



17 June 2020

Dear Muhlenberg Theatre & Dance Community,

On June 4, 2020, the Department received a letter from Maereg Gebretekle '22, co-signed by over 400 current and former Theatre & Dance students. With the voices of Black, indigenous and people of color centralized, this letter is an unequivocal mandate that the Department take expedient action to incorporate anti-racist practices and to confront anti-Blackness. In no uncertain terms, it directs the Department to deal plainly with its own history, and to open more reliable lines of transparent communication with students and alumni, for the purpose of listening and responding to concerns about systemic racism.

The faculty and staff of the Department have worked to craft [a response](#) that meets the seriousness and depth of the letter, that fully heeds its appeal for sustainable change, and that seeks to take responsibility in a meaningful way. I'm writing to ask you to read the response, and then to engage with us. I know you will have questions and ideas, and I invite you to let us know what they are. In the short term, here's how you can do that:

- by commenting on the Department's Facebook page,
- by emailing me directly,
- by scheduling a Zoom appointment to speak personally with me during my regular [Accountability Office Hours](#).

Additionally, the action plan contained in the response outlines initiatives that obligate the Department to be in consultation with current students as we move forward. In the coming weeks, I will reach out via email and Facebook with more information about how those initiatives will unfold, and how you can participate. I will also share information about how you can be part of two new Theatre & Dance Anti-Racism Advisory Councils — one for current students, and one for alumni.

My pledge to you is to maintain consistent communication about our ongoing work by providing regular updates to the Theatre & Dance community. If you would like to be added to my email list for these updates, [you may do so here](#). I will also post these updates on the Department's Facebook page, and on the pages for two Theatre & Dance alumni Facebook groups, the Fishbowl Collective and Still Moving. The Department has also created a web page where all materials, updates and documents related to these ongoing processes will be kept:

muhlenberg.edu/TDantiracism

This page will also serve as the repository for a series of videos I'm recording to address very particular informational questions posed in the June 4 letter. (These videos will also be emailed out and posted on Facebook.)

I would also like to report to you that on Saturday, June 13, the Dance Program received a letter from a group of current and former Dance students requesting that the Program address specific concerns related to the incorporation of anti-racist practices and the confrontation of anti-Blackness specific to Dance. Incoming Director of Dance Jeffrey Peterson has begun a process of dialogue with these students and alumni, and will have more to say in the coming days about the Dance Program's response. Please stay tuned.

Personally, I am very grateful for the many conversations I have had in the past two weeks — conversations in which many of you have pointedly shared concerns, stories, and ideas. (Indeed, I know I still owe some folks some email replies.) Even though this process is one in which we are grappling with uncomfortable truths, one message is coming through loud and clear — that you are passionate enough about your Muhlenberg Theatre & Dance experience to speak your honest truth, and hold us accountable for necessary change.

Thank you again for your patience as we have taken the time we genuinely needed to commence this necessary process. This is just a beginning step.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Dwyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Troy Dwyer
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