in and kind of follow in the wake of what quo has created,

321

00:20:28.540 --> 00:20:33.060

I want to share a vocal Ben addiction by a singer that I'm sure a lot of us,

322

00:20:33.080 --> 00:20:37.730

if not all of us, no, and love the great Roland Haye. Um,

323

00:20:38.150 --> 00:20:41.410

and this is, uh, Schubert's song. Dubas Deru,

324

00:20:41.570 --> 00:20:46.250

I think it's appropriate for what will be a peaceful and invigorating

325

00:20:46.540 --> 00:20:47.600

discussion. Uh,

326

00:20:47.660 --> 00:20:52.480

let me see if I can pass the elder millennial gauntlet of sharing

327

00:20:52.620 --> 00:20:56.530

my screen. So there everybody sees that. Yes.

328

00:20:57.360 --> 00:21:00.740

Awesome. And full screen,

329

00:21:03.470 --> 00:21:05.850

and Roland is gonna sing the first verse of this song.

330

00:21:05.851 --> 00:21:06.730

And then I'm gonna interrupt.

331

00:22:24.280 --> 00:22:27.250

He's already given me a disapproving look in this picture for interrupting him.

332

00:22:27.310 --> 00:22:28.810

And I'm so sorry,

333

00:22:29.070 --> 00:22:33.360

but I trust that y'all will track the rest of that down if you haven't already

334

00:22:33.361 --> 00:22:37.060  
heard it and listened to it. We as opera folk,

335  
00:22:37.280 --> 00:22:41.820  
as voice centered folk, you know, uh, prima above, all right,

336  
00:22:42.790 --> 00:22:47.210  
we, as opera folk are concentrated on the voice, we're concentrated on the art.

337  
00:22:47.260 --> 00:22:51.890  
We're concentrated on the humanity that is revealed through the vibrations of

338  
00:22:52.170 --> 00:22:54.980  
the singer's voice. Right?

339  
00:22:57.570 --> 00:23:01.860  
When I hear this, uh, rendition, I, I hear so many endearing things.

340  
00:23:02.140 --> 00:23:05.420  
I hear this wonderful almost Rey Tamber,

341  
00:23:05.960 --> 00:23:10.020  
the incredible lightness, uh, weightlessness of his voice, the, the,

342  
00:23:10.400 --> 00:23:15.210  
the really, really sweetly precise if dated German pronunciation. And, um,

343  
00:23:16.410 --> 00:23:19.700  
but in his time,

344  
00:23:21.360 --> 00:23:24.820  
people didn't always hear what Roland Hayes's voice told them,

345  
00:23:25.650 --> 00:23:28.360  
which is why this particular light, light, light,

346  
00:23:28.361 --> 00:23:33.160  
lyric tenor was offered a few times, various Otello,

347

00:23:34.240 --> 00:23:38.990

as you know, this is gonna be your big break and, you know,

348

00:23:39.550 --> 00:23:43.380

opera folk, you know, we're, we're snobs, I believe often for the right reasons.

349

00:23:43.381 --> 00:23:46.880

Sometimes, you know, we hear things and we say, well, wait, you know,

350

00:23:46.900 --> 00:23:50.280

how is this voice gonna cut? How is his voice gonna, you know,

351

00:23:50.540 --> 00:23:52.640

get over this orchestra? How is his voice gonna do this? And that,

352

00:23:53.710 --> 00:23:56.960

just try to imagine what would lead someone

353

00:23:58.700 --> 00:24:02.470

to offer that kind of voice, that kind of role.

354

00:24:05.600 --> 00:24:09.570

And, uh, I don't actually have anyt left in, but I'm gonna take a sip anyway

355

00:24:11.320 --> 00:24:13.500

and let that sit with the room. Right.

356

00:24:13.730 --> 00:24:18.250

What possible reason could there be since we've talked about how racial

357

00:24:18.650 --> 00:24:21.370

identity is often used to flatten artistic identity,

358

00:24:22.040 --> 00:24:26.450

what possible reason could there be for Roland Hayes to be offered ver Ello?

359

00:24:30.730 --> 00:24:31.563

So,

360

00:24:32.010 --> 00:24:36.500

so I think we can all agree that our love of opera

361

00:24:36.820 --> 00:24:41.710

involves our love of all the nuance in opera opera for me

362

00:24:42.050 --> 00:24:43.390

is an explosion,

363

00:24:43.550 --> 00:24:48.430

a tidal wave of different TAs and visual feast, uh, uh,

364

00:24:48.480 --> 00:24:52.190

dance, uh, uh, painting even perhaps sculpture,

365

00:24:52.210 --> 00:24:56.020

if you're in a Zeph production, uh, costing, um,

366

00:24:56.080 --> 00:24:58.500

not to mention all the different TAs of the instruments and the voices,

367

00:25:00.990 --> 00:25:04.890

but when you hear someone like that and think, okay,

368

00:25:05.360 --> 00:25:10.240

this guy's gonna be perfect for the black tenor for the black

369

00:25:10.440 --> 00:25:11.273

10 role.

370

00:25:12.810 --> 00:25:17.620

There occurs a flattening of the nuance that we prize as

371

00:25:17.621 --> 00:25:22.140

lovers of opera, right? The, the thing I hear the most,

372

00:25:22.700 --> 00:25:24.300

um, and you know, whether this is true or not,

373

00:25:24.301 --> 00:25:27.700

but when I'm talking to different people in different genres of music,  
they say,

374

00:25:27.701 --> 00:25:30.660

oh my goodness, you know, opera's so complicated, it's so complex.

375

00:25:30.720 --> 00:25:34.140

And I often tell them that their genre is also complex because it is,

376

00:25:34.760 --> 00:25:39.550

but we need to embrace complexity because

377

00:25:39.560 --> 00:25:44.140

there are version of what happened to Roland Hayes with O hotel

378

00:25:44.330 --> 00:25:46.260

happening all throughout,

379

00:25:46.360 --> 00:25:49.820

not only the history of black people trying to sing opera in this country,

380

00:25:50.400 --> 00:25:53.900

but even today, right. Pigeonholing is a thing.

381

00:25:54.540 --> 00:25:55.500

Pigeonholing is,

382

00:25:55.700 --> 00:26:00.420

as far as race is a thing that happens all up and down the operatic  
industry.

383

00:26:02.900 --> 00:26:03.701

Uh, earlier when,

384

00:26:03.701 --> 00:26:06.260

when co and I were discussing kind of different ways to approach this, we,

385

00:26:06.261 --> 00:26:10.900

we thought about doing, uh, offering like a timeline of, uh, black  
Americans,

386

00:26:11.900 --> 00:26:16.700  
uh, kind of struggle and progress to, to be heard and seen in opera. Um,

387

00:26:16.800 --> 00:26:19.860  
and we, we decided to move in a different direction, but, uh,

388

00:26:19.940 --> 00:26:24.450  
a few little tidbits from that stick with me, not only Roland Hay's, uh,  
uh,

389

00:26:24.451 --> 00:26:29.010  
experience, but, uh, there was a wonderful, uh, black soprano named Creta  
Jones,

390

00:26:29.600 --> 00:26:31.610  
roughly Al with Roland. Uh,

391

00:26:31.710 --> 00:26:36.530  
he was born in 1887 and died in 1977. Uh,

392

00:26:36.780 --> 00:26:38.330  
Creta Jones, uh, full name,

393

00:26:38.840 --> 00:26:43.560  
Matilda Creta joiner Jones was born in, uh,

394

00:26:43.561 --> 00:26:47.960  
68 or 69. A Southern woman never reveals her true age, um,

395

00:26:48.140 --> 00:26:50.280  
and passed away in, in 1933.

396

00:26:51.100 --> 00:26:55.840  
And she was also evaluated based on something that was not

397

00:26:55.841 --> 00:27:00.560  
connected with her actual voice or person. She was called the black, oh,

398

00:27:00.561 --> 00:27:04.990  
there we go. Again, the black Potti because she was, uh,

399

00:27:05.000 --> 00:27:08.590  
often compared to the Italian opera singer, Alina Patti. Now

400  
00:27:11.120 --> 00:27:14.270  
there are not enough recordings available of black opera stars in general,

401  
00:27:15.040 --> 00:27:16.980  
for all I know, uh,

402  
00:27:17.470 --> 00:27:20.500  
Madam Creta could have sounded like Adina Patti's twin,

403  
00:27:22.100 --> 00:27:26.470  
but she was not Adina Patti. She was ma tilled say,

404  
00:27:26.490 --> 00:27:30.510  
Soreta join or Joan. She was her own artistic entity,

405  
00:27:31.010 --> 00:27:32.980  
her own human,

406  
00:27:33.310 --> 00:27:37.710  
fully human nuanced person with something to offer to the world of opera.

407  
00:27:38.860 --> 00:27:42.240  
I'm always amused when I hear the black this or the black that, because

408  
00:27:44.180 --> 00:27:47.940  
if we are all human beings and if we are

409  
00:27:49.120 --> 00:27:52.010  
equally important in the, on the stage,

410  
00:27:53.540 --> 00:27:56.860  
metaphorical and literal, there is no need for that.

411  
00:27:56.890 --> 00:28:01.780  
Just like there's no need for a white quote Johnson or a white James

412  
00:28:02.260 --> 00:28:06.920  
Darin. We are all, we all approach the alter of art. I like to think,



413

00:28:06.921 --> 00:28:11.870

and I know I'm very naive, but we all approach the alter of, of art as equal.

414

00:28:12.670 --> 00:28:17.340

SNTs right. I think these are things we can all get behind. I hope,

415

00:28:18.340 --> 00:28:19.173

um,

416

00:28:19.280 --> 00:28:23.380

the last few instances of this that I'm gonna share before I toss it back to

417

00:28:23.540 --> 00:28:27.490

quote go forward in time, because as we know, uh,

418

00:28:27.491 --> 00:28:31.450

racism is neither old fashioned nor new, unfortunately,

419

00:28:32.960 --> 00:28:37.520

um, not only did Roland and Matilda Creta deal with kind of this pigeon holding,

420

00:28:37.700 --> 00:28:42.680

but also further forward in the timeline around the mid

421

00:28:43.320 --> 00:28:48.310

19, I'd say 1950s, 1950s or sixties, there was a sort of,

422

00:28:48.750 --> 00:28:51.750

um, by that point, you know, a lot more black,

423

00:28:52.070 --> 00:28:54.060

upper singers were kind of percolating into the opera scene,

424

00:28:54.640 --> 00:28:57.680

but that whole idea that if you are black,

425

00:28:57.820 --> 00:29:02.150

you must have a humongous voice. You must have a,

426

00:29:02.290 --> 00:29:05.990

an Vil of a voice. That idea started to percolate. Um,

427

00:29:06.750 --> 00:29:11.190

I can go into the weeds about, you know, how obviously, uh, uh,

428

00:29:11.280 --> 00:29:15.970

orchestras becoming larger and Americas to build larger opera houses

429

00:29:16.040 --> 00:29:20.930

also contributed, but there was this understanding that if you were not, uh,

430

00:29:21.650 --> 00:29:26.290

a black singer with both the physical stature of assignment SDS or a vocal

431

00:29:26.730 --> 00:29:29.770

SD or vocal stature of assignment SDS, that you were not,

432

00:29:29.771 --> 00:29:33.900

that you did not have a place. If you auditioned, you were either told, okay,

433

00:29:34.220 --> 00:29:37.310

poor game invest or Vagner or Verde,

434

00:29:37.830 --> 00:29:40.810

you have to bring the noise all the time.

435

00:29:41.290 --> 00:29:42.840

Light lyrics need not apply.

436

00:29:43.770 --> 00:29:47.980

Then you go forward a little bit more in time and you run into, uh, the era of,

437

00:29:48.040 --> 00:29:52.340

you know, the great leonine and, you know, grace Buny and Shirley Vire.

438

00:29:53.470 --> 00:29:56.210

And you see again with VIT,

439

00:29:56.230 --> 00:30:01.200

you see de Fox OFS, right? With Buny just schwa.

440

00:30:01.320 --> 00:30:03.150

So of ans right, the black Venus,

441

00:30:04.810 --> 00:30:09.360

what about blackness means you have to qualify

442

00:30:10.660 --> 00:30:13.190

the goddess of love, right?

443

00:30:13.770 --> 00:30:18.690

So then we get to our own time and I love all of

444

00:30:18.691 --> 00:30:21.930

my black colleagues out there doing the thing, but we also, you know, we talk,

445

00:30:23.390 --> 00:30:25.160

we, we spill the tea, share it.

446

00:30:25.780 --> 00:30:30.320

And the thing that happens so often now is you're not so quickly,

447

00:30:30.960 --> 00:30:35.270

I would say, ghettoized to JAMA pogi or Vagner or Verde.

448

00:30:35.290 --> 00:30:38.360

You still are asked often I've been asked.

449

00:30:38.760 --> 00:30:43.200

I think probably every black singer has been asked, do you sing pogi? Um,

450

00:30:43.660 --> 00:30:44.680

but nowadays,

451

00:30:45.660 --> 00:30:49.450

because our versatility has become more known,

452

00:30:50.190 --> 00:30:54.370

we are now asked to sing things that are completely out of our.

453

00:30:55.320 --> 00:30:55.941

So, you know,

454

00:30:55.941 --> 00:31:00.020

we are kind of back to the roll and TAES being asked to sing Otello because we

455

00:31:00.021 --> 00:31:04.980

can do it all. We are singing folk, right? So as we move forward,

456

00:31:05.590 --> 00:31:09.280

let's keep behold of the nuance, the nuance that we all love,

457

00:31:10.250 --> 00:31:14.210

a human with different varieties, different levels of expression,

458

00:31:14.211 --> 00:31:18.880

but also vocal expression and nuance has nothing to do with the color of our

459

00:31:18.881 --> 00:31:22.610

skin, everything to do with how well we use our ears back to you.

460

00:31:24.000 --> 00:31:27.110

<v 0>Thank you for that, James. And thank you for walking us through that.</v>

461

00:31:27.690 --> 00:31:31.300

I'd also like to con connected to additional calls,

462

00:31:31.600 --> 00:31:34.620

to not be pigeon held in the space that we're hearing now,

463

00:31:35.060 --> 00:31:38.300

particularly from Asian opera Alliance in the call for change.

464

00:31:38.760 --> 00:31:42.300

So this is not something that is just happening to one group.

465

00:31:42.370 --> 00:31:47.300

This is something that the opera field continues to do because we do not allow

466

00:31:47.301 --> 00:31:51.090

racial identity to be as multi be faceted as our own identities.

467

00:31:51.810 --> 00:31:55.010

Everyone has to be placed within a box. That is neat. That is nice.

468

00:31:55.011 --> 00:31:58.690

That is pretty so that we can continue to operate in this space.

469

00:31:58.930 --> 00:32:02.330

And as a nation of this is who you are. This is how it's supposed to be.

470

00:32:03.270 --> 00:32:06.250

I'm gonna go back to sharing my screen.

471

00:32:06.270 --> 00:32:09.250

As we continue on our journey and our conversation

472

00:32:11.150 --> 00:32:13.890

as opera continues to do this, we know that opera,

473

00:32:14.710 --> 00:32:17.610

we lean into the power of storytelling. We put a hole in the wall.

474

00:32:17.611 --> 00:32:22.290

We play pretend and men, we do it well. Opera and narratives go hand in hand.

475

00:32:22.420 --> 00:32:27.410

Opera is all about the stories that we tell opera, communicates interests,

476

00:32:27.660 --> 00:32:30.800

value, intent lessons, all of these things,

477

00:32:31.030 --> 00:32:36.000

imagination opera also sends messages because it is a form of communication.

478

00:32:36.130 --> 00:32:40.000

These messages are moral messages, social messages,

479

00:32:40.180 --> 00:32:44.720

and messages about political power. It has always been true.

480

00:32:45.260 --> 00:32:48.600

We love Mozart for what he was doing. We're still doing it right,

481

00:32:49.260 --> 00:32:54.200

but opera is influenced by a influences society because we are in the arts

482

00:32:54.270 --> 00:32:58.440

does not mean that we are exempt from being impacted by society.

483

00:32:59.570 --> 00:33:03.830

And in this racism thrives on false and incomplete narratives.

484

00:33:04.460 --> 00:33:08.790

When we look at the separation between different groups and different racial

485

00:33:08.850 --> 00:33:09.683

groups,

486

00:33:09.880 --> 00:33:14.870

often that separation is reinforced by a story by a

487

00:33:14.871 --> 00:33:15.450

narrative,

488

00:33:15.450 --> 00:33:20.180

by an idea of who is dangerous is not by an idea idea of who is civilized,

489

00:33:20.280 --> 00:33:25.140

who is not by an idea of who is accepting and who is intelligent and who is

490

00:33:25.200 --> 00:33:27.740  
not. And of course, all of these ideas,

491

00:33:27.920 --> 00:33:30.500  
all of these stories are false narratives.

492

00:33:31.000 --> 00:33:33.940  
So if we are opera and we are sharing narratives,

493

00:33:33.941 --> 00:33:36.380  
and we are perpetuating narratives that are false,

494

00:33:36.850 --> 00:33:41.450  
then we are participating in this system in a way in which we are being

495

00:33:41.700 --> 00:33:42.533  
influenced,

496

00:33:42.710 --> 00:33:47.490  
as opposed to actually influencing the system of race like we would like  
to do,

497

00:33:47.540 --> 00:33:50.130  
which is the reason for racial justice work in opera.

498

00:33:51.740 --> 00:33:55.640  
I'd like for everybody to consider what narratives are being shared about  
your

499

00:33:55.641 --> 00:34:00.120  
racial identity through opera, James just gave us this beautiful,

500

00:34:01.270 --> 00:34:04.950  
very succinct kind of line or lying through everything that we're doing.

501

00:34:05.340 --> 00:34:09.630  
What does that mean for all of our organizations?

502

00:34:09.631 --> 00:34:12.070  
What does that mean for all of our racial identities?

503

00:34:12.900 --> 00:34:17.750

I'm gonna give us a moment to think about it as we look and we see when

504

00:34:17.870 --> 00:34:19.870

I see myself on stage, who am I?

505

00:34:20.820 --> 00:34:25.300

When I hear a story about my race or my culture, or my identity, my ethnicity,

506

00:34:25.490 --> 00:34:28.940

what is happening? What stories are being told through opera,

507

00:34:33.310 --> 00:34:34.410

who are you in opera?

508

00:34:36.830 --> 00:34:38.570

Who do you get to be when you're on stage?

509

00:34:39.410 --> 00:34:42.890

I'll use the example of Madam butterfly, which has been,

510

00:34:44.530 --> 00:34:46.610

uh, a piece that is both loved.

511

00:34:46.630 --> 00:34:50.920

And that is both harmful point blank and period,

512

00:34:51.680 --> 00:34:53.720

and opera because of its approach.

513

00:34:53.940 --> 00:34:58.760

And because of the ways in which it tells a story about a particular community

514

00:34:59.680 --> 00:35:02.440

in Madam butterfly, beautiful music, beautiful story.

515

00:35:03.140 --> 00:35:07.950

It presents the idea that this is the Asian opera of the Asian operas.



516

00:35:07.951 --> 00:35:09.830

This is one of the Asian operas.

517

00:35:10.370 --> 00:35:14.990

And so those who have an identity that aligns with those Asian characters,

518

00:35:14.991 --> 00:35:18.910

they see themselves right, see themselves in opera. This is the Asian opera.

519

00:35:19.010 --> 00:35:19.843

That's me,

520

00:35:20.210 --> 00:35:25.190

as opposed to those who do or do not have the option to align

521

00:35:25.191 --> 00:35:29.020

with Pinkerton. We all know Pinkerton is a bad man. He did bad things,

522

00:35:29.160 --> 00:35:30.020

bad Pinkerton,

523

00:35:31.040 --> 00:35:35.940

the ability for a white male to look at Pinkerton and say, Pinkerton,

524

00:35:36.260 --> 00:35:37.960

you're bad, man. And then to walk away,

525

00:35:37.961 --> 00:35:41.560

because there are so many other options out there. I don't have to be Pinkerton.

526

00:35:41.910 --> 00:35:44.000

That person doesn't have to be Pinkerton.

527

00:35:44.130 --> 00:35:47.520

There are so many other options compared to Pinkerton.

528

00:35:47.540 --> 00:35:50.920

We can look at Pinkerton and we can disassociate ourselves, right?

529

00:35:50.940 --> 00:35:54.280

As white men can disassociate themselves from Pinkerton.

530

00:35:54.950 --> 00:35:59.310

Whereas when we have very limited options for others,

531

00:35:59.730 --> 00:36:03.390

it becomes this association of this is the opera that I play.

532

00:36:03.391 --> 00:36:06.990

This is the role that I portray. This is the opera that I will perform.

533

00:36:07.990 --> 00:36:09.580

Opera is telling us who we are.

534

00:36:11.560 --> 00:36:16.370

Opera is also telling us who we get to be and who gets to play,

535

00:36:16.371 --> 00:36:20.330

what role. And when we get to be on those individuals,

536

00:36:20.820 --> 00:36:25.010

we're still very limited in that. And we still have not approached a space,

537

00:36:25.260 --> 00:36:29.890

which is why the racial justice work matters in which you get to be your full

538

00:36:29.980 --> 00:36:32.850

human self, regardless of your racial identity.

539

00:36:33.670 --> 00:36:38.650

And you get to see your full human self and your racial identity represented

540

00:36:38.750 --> 00:36:39.583

on stage.

541

00:36:40.460 --> 00:36:44.280

I'm gonna stop there and I'll pass it back to James, uh,

542

00:36:44.300 --> 00:36:47.560  
to provide some additional context for this space.

543

00:36:49.370 --> 00:36:50.590  
<v 3>So, um,</v>

544

00:36:53.190 --> 00:36:57.440  
when I look at who I usually am on the opera stage,

545

00:36:58.670 --> 00:37:02.700  
um, and, and I mean, you know, characters that are written to be black,

546

00:37:02.701 --> 00:37:05.110  
which is a smaller she, of,

547

00:37:05.390 --> 00:37:07.350  
of characters than I have actually gotten to play in my life.

548

00:37:07.351 --> 00:37:12.280  
I've played a lot of, uh, Italian, uh, excuse me, Spanish, uh,

549

00:37:12.650 --> 00:37:17.320  
noble, noble folk. I've played Russian pirates, but, um, white,

550

00:37:17.321 --> 00:37:21.650  
Russian pirates. But, uh, when I've played myself, it has either been,

551

00:37:22.810 --> 00:37:25.720  
um, as an enslaved person, um,

552

00:37:26.680 --> 00:37:31.480  
a person who is, uh, marching as part of the civil rights struggle.

553

00:37:32.970 --> 00:37:37.520  
Um, and therefore is losing people in my life. Or, um,

554

00:37:38.480 --> 00:37:42.680  
I have been asked though, not accepted, uh, asked to play, um,

555

00:37:43.160 --> 00:37:46.850  
a black policeman, which has fraught, uh,

556  
00:37:47.000 --> 00:37:49.490  
nuances for me personally. Um,

557  
00:37:50.370 --> 00:37:54.510  
but that is the range that I've been offered. Um, so often

558  
00:37:56.340 --> 00:37:57.330  
black folk and opera,

559  
00:37:57.500 --> 00:38:01.130  
especially if you want to sing are offered parts in something that is  
either

560  
00:38:01.131 --> 00:38:04.650  
traumatic or trauma adjacent. Um,

561  
00:38:06.350 --> 00:38:09.800  
it is therefore no fault of our own that, you know, often we,

562  
00:38:10.360 --> 00:38:15.200  
we write pieces that deal with trauma. Um, and you know,

563  
00:38:15.201 --> 00:38:19.560  
some of our greatest black operat composers are no exception. Um,

564  
00:38:19.820 --> 00:38:22.040  
you write what you know, and you write what you want to write,

565  
00:38:22.041 --> 00:38:26.880  
but you also write what you think will be produced, will be seen and  
heard. So,

566  
00:38:28.130 --> 00:38:31.790  
uh, one of my absolute, you know, I, I wouldn't say idol,

567  
00:38:31.890 --> 00:38:35.030  
but definitely I admire him greatly. And I've actually gotten to speak to  
him,

568

00:38:35.140 --> 00:38:39.720

you know, Anthony Davis, I'm sure all of us know, uh, his name and his work. Um,

569

00:38:40.560 --> 00:38:44.220

and you know, I was Googling the other day. I was Googling his other,

570

00:38:44.400 --> 00:38:47.700

the other opposite of his that I didn't yet know I knew X. Um,

571

00:38:47.880 --> 00:38:52.880

but I just wanted to kind of flesh out my knowledge and I stumbled across, uh,

572

00:38:53.110 --> 00:38:57.430

what I might call the maybe the most outrageous review I've ever read,

573

00:38:57.431 --> 00:39:01.430

which considering I'm in the, a operat field is saying something, cuz uh,

574

00:39:01.610 --> 00:39:04.350

our reviewers are spicy just like we are. Um,

575

00:39:05.130 --> 00:39:07.070

and it really brought home to me,

576

00:39:07.900 --> 00:39:12.210

not only the fact that there are stories that we are not being asked or allowed

577

00:39:12.211 --> 00:39:16.760

to tell of our full humanity, but also then when we tell them

578

00:39:18.830 --> 00:39:22.570

it is not up to us to decide if they are acceptable or not.

579

00:39:23.730 --> 00:39:26.500

White supremacy is such that if you,

580

00:39:26.600 --> 00:39:30.060

as an Asian person bring your full humanity to the stage, if you,

581

00:39:30.061 --> 00:39:32.780

as a black person bring your full humanity to the stage, if you,

582

00:39:32.781 --> 00:39:36.620

as a Afro Latina person bring your full humanity to the stage, um,

583

00:39:36.920 --> 00:39:41.610

you still have to pass a gatekeeper that perhaps does not know your

584

00:39:41.611 --> 00:39:46.330

lived or historical experience. So I'm just gonna share with you. I,

585

00:39:46.410 --> 00:39:48.530

I like to disrupt and cause a ruckus clearly.

586

00:39:48.590 --> 00:39:53.210

So I'm gonna share with you a couple of quotes from this review. And, and again,

587

00:39:54.360 --> 00:39:59.240

I won't even underline what is wrong with it. I think I'll just share them and,

588

00:39:59.400 --> 00:40:03.980

and ask you to think about what, what doesn't sit right in your spirit.

589

00:40:05.330 --> 00:40:09.030

So this is a review of Anthony Davis and, um, through Lonnie Davis, uh,

590

00:40:09.090 --> 00:40:12.110

no relation Loist, um, their opera Amistad.

591

00:40:12.210 --> 00:40:14.830

And this is of the premiere in 1997,

592

00:40:16.630 --> 00:40:20.480

the headline is Amistad misses the boat.

593

00:40:24.090 --> 00:40:27.650

So Third paragraph,

594

00:40:27.790 --> 00:40:29.970

we are already into the fire.

595

00:40:30.150 --> 00:40:35.010

It says as it is the Davis and Davis Amad

596

00:40:35.650 --> 00:40:40.620

proved pretty much a cardboard cut out morality sermon slavery was

597

00:40:40.830 --> 00:40:41.980

slash is terrible.

598

00:40:44.130 --> 00:40:47.080

Black people are noble stoical and close to God.

599

00:40:47.870 --> 00:40:51.640

Most white people are brutal, lustful AIT, slim balls.

600

00:40:52.140 --> 00:40:56.920

And so on the reviewer then goes on to say,

601

00:40:57.340 --> 00:41:00.880

to give us what he calls a quick reality check, but is really just, um,

602

00:41:01.520 --> 00:41:04.680

mansplaining Amistad and the, uh,

603

00:41:05.740 --> 00:41:09.650

phenomenon historical phenomenon of chattel slavery, the Atlantic slave trade,

604

00:41:10.410 --> 00:41:14.810

um, the Amistad rebellion, um, and really, uh, uh,

605

00:41:15.630 --> 00:41:19.850

the whole middle passage is pretty condensed and flattened by this particular

606

00:41:19.920 --> 00:41:22.930

gentleman to the point where, um,

607

00:41:23.750 --> 00:41:28.160

he concludes a couple of paragraphs down that this whole incident,

608

00:41:28.180 --> 00:41:29.240

the Amistad rebellion,

609

00:41:30.140 --> 00:41:34.640

this incident is actually a welcome historical example of the United States,

610

00:41:34.720 --> 00:41:38.840

behaving with wisdom and compassion towards the helpless and downtrodden.

611

00:41:39.470 --> 00:41:43.320

This is grudgingly and elusively acknowledged in the opera, but nowhere near.

612

00:41:43.340 --> 00:41:45.240

So fortunately stated as it should have been,

613

00:41:45.600 --> 00:41:47.720

particularly with all the distasteful,

614

00:41:47.721 --> 00:41:51.680

examples of white racism that were paraded throughout the evening.

615

00:41:53.330 --> 00:41:57.470

One can only imagine what a writer with the fearless intellectual probity of a

616

00:41:57.650 --> 00:42:00.070

vs Nepal might have done with this material.

617

00:42:01.410 --> 00:42:05.990

Still distortions aside Dulan Davis has written a fitfully

618

00:42:06.140 --> 00:42:08.310

elegant and eloquent Loreto.

619

00:42:09.130 --> 00:42:13.580



I hope her next libretto is more scrupulous. She is a writer of great gifts.

620

00:42:14.450 --> 00:42:18.540

My stomach starts to become involved when I read more of this review,

621

00:42:18.541 --> 00:42:23.050

because there's much more including a lot of condescension about Anthony Davis'

622

00:42:23.051 --> 00:42:26.290

work as well. But again,

623

00:42:27.750 --> 00:42:31.990

I want us to listen to, because we are listening creatures, operatic lovers.

624

00:42:32.560 --> 00:42:34.960

I want us to listen to the nuance that is not being said

625

00:42:37.640 --> 00:42:40.690

now. I I'm sure most of y'all have a, not seen the score of this opera.

626

00:42:40.970 --> 00:42:42.770

Probably I had to do some digging to find it,

627

00:42:42.790 --> 00:42:47.730

but there was a lot of hurt and fear and rage

628

00:42:48.660 --> 00:42:50.070

boiling underneath that review.

629

00:42:52.210 --> 00:42:56.660

Now the opera does not, I believe warrant that kind of reaction,

630

00:42:56.800 --> 00:42:57.860

but even if it did,

631

00:43:00.020 --> 00:43:02.590

when have you or any of us ever come away from an opera,

632

00:43:02.790 --> 00:43:07.130  
thinking that it portrayed all white people as AIT,

633  
00:43:08.190 --> 00:43:11.480  
lustful, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, as the villain, right?

634  
00:43:12.510 --> 00:43:14.470  
I don't actually think I've come away from any opera

635  
00:43:16.030 --> 00:43:20.850  
personally revolted by a portrayal of a whole

636  
00:43:20.851 --> 00:43:21.850  
group, right?

637  
00:43:23.750 --> 00:43:28.740  
There are often things in art, which unsettle us,

638  
00:43:29.780 --> 00:43:34.720  
but I was taken aback at the reaction in this review. I thought, okay,  
this,

639  
00:43:34.721 --> 00:43:37.400  
this opera must be the most profane thing that has ever been done.

640  
00:43:38.240 --> 00:43:41.560  
I found a recording. I looked at the score. I thought, well, it's kind of  
hard,

641  
00:43:41.660 --> 00:43:42.493  
but other than that,

642  
00:43:44.260 --> 00:43:48.610  
what is underpinning the reaction to this,

643  
00:43:48.710 --> 00:43:50.210  
the extreme reaction to this,

644  
00:43:51.000 --> 00:43:55.150  
then the other thing I'm wanna leave you with the other question is

645

00:43:57.920 --> 00:44:01.130  
when is a compliment, not a compliment

646  
00:44:03.480 --> 00:44:08.300  
when a person writing about their own experience is compared

647  
00:44:09.650 --> 00:44:14.450  
unflatteringly to a writer of a different racial experience because vs  
Nepal is

648  
00:44:14.510 --> 00:44:19.340  
not black. One then must wonder, okay,

649  
00:44:19.400 --> 00:44:23.810  
so what about this? Person's writing leaves it wanting,

650  
00:44:24.760 --> 00:44:27.540  
is it that they don't know what they're writing? Write, write what? You  
know,

651  
00:44:27.920 --> 00:44:32.360  
it can't be that right. Anthony Davis and Davis are both African American.

652  
00:44:34.920 --> 00:44:36.770  
Then it struck me that, okay, maybe,

653  
00:44:38.170 --> 00:44:42.680  
maybe one of the things that elicits this reaction is when your

654  
00:44:44.160 --> 00:44:46.460  
preconceptions or misconceptions are challenged.

655  
00:44:46.480 --> 00:44:50.200  
We tend to get a little bit spiky, right?

656  
00:44:51.100 --> 00:44:55.930  
I have certain sports allegiances that I hold two with all of my being and  
all

657  
00:44:55.931 --> 00:44:56.764  
of my strength.

658  
00:44:56.950 --> 00:45:00.330  
And if somebody tells me that my favorite player is not the greatest,

659  
00:45:00.750 --> 00:45:03.590  
my immediate impulse is two pounds,

660  
00:45:06.070 --> 00:45:10.880  
but again, this is art. There are no actual winners or losers on the field.

661  
00:45:12.070 --> 00:45:12.920  
This is not sport.

662  
00:45:14.830 --> 00:45:19.640  
So I share that review with you one to hope that,

663  
00:45:19.660 --> 00:45:22.670  
and as the rest of it, I hope that you, you know, engage your critical,

664  
00:45:23.340 --> 00:45:25.070  
your critical eyes and reading faculties,

665  
00:45:25.071 --> 00:45:29.110  
and kind of see between the lines and the words of what this particular guy is

666  
00:45:29.111 --> 00:45:33.910  
saying. But also to realize that that opera has been done

667  
00:45:35.440 --> 00:45:37.810  
hardly at all, after its premier

668  
00:45:39.850 --> 00:45:43.760  
critical pans critics, we have power, right? And,

669  
00:45:44.030 --> 00:45:46.870  
and all of us are critics. On some level. If we have power in this industry,

670  
00:45:47.410 --> 00:45:51.390

we have the ability to grease the wheels to move something through or to stop

671

00:45:51.391 --> 00:45:55.190

it. So Anthony Davis, you know, he ain't hurting, you know,

672

00:45:55.191 --> 00:45:57.790

he is doing well every time I talk to him, he seems in high spirits,

673

00:45:57.791 --> 00:45:59.590

he's getting premieres and all that stuff he's doing great,

674

00:46:00.010 --> 00:46:02.760

but this particular piece is not available to us.

675

00:46:03.910 --> 00:46:06.640

And this review has something to do with, um,

676

00:46:07.680 --> 00:46:09.060

I'm not going to share this with you,

677

00:46:09.080 --> 00:46:13.060

but I just want to make sure that you understand that the writer of this review

678

00:46:14.150 --> 00:46:18.960

is still at the same periodical. And in fact,

679

00:46:19.480 --> 00:46:24.320

uh, in 2022 was tasked with writing the retrospective for Maria Ewing,

680

00:46:24.580 --> 00:46:27.130

the black opera singer of the past recently. So

681

00:46:28.710 --> 00:46:32.870

I have to tell you if I wrote about something that as much vitriol as this,

682

00:46:33.030 --> 00:46:36.030

I would expect to be placed on another beat.

683

00:46:37.140 --> 00:46:38.760  
It is not about the man himself.

684  
00:46:39.340 --> 00:46:44.290  
It is about how slowly the system that we are all in the white supremacist

685  
00:46:44.291 --> 00:46:45.170  
system, that we are all in,

686  
00:46:45.171 --> 00:46:49.410  
how slowly it moves to purge or reallocate

687  
00:46:50.640 --> 00:46:54.520  
folks that perhaps don't have the lived experience to speak with authority

688  
00:46:55.310 --> 00:46:59.980  
versus, uh, poison. I hand it back over now that I've caused trouble.

689  
00:47:02.300 --> 00:47:04.420  
<v 0>Good trouble. Um, in this, of course,</v>

690  
00:47:04.640 --> 00:47:08.700  
as we mindful that we're shaping this space and compassion and we're  
shaping the

691  
00:47:08.701 --> 00:47:09.420  
space in truth,

692  
00:47:09.420 --> 00:47:13.890  
I do want to acknowledge that as we continue to learn and speak about  
these

693  
00:47:14.070 --> 00:47:16.290  
truths and share our truths throughout the forum,

694  
00:47:16.760 --> 00:47:19.370  
that it is not the most comfortable space to be in.

695  
00:47:19.770 --> 00:47:24.250  
I encourage everybody to kinda lean in a bit for their own,

696

00:47:25.090 --> 00:47:28.570  
uh, purposes, but then also for community as well.

697  
00:47:29.620 --> 00:47:31.700  
I want to make the connection we're talking about on stage,

698  
00:47:31.820 --> 00:47:32.620  
and we're talking about performance.

699  
00:47:32.620 --> 00:47:35.660  
I wanna make the connection to staff members, to administration,

700  
00:47:36.080 --> 00:47:37.340  
to community engagement,

701  
00:47:37.341 --> 00:47:42.340  
all of these things just as we place people or we pigeon

702  
00:47:42.700 --> 00:47:44.580  
hold people into particular roles.

703  
00:47:44.720 --> 00:47:49.610  
We do the same in positions in opera does not come from a space of

704  
00:47:49.611 --> 00:47:53.570  
intention of you will always be this role and have this space in opera.

705  
00:47:53.990 --> 00:47:58.410  
But the impact is the same just as when we,

706  
00:47:58.890 --> 00:48:00.890  
we find that something has happened in the nation,

707  
00:48:01.200 --> 00:48:05.130  
something has taken place and there has been racial violence.

708  
00:48:05.131 --> 00:48:09.800  
There's been violence against a group because of racism starting to then

709  
00:48:11.280 --> 00:48:15.880  
identify or ask staff members of color. Can you write this statement?

710

00:48:16.460 --> 00:48:21.280

Can you make sure we do these things as a form of targeting that is not

711

00:48:21.430 --> 00:48:24.600

intentional, but it results in this is your role.

712

00:48:24.820 --> 00:48:29.400

You need to play this role as opposed to what does it mean for us as human

713

00:48:30.030 --> 00:48:30.031

beings?

714

00:48:30.031 --> 00:48:34.710

As we tell stories on stage to also be mindful of the stories of our staff  
and

715

00:48:34.770 --> 00:48:36.190

of our community members,

716

00:48:36.850 --> 00:48:41.750

to be mindful of the shared harm that comes in racism and to be mindful

717

00:48:42.050 --> 00:48:46.870

of how we start to grow and how we start to learn that does not mean that  
staff

718

00:48:46.930 --> 00:48:50.030

of color should not participate in those conversations.

719

00:48:51.100 --> 00:48:54.580

It is direct correlation of, well, this is yours. You experience it.

720

00:48:54.600 --> 00:48:59.500

You must be the best at doing it without realizing that we are pigeon  
holding

721

00:48:59.501 --> 00:49:03.620

people into positions based on our expectations based on racial identity.

722

00:49:04.400 --> 00:49:08.900



The same is true when we find that majority of our staff members and senior

723

00:49:08.901 --> 00:49:13.250

leadership position, and a lot of our organizations got their, um,

724

00:49:13.860 --> 00:49:15.290

their demographics back,

725

00:49:15.610 --> 00:49:20.450

majority of our staff members in senior leadership positions identify as white.

726

00:49:21.390 --> 00:49:25.650

Yes, this is a smaller, uh, or a microcosm, right?

727

00:49:25.680 --> 00:49:29.890

Smaller representation of the larger demographic. When we compare those,

728

00:49:30.850 --> 00:49:35.240

uh, demo demographics to region. When we compare those demographics to,

729

00:49:36.040 --> 00:49:38.400

uh, to cities, to city populations,

730

00:49:38.401 --> 00:49:41.720

something that black upper Alliance ask that every organization start to look

731

00:49:41.721 --> 00:49:42.340

at,

732

00:49:42.340 --> 00:49:47.120

we start to see the very real lines and how the barriers are in

733

00:49:47.121 --> 00:49:50.030

place based on race. Yes,

734

00:49:50.170 --> 00:49:54.460

we have barriers based on gender identity, orientation ability, age,

735

00:49:54.610 --> 00:49:55.443  
nationality,

736

00:49:55.800 --> 00:50:00.300  
but we look at the very vivid barriers that are in place based on race.

737

00:50:01.530 --> 00:50:05.590  
I'm going to share my screen again, as we continue on this journey,

738

00:50:08.840 --> 00:50:12.110  
Again, who are you in opera, right? Who do you get to show up as on stage,

739

00:50:12.450 --> 00:50:15.980  
who do you have to immediately kind of identify with what stories are you asked

740

00:50:16.440 --> 00:50:18.660  
to tell about your own experience?

741

00:50:18.661 --> 00:50:23.100  
What stories that are only accepted about your experience by the dominant group.

742

00:50:23.600 --> 00:50:27.520  
And this goes for everyone as we look at race, and as we look at racism,

743

00:50:28.260 --> 00:50:33.040  
it literally strips us of our identities. It strips us of culture.

744

00:50:33.140 --> 00:50:36.880  
It strips us of practices. It strips us of all of these things,

745

00:50:37.490 --> 00:50:42.160  
especially in the very vivid and active practice of those who were able to come

746

00:50:42.161 --> 00:50:43.960  
to this nation through Ellis island,

747

00:50:44.220 --> 00:50:49.090  
having to change their last names so that they can fit within whatever system

748

00:50:49.091 --> 00:50:51.810  
was already in place for survival, as we said,

749

00:50:52.190 --> 00:50:54.130  
but those who had to change their last names,

750

00:50:54.131 --> 00:50:55.770  
those who had to change their practices,

751

00:50:56.060 --> 00:50:59.850  
those who have to find their way within these five boxes,

752

00:51:00.160 --> 00:51:02.090  
knowing that we have all of these other,

753

00:51:02.380 --> 00:51:05.730  
these other things about our identities that are being dismissed.

754

00:51:07.100 --> 00:51:08.710  
How can opera meet at nuance

755

00:51:10.870 --> 00:51:14.820  
opera very much, uh, correlates with identity,

756

00:51:15.800 --> 00:51:20.380  
but opera has had a practice of controlling identity and limiting  
connection.

757

00:51:20.381 --> 00:51:20.720  
Again,

758

00:51:20.720 --> 00:51:25.260  
we talked about the connection or the lack thereof or the struggling or  
fleeting

759

00:51:25.261 --> 00:51:28.940  
connections that we have with our communities that we have for staff  
members

760

00:51:29.210 --> 00:51:33.210

that we have with whatever's going on in our different spaces.

761

00:51:35.110 --> 00:51:39.850

In the beginning, as we looked at opera of centuries ago,

762

00:51:40.110 --> 00:51:43.130

as we look at opera, it was very much an outsider's fantasy.

763

00:51:43.320 --> 00:51:47.330

This is an outsider's view of what is happening. These individuals, uh,

764

00:51:47.350 --> 00:51:51.880

in Western Europe may not have at the experience of engaging with other

765

00:51:51.881 --> 00:51:53.600

cultures. So cool. This is a very,

766

00:51:54.820 --> 00:51:58.150

very colorful way actually for them to say, ah,

767

00:51:58.151 --> 00:51:59.830

this is what I think this place is like.

768

00:51:59.900 --> 00:52:04.350

I've been receiving goods and I've been receiving different spices and trades

769

00:52:04.351 --> 00:52:08.190

and things from the trade. I think this is what is happening. I've seen art.

770

00:52:08.270 --> 00:52:09.990

I think this is what is happening in other spaces.

771

00:52:10.560 --> 00:52:12.140

It was very much an outsider's fantasy.

772

00:52:12.250 --> 00:52:14.460

When we start to tell stories about the cultures,

773

00:52:15.320 --> 00:52:19.020

the difference now is that this is no longer an outsider's fantasy in this

774

00:52:19.021 --> 00:52:20.180  
nation of the United States.

775

00:52:20.430 --> 00:52:23.540  
These are very real lived experiences that people are having.

776

00:52:24.120 --> 00:52:27.940  
So no longer are we saying, Hey, other outsiders, join us.

777

00:52:28.360 --> 00:52:33.330  
As we tell this story about this place that we think is amazing in all of  
our

778

00:52:33.331 --> 00:52:37.410  
good intent, we're saying, Hey, all of the community come and join us.

779

00:52:37.430 --> 00:52:40.250  
As we tell this story about this place again,

780

00:52:40.251 --> 00:52:42.170  
that we think is amazing with good intent.

781

00:52:42.790 --> 00:52:47.690  
But as we start to look at the ways that these very same stories are  
harming

782

00:52:47.691 --> 00:52:52.430  
some of our communities, because we're still in this outsider fan see  
approach,

783

00:52:52.990 --> 00:52:57.700  
or we're still limiting who gets to tell what stories and how and why,

784

00:52:58.870 --> 00:53:02.210  
or we have this assumption that we know what communities need without  
actually

785

00:53:02.211 --> 00:53:03.090  
listening to them.

786

00:53:03.350 --> 00:53:06.370

So now we get to tell the stories and we get to determine what stories are being

787

00:53:06.371 --> 00:53:11.090

told in the opera field. Because of that, we limit potential.

788

00:53:11.150 --> 00:53:15.280

We limit the potential of our, of our artists, of our communities,

789

00:53:15.300 --> 00:53:17.400

and we limit the potential of opera itself.

790

00:53:17.820 --> 00:53:21.200

That's why we're all gathered in this space so that we can learn what to do.

791

00:53:21.500 --> 00:53:24.080

And so that we can create collective decisions.

792

00:53:25.520 --> 00:53:29.250

Current practices reinforce racist values, period.

793

00:53:30.870 --> 00:53:33.050

It is not always intentional, but of course,

794

00:53:33.051 --> 00:53:36.130

racism does not require that you be intentional. It's about impact.

795

00:53:36.770 --> 00:53:39.650

It can be the most amazing, wonderful, lovely individuals,

796

00:53:39.870 --> 00:53:43.250

but the impact is one that continues to say, I,

797

00:53:43.690 --> 00:53:48.560

I am valued moral or less because of my racial identity because of where

798

00:53:48.680 --> 00:53:53.520

I fit within this false hierarchy that is built on a construct for

799

00:53:53.521 --> 00:53:57.230  
social and political means racism again,

800

00:53:57.580 --> 00:54:00.310  
thrives on false and incomplete narratives.

801

00:54:00.690 --> 00:54:03.310  
So as we start to look at the narratives that we share,

802

00:54:03.330 --> 00:54:06.220  
it is not enough for us to just say, this is a beautiful opera.

803

00:54:06.690 --> 00:54:10.620  
This is a beautiful space. Let us share it as opposed to,

804

00:54:10.760 --> 00:54:13.380  
how are we going to complete this narrative?

805

00:54:14.080 --> 00:54:18.780  
How are we going to be mindful of the impact that comes when we assign

806

00:54:18.950 --> 00:54:21.980  
value to different individuals? Or when we assume that,

807

00:54:22.010 --> 00:54:24.500  
because we are telling a story in such a beautiful way,

808

00:54:25.100 --> 00:54:26.930  
it is enough for people here and to connect.

809

00:54:29.700 --> 00:54:31.950  
This is where we get to racial justice, right?

810

00:54:31.951 --> 00:54:36.350  
This is the how we're opening our entire forum today with racial justice.

811

00:54:36.740 --> 00:54:41.550  
What is necessary is that we disrupt and that we correct the false  
narratives,

812

00:54:42.100 --> 00:54:45.240  
racial justice, disrupts and corrects false narratives.

813  
00:54:45.660 --> 00:54:48.510  
If you are not disrupting and correcting false narratives,

814  
00:54:48.570 --> 00:54:52.430  
it is not racial justice. You're perpetuating a system that is already in place.

815  
00:54:53.530 --> 00:54:57.110  
It challenges everyone, every single person, no matter who we are,

816  
00:54:57.111 --> 00:55:00.910  
where we're from, what we've experienced through counter-cultural work.

817  
00:55:01.410 --> 00:55:04.950  
The work that we're doing is definitely counter-cultural because our culture

818  
00:55:05.380 --> 00:55:09.060  
here at the, in the United States says that this is what the is to happen.

819  
00:55:09.070 --> 00:55:13.020  
We're not supposed to talk about it. You're being sensitive. You made it up.

820  
00:55:13.140 --> 00:55:16.060  
We have all these different things. Nobody wants to do it.

821  
00:55:16.061 --> 00:55:20.900  
Nobody actually is engaged in opera. We have to teach people how to value opera,

822  
00:55:21.110 --> 00:55:25.820  
right? As we look at this work, it's going to challenge every single person,

823  
00:55:26.400 --> 00:55:30.970  
but I encourage all of us to lean into our love of this beautiful art form and

824



00:55:30.971 --> 00:55:35.090

the ways that it connects people to say, yeah, my art form has the ability.

825

00:55:35.120 --> 00:55:39.530

This art form has the ability to continue to go against the culture that says

826

00:55:39.531 --> 00:55:41.970

that you can only fit in certain boxes in certain ways,

827

00:55:42.750 --> 00:55:46.890

racial justice and opera brings our full humanity into storytelling.

828

00:55:48.310 --> 00:55:49.520

When we do this work,

829

00:55:49.680 --> 00:55:54.550

it allows us to see the multifaceted parts of our identity and of the

830

00:55:54.750 --> 00:55:59.190

identity of others. But then it also allows us to tell stories more fully.

831

00:55:59.530 --> 00:56:04.350

It allows us to connect with our communities in a more meaningful way.

832

00:56:05.460 --> 00:56:09.280

I'm gonna pass it back to James. Before I come back with a final question,

833

00:56:09.310 --> 00:56:13.270

that will be the question we are seeking to start to answer for the rest of the

834

00:56:13.271 --> 00:56:16.830

forum. James is a beautiful, uh,

835

00:56:16.940 --> 00:56:20.110

interview quote that he'd like to share with us. And again,

836

00:56:20.270 --> 00:56:23.600

I would like to remind everyone that as we move into these spaces for the rest

837

00:56:23.601 --> 00:56:24.840  
of the day and the rest of the forum,

838

00:56:25.430 --> 00:56:29.240  
that we take this knowledge and this information and apply it directly to  
our

839

00:56:29.241 --> 00:56:33.400  
own racial identities, racism harms every single person.

840

00:56:34.060 --> 00:56:34.710  
So again,

841

00:56:34.710 --> 00:56:39.320  
just as different racial groups are limited on stage and in the staff,

842

00:56:39.900 --> 00:56:44.830  
it creates the harm of not being able to connect to with everyone know

843

00:56:44.831 --> 00:56:46.310  
that everybody has been limited,

844

00:56:46.540 --> 00:56:49.750  
know that everybody's identity has been stripped in some way,

845

00:56:50.160 --> 00:56:53.830  
we're seeking to find those parts of our identity and to make sure that  
they're

846

00:56:53.831 --> 00:56:57.150  
ever present in opera. So me give it back to you, James.

847

00:56:58.020 --> 00:57:00.190  
<v 3>I've been told that I've been a little bit hard to hear.</v>

848

00:57:00.370 --> 00:57:05.320  
Is this something better? Hmm, yes. Maybe. Yes.

849

00:57:06.120 --> 00:57:08.440  
All right. Um, it is I your, uh,

850

00:57:08.680 --> 00:57:11.920

resident angel of doom and gloom in this conversation. Um,

851

00:57:12.360 --> 00:57:15.960

I just want to acknowledge again, what quote said, this work is hard

852

00:57:18.160 --> 00:57:22.190

talking about. This is not fun or easy. Um, and

853

00:57:24.160 --> 00:57:28.470

if I feel that way, I know that probably we all do. Um,

854

00:57:28.590 --> 00:57:32.300

I I'm being told that I sound far away from the mic. So hold on.

855

00:57:34.130 --> 00:57:38.790

Is this any better? Hello? Hello. Hello?

856

00:57:40.800 --> 00:57:45.670

Is this any better? Hello? Hello. Hello. Hey. All right.

857

00:57:46.570 --> 00:57:50.320

The power of community gets us through. So again,

858

00:57:51.220 --> 00:57:55.500

if you feel bad talking about this, that's the right reaction.

859

00:57:55.650 --> 00:57:59.420

That means that there's something inside that we are breaking apart,

860

00:58:01.330 --> 00:58:02.360

white supremacy,

861

00:58:02.620 --> 00:58:07.490

our society's constructs breaking them apart is going

862

00:58:07.491 --> 00:58:12.480

to feel bad because we've lived all of our lives and all

863

00:58:12.481 --> 00:58:14.000  
of our histories inside of it.

864  
00:58:15.210 --> 00:58:19.140  
So please don't feel that you are failing in this,

865  
00:58:19.490 --> 00:58:22.260  
that you are losing in this. If you feel some kind of way,

866  
00:58:22.540 --> 00:58:23.580  
I feel some kind of way.

867  
00:58:23.970 --> 00:58:28.180  
It's hard for me to read these things and keep myself together. Right.

868  
00:58:29.200 --> 00:58:33.460  
But that is why I take such inspiration from this next, uh, interview. Uh,

869  
00:58:33.530 --> 00:58:37.730  
this is of, uh, leonine price in a leave 1973.

870  
00:58:38.550 --> 00:58:42.930  
And you know, she, by this point was already known as a diva ACETA.

871  
00:58:43.650 --> 00:58:47.890  
Um, she had already, you know, uh, conquered the met stage and, you know,

872  
00:58:47.910 --> 00:58:51.690  
had illustrious debut on debut and debut and, you know,

873  
00:58:52.070 --> 00:58:54.250  
had operas written for her and all sorts of things. You know,

874  
00:58:54.251 --> 00:58:58.680  
she was already the person that we know to be just a star. Right.

875  
00:58:59.700 --> 00:59:00.920  
But I love it because this article,

876  
00:59:01.140 --> 00:59:05.480

the title of it is a quote from her and it says I'm not scared anymore.  
And,

877

00:59:05.500 --> 00:59:08.560

you know, I was, again, I was looking at articles, you know, I was like,  
Ooh,

878

00:59:08.960 --> 00:59:10.360

leonine I want to, I wonder if she's ever been,

879

00:59:10.361 --> 00:59:13.400

ever talked about the fight for progress and liberation, you know,

880

00:59:13.440 --> 00:59:16.160

I hadn't hadn't seen anything. So I, I Googled Googled her.