

Vanessa Marie Campagna

Diversity Statement

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**Diversity requires justice.
If there is not equity, there is not justice.
If there is not inclusion, there is not justice.
If there is not redressive action, there is not justice.**

The words above articulate my core philosophy about diversity, and they are fundamental to my personal and professional lives. In no uncertain terms, I am a person committed to justice, with demonstrated action to that effect.

- I am a colleague who has taken and currently takes advantage of professional development opportunities:
 - Participated in a Monmouth College Faculty Book Group on *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux* by Cathy N. Davidson
 - Participated in a Monmouth College Faculty Book Group on *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverley Daniel Tatum
 - Participated in a Monmouth College Faculty Book Group on *So You Want to Talk About Race?* by Ijeoma Oluo
 - Represented Monmouth College at an Associated Colleges of the Midwest diversity meeting
 - Participated in Safe Space training
 - Participate in AACU webinars on diversity
 - Attend relevant panels at the Mid-America Theatre Conference and ATHE Conference

- I am a colleague who has engaged and currently engages in additional service to the institution for DEI initiatives
 - Served on Monmouth College's the All of Us Together *ad. hoc.* committee, which focused primarily on the needs of students of color
 - Facilitated a movie screening and talk-back session during Monmouth College's Immigration Palooza event series
 - Serving on a working group for Monmouth College's DEI committee, which focuses on the needs of LGBTQ+ students
 - Served as Faculty Advisor to Spectrum, an LGBTQIA student organization
 - Will soon be meeting with the student leaders of SAGA, the new LGBTQIA student organization
 - Have taught Independent Studies on an unpaid overload at Monmouth College so that senior students could fulfill a capstone experience in LGBT studies

- I am a colleague who is engaging in additional service to the field for DEI initiatives.
 - I currently serve as a member of the Conference Planning Committee for the March 2022 convening of the Mid-America Theatre Conference, the theme for which is Revolution.
- I am a person who educates myself
 - I read and I listen. The onus to learn and grow is on me.
- I am a colleague who has moved from non-racist to antiracist pedagogies (see Statement of Teaching Philosophy).
- I am a Department Chair who shepherded her colleagues in crafting a DEI statement for all audition notices, and who has worked with community partners on Arts Access initiatives.
- I am a scholar whose research employs queer theory, gender theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, and crip theory.
- I am a white person who admits that I have been complicit in the white supremacy that I diligently work to dismantle. I am undoing my biases, recognizing my privilege, and taking seriously my role as an ally for BIPOC.

I am in the ongoing process of becoming this person. The work will never be done.

Identity, of course, is the lynchpin of diversity. Please let me conclude, then, by sharing with you some salient aspects of my identity and the formative experiences that have led me to be a colleague and person committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

I am a second-generation Italian American. I am a cisgender, femme-presenting lesbian. I was raised by a single mother in a lower-middle class, suburban home. It was not until my mid-twenties when I began graduate school that I understood the intersectional nature of identity. *Intersectionality* was a new word—a buzz word, even—that I quickly came to understand, at least theoretically. It took time, however, to accept the fact that intersectionality accounts for people experiencing oppression on multiple fronts, with race being a front on which I will never experience oppression. Studying intersectionality revealed to me the egregious chasm between diversity and equity, inclusion, and justice. This revelation was a definitive moment in my life, as it was the moment that I became committed to justice.

I grew up attending what is likely best described as a socially and politically moderate Christian church—that is to say, socio-political issues were never the basis of Sunday sermons, despite significant cultural moments that would have provided excellent fodder for critical conversation and necessary redressive action. The white pastors and white congregants kept quiet. I kept quiet, too. While the church my family attended was not at all diverse, the schools I attended were. My elementary school had a significant deaf population, and the foundations of American Sign Language were taught as early as Kindergarten. I sat in K-12 classrooms alongside Black students; Hispanic, Mexican, and Latinx students; Asian students; African students; international students from Eastern Europe and the Middle East; and students with a range of physical/emotional/cognitive disabilities. Diversity was all around me, but I had no critical framework for understanding it. At that time, neither did I recognize the need for a critical framework for thinking about and engaging with diversity. Assimilation was the status quo; by and large, everyone got along. By and large, we were all non-racists. I never imagined the quiet suffering of my peers of color (and other peers whose differences were always visible), even as I silently suffered because

of my sexual identity. *Passivity* is the word that captures how DEI issues were approached for the majority of my life.

When I committed myself to justice, I first had to take accountability for more than two decades of inaction. One important part of this process was realizing the unproductiveness of white guilt. Motivated by Shelby Steele, I redirected my attention to action—the reading, listening, serving, and participating activities listed above. *Antiracism* came into vernacular shortly thereafter and the distinction between non-racism and antiracism has been instrumental to my personal and professional development. This distinction is the single-most influential component of my pursuing justice. Alda M. Blakeney’s “Antiracist Pedagogy: Definition, Theory, Purpose, and Professional Development” has been integral to shifting my pedagogical approach (see Statement of Teaching Philosophy), but her emphasis on leveraging critical consciousness to empower voices, and to denounce historical and ongoing structural racism impacts my life and work beyond the classroom, as well. There is no room for passivity in this work.

I now extend antiracism to issues of systemic sexism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and ableism. I am concerned with poverty, the disenfranchisement of the poor, and the unique challenges experienced by low-income and first-generation students. I am committed to:

- creating and sustaining dialectic teaching and learning environments in which all voices are valued, and in which underrepresented voices are particularly encouraged
- engaging theatre as a democratic art and powerful social tool that cultivates community and shapes individual and collective consciousness
- making theatre that is ethically-guided and that exemplifies Artistic Citizenship (see Elliott, et. al.).

I desire to teach, see, and produce projects that that speak to social-political injustices and that destabilize dominant systems of power and dominant rhetoric in favor of amplifying historically suppressed and even erased narratives and the voices.

It is my intention to continue coming to the theatre and theatre classroom to confront our humanity, experience empathy, and more-fully become a person who advocates for nothing less than justice.