



WASHINGTON STATE ARTS COMMISSION

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Washington State Arts Commission Board Statement on racial justice and equity June 5, 2020

We, the Board of the Washington State Arts Commission, share the following statement:

“Violence, bloodshed, and the wasting of the human spirit in these times seem almost inextricably woven into the fabric of our society. ”

The recent deaths of George Floyd and many other black men and women in circumstances that involved police use-of-force adds another sickening stain to an unimaginable chronicle of tragedy.

“The racial wounds that endure in America have deep roots. They’re historic, they’re current, they’re cumulative, and they have been laid bare at our feet. Our country hasn’t fully acknowledged this, and until we do, meaningful positive change can’t happen. As we look within and all around us to determine how to move forward, consider the following:”

“What is needed is more opportunity for the full potential of life to be realized, respected, and enjoyed. The arts can help us understand what is needed in order that we may realize what we can become. The arts and the encouragement of the arts by all segments of society may not cure the excruciating pervasive problems of our society. The arts can, however, start the communication of understanding between everyone of how great a gift life is and how joyous it is to behold in others.”

Quoted portions of the previous paragraphs were written on June 10, 1968 by the newly formed North American Assembly of State and Provincial Arts Agencies (now known as the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies). The leadership set forth a vision, placing the arts in context with difficult moments of the civil rights movement. It passed the resolution quoted, in part, above.

In June 2020, we adamantly reaffirm the need for the arts to take the lead in “starting the communication of understanding.” Black Lives Matter. By acknowledging, listening, and pledging to do and be better, we will affect meaningful and real change.

This is our lifetime commitment. It’s long overdue.