

Statement of solidarity, affirmation, and action: Black Lives Matter

“The difficult I’ll do right now. The impossible will take a little while.”

Billie Holiday

In the wake of yet another crime publicly committed against Black citizens in America, the Washington Music Educators Association affirms that Black Lives Matter and calls our members and supporters to take action against systemic oppression within music education in the state of Washington. We acknowledge that there are traditions and practices in our profession that continue to marginalize people of color. We pledge to thoroughly examine our programs and policies, and make the changes necessary to eliminate these barriers.

- WMEA commits to our national organization’s positions on “Equity and Access to Music Education” and “Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education.”
- WMEA will work to identify and rectify the individual and institutional racial biases that exist within our organization and profession, and to eradicate the attitudes and behaviors that obstruct access to a relevant and relatable music education for historically disenfranchised populations.
- WMEA will actively seek out and amplify the voices of educators and students of color from across the state. The **Committee of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** will be enhanced to reimagine our inherited models of planning, promoting, and facilitating organizational operations and activities.
- WMEA recognizes the enormous potential of Black musicians and educators (past, present, and future) and honors the many contributions of Black composers and artists throughout history in all genres of music. In particular, as Americans we enjoy a rich musical heritage thanks in large part to uniquely American styles that originated within Black culture and were created by Black musicians. We greatly value these traditions and believe that they should be treated with care, and are as worthy of being studied, heard, and performed as any music stemming from European traditions. WMEA encourages its members to intentionally program music of composers of color.

As stated by scholar Deborah Bradley (2007):¹

Once we stop evading race talk in music education, we will begin to see changes that have proven very elusive over the years. Engaging meaningfully with our students about oppressions, racial oppression included, may provide a needed catalyst for transforming a discipline that remains sadly out of sync with the students we currently serve and those whom we desire to serve. Talking openly about race and about music education’s racialization is a small but crucial step towards social justice through music education, and towards a more socially just music education.

As members of WMEA, we empathize and stand in solidarity with all music educators and students who suffer from systemic oppression. We commit our organization to a culture that celebrates diversity and is welcoming to all. We understand that change is needed and pledge to do the work necessary to implement these core values in all of our programs. Silence is not an option!

¹ Bradley, D. (2007) “The sounds of silence: Talking race in music education” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6/4: 132-162. http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bradley6_4.pdf