

CITE-C Final report on activities for AY18-19

This report will be posted on the CITE-C website, reported to the faculty and the Board of Trustees, and shared with the Communications team for potential inclusion in stories and in the Lowdown.

Theatre Department: 2018-19 Themed Season (Social Justice)

The Theatre Department and our audiences have enjoyed a particularly exciting year of creativity and resonance around the topic of **social justice** associated with our four main stage productions this season. We are proud to have played a small part in the ongoing Emotional Intelligence/Empathy initiatives supported by the work of the CITE-C committee.

MOSAIC (Directed by Jeffrey Lentz)

In September, we opened our original physical theatre piece, *Mosaic*, with a cast and crew of over twenty-five students from around the world. This ensemble-driven creative experience (fueled by video work by Cocol Bernal and original music by our new music colleague, Mike D'Errico) set out to tackle such issues as immigration, wealth inequity, racism, gender fluidity, women's rights, mental health, and child labor. Each piece was created by the ensemble in direct relation to our conversations and creative exercises designed to open pathways of empathy within ourselves and our audiences. With the help of David Tanner and the folks in the Freedman Gallery, CITE-C hosted their first CITE-C Social on the evening of the final dress rehearsal of our play. We invited student leaders from many of our socially-conscious campus groups to join us for a little food and fellowship in the gallery before a performance of *Mosaic* followed by a talk-back between the guests and the cast/crew. From all accounts, the initiative worked -- we continue to experience resonances from those conversations and performances for many of those who chose to attend the world premiere. The idea of creating a new piece of theatre is nothing new for our Theatre Department, and we were thrilled to help generate a lot of energy and excitement around the potent connection between the arts and issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

A RAISIN IN THE SUN (Directed by Julia Matthews)

In November, our now nationally recognized production of Lorraine Hansberry's classic American play opened to great acclaim (and a little snow). While the inopportune weather dampened our efforts to accomplish a second CITE-C talk-back on opening night, those gathered at Sunday afternoon's matinee felt compelled to stay and talk -- and thus an impromptu discussion was held. Conversations about how the racism experienced by the Younger family in 1950's Chicago pointed to the ongoing systemic mechanisms that plague our citizens of color even today. Again, these are important conversations for our students to be having around ideas that are painful to comprehend and acknowledge. We were honored to have offered this play to our audiences and are deeply grateful for the support of our community to spread the word about the contemporary significance of its difficult message.

AMERICA, THE PLAY (Written/Directed by Matt Fotis)

In February, our audiences enjoyed a satirical look at the vicissitudes of what it means to be an American during Matt Fotis' original play -- *America, The Play*. While CITE-C did not organize a talk-back around this production, we, as always, conduct an opening night talk-back for our guests. We were excited to see so much passionate conversation and contemplation around the idea of national identity and how our labeling of ourselves helps to promote an ongoing "Us versus Them" power struggle in our communities. The idea that "giving you more leaves me with less" rang all too true with many of our gathered patrons and production members. As with

A Raisin in the Sun and *Mosaic, America the Play* received glowing accolades from the regional respondents of the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival -- a testament to the ongoing efforts of our department and the power of theatre to spark meaningful debate.

SWEENEY TODD (Directed by Jeffrey Lentz)

Our theatre was filled to the rafters with enthusiastic and amazed audience members for our unique production of *Sweeney Todd*. We kept the idea of injustice close to us during the creative process by viewing the play through the creative lens of **agency** -- what it feels like to live in a world that does not set you up for success (or, moreover, is designed to keep you from succeeding). That view manifested a visual language for the production that informed the ideas for our sets, costumes, and props. Examples of how this manifests would be: we offer a plate with no pies, a case with no razor, a piano with no strings; we offer a house with no walls or door; ensemble members are clothed only in their undergarments. Working within these creative parameters allowed us to engage in multiple conversations with the cast and crew about what aspects of their lives seem to resonate with this idea of "doing without".

As we contemplate selections for our upcoming season, the Theatre Department is looking at more ways to frame our productions for 2019-20 through another themed lens. We thank CITE-C for offering us the opportunity to help amplify the empathetic power found in creating and experiencing potent stories of the human condition. Until next year...

2018-19 CITE-C Socials and Initiatives

CITE-C Socials were designed to provide a venue for raising awareness about issues pertaining to DEI issues as well as providing a space for learning/having difficult conversations. Many were integrated with the Theatre's Social Justice Initiative noted above. Each event was attended by 20-40 people

September 27: Susan Crile/Mosaic Preview

Participants began with a reception in the CFA in observance of Susan Crile's exhibit: *Incarceration in the Era of Impending Fascism*. In 2003, when photos of prisoners being tortured at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq began to surface on the Internet, she began to focus her creativity towards awakening a global consciousness regarding incarceration and inhumane practices of prisoner torture.

Participants then proceeded over to the Wachovia theatre for a sneak preview of *Mosaic* (see above for details). The audience was so riveted that when the cast and crew came out afterwards, we ended up having our own impromptu talkback.

October 25: How to Have Difficult Conversations

Beth Kiester and Kim Hubric held a session for students interested in talking about how to have difficult conversations. They used an activity of throwing a ball back and forth with examples of things people might feel strongly about (e.g. Pineapple on pizza: Yes or no; Coke vs Pepsi; Wawa vs Sheets; Star Wars vs Star Trek; Best Hogwarts House). Students were also given a handout with suggestions that were discussed as a group about how to handle difficult conversations in the future.

November 18 : Raisin in the Sun Talkback

Rescheduled due to snow cancellation; Held an impromptu talkback on Sunday afternoon with the cast and crew about being in the play and the issues it addressed.

April 1 (March): Growing Our Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. Join Professors Gilliams and Kiester as they help students understand the importance of emotional intelligence and practice techniques for developing these skills. They will also be discussing the link between emotional intelligence and the way it effects our implicit biases which often lead to discrimination and exclusion. Students from Professor Gilliam's courses who have already been exposed to this concept will also be present to help share their own experiences and expertise.

April 8: Quilting Together Our Differences and Celebrating Diversity (52 quilt blocks were made)

Quilts have a long history of documenting personal stories, important national events, and even resisting oppression and injustice. Quilts were used to signal safety to slaves escaping north in the Underground Railroad while the AIDS Memorial Quilt Project started in 1987 to remember those lost to the disease. More recently, the 9/11 Memorial Quilt Project, a series of 9 themed quilts, is on display in the 9/11 Memorial Museum to commemorate the lives lost during this terrorist attack. Come help CITE-C start a new Diversity Week tradition making quilt blocks that reflect how our campus' diversity makes us who we are! No sewing required. Students, staff and faculty are all welcome! Pizza and snacks were served. Many thanks to Enosh for his student recruitment and to Paula and her students for sewing it together!!

April 13: Raising the PRIDE+ flag

This initiative began the year before, in response to a request from the student group Pride Plus. A CITE-C task force, led by Amanda Hanincik, worked to identify a site and to get the installation approved by various committees and groups. This flag will be the first of what will hopefully be multiple student groups, who apply and demonstrate that their year's activities actively promote a thriving, inclusive, and fully participating community.

2018-19 FYS and the Campus Read: *Between the World and Me*

In academic year 2018/19, in an effort both to satisfy a long-felt faculty need for cross-curriculum continuity and to address recent incidents on campus that disrupted inclusiveness, the faculty endorsed a resolution to adopt Ta-Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me* as a campus-wide common reading. Several groups themed extra-curricular exhibits, speakers and events around this theme.

Nine faculty agreed to incorporate Coates into their First-Year Seminars as required reading. These faculty met over the summer to discuss the book and their reactions to it, as well as ways to incorporate it into their classroom(s). The group developed a Moodle site for sharing class exercises, writing prompts and discussion guides specific to the book and its themes. They also collected anecdotal materials regarding the affect of the class discussion and its outcomes. They met once over the fall to share process and make adjustments, and plan to meet again to sort through which exercises, prompts and classrooms activities were effective and could be recommended to other faculty. Additional faculty also incorporated the read into their ENG 101/102 courses as well as other substantive courses as appropriate.

This book will be used for a second year in a row in academic year 2019/20 in order to try to get more faculty on board with this and future common reads.

Freedom of Expression Statement and Inclusivity and Equity Statement

This year also saw the drafting of two statements important to our community and reflected in our core values, mission, and vision. The first was the Inclusivity and Equity Statement. It

articulates Albright's commitment to full participation, inclusivity, and equity. It does so by specifically articulating that any and all differences will be welcomed and supported by our community. It also sets forth what an equitable community should look like. The Freedom of Expression statement sets an expectation that freedom of expression is valued in an academic setting and one in which we are not always going to agree or share the same values. And while it is okay to disagree, it is not okay to disrespect others or make other community members feel unsafe.

These statements were a collaborative effort of numerous council members over the course of the entire academic year. We sought advice from a variety of constituents around campus including HR, legal, and the Board of Trustees. We now await the final approval of the faculty.