



## March Quarterly Update

As Milwaukee Rep continues on our ED&I journey, we share an update on what we've accomplished so far and some of our short and long-term plans and goals going forward.

### REP Forward

Rep Forward is Milwaukee Rep's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Plan. The three pillars of the plan are:

- Workforce: Ensure diverse representation throughout the organization.
- Workplace: Build a culturally competent organization that embraces and celebrates differences.
- Community: Continue building stronger relationships with marginalized communities and partners.

### So.... What's occurred since the last update? I'm glad you've asked...

Since February 2023, Milwaukee Repertory Theater has continued to push forward in celebrating its achievements. We have united our staff around cultural celebrations such as: Black History Month, Women's History Month, Pride Fest, and Juneteenth Day. Through our capital campaign, ED&I has worked closely with the accessibility focus group to ensure that individuals with accessibility needs have a platform to share their opinions and create a more inclusive theater for everyone. As we entered the 2023-24 Fiscal year this fall, all staff were provided a refresher of the Rep Forward Plan, encouraging everyone to embrace the Champions Uniting Experiences (CUE) initiative and recommitting to our Pledge to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Following our fall kick off, staff participated in trainings on topics such as Unconscious Bias and Burnout/Psychological Safety, further enhancing our commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all.

### Staff Trainings Update

We offered multiple opportunities for staff trainings in the first half of 2023. We provided in person sessions including *Unconscious Bias* and *Psychological Safety* with Toni Whitaker.

In December, a strategic decision was made to temporarily suspend trainings to ensure that our staff receives information that is specifically relevant to their respective roles and easily applicable to a performing arts environment. This approach allows us to tailor our training sessions to address the

specific needs of staff, enabling them to excel in their job functions. However, this is just a temporary adjustment, as we recognize the importance of ongoing learning and growth. We are excited to announce that additional trainings will be offered in the future, covering a diverse range of topics that will further enhance the skills and knowledge of our staff. We encourage everyone to stay tuned for these upcoming opportunities to expand their professional development. By providing these trainings, we are dedicated to empowering our staff members with the tools and resources they need to thrive in their positions, ultimately contributing to the collective success of Milwaukee Rep.

## **Current events**

### **Education and Engagement**

On March 18th, the third annual Milwaukee Regionals for the National Next Narrative Monologue Competition (NNMC) took place, a program initiated by Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company of Atlanta, GA. This competition provides students with the chance to deliver impactful, contemporary monologues from modern Black playwrights. Milwaukee Rep is among the regional cities participating, and our regional winners will advance to the national competition at The Apollo Theatre in Harlem for scholarships and prizes. Over 250 students from Milwaukee engaged in free training leading up to the competition, with former competitors being hired as youth leaders or Teaching Artist Assistants. Additionally, the two regional winners from 2023 are co-hosting this year's competition. This initiative not only offers equitable access to high-quality arts education but also provides paid employment to young individuals, fostering confidence, professional skills, and job experience as they transition into college or the workforce.

In February, we took ten high school students to Madison for Create Wisconsin Day. Prior to the trip, they participated in an advocacy workshop to understand the importance of conversing with legislators and the impact of their voices in driving change. Through our Teen Council Leadership Program, a free initiative for high schoolers, they gained a voice in program planning and received training in the administrative aspects of theater. In June, six Teen Council leaders will attend TCG's National Theater Conference in Chicago.

Throughout the season, 864 students from 32 classrooms participated in our Reading Residency program focused on "Little Women" and "The Chosen." We collaborated with schools in Milwaukee to identify those in need of additional support in literacy and social-emotional learning, aiming to provide all students with equal access to arts education. These programs not only enhance learning but also offer students the chance to experience world-class theater.

This season, nearly 700 individuals have engaged in Community Conversations events, which included panel discussions on topics relevant to our productions, such as "Women in Government" and "Gender Expression Through Clothing." Dinner Dialogues featuring guest speakers have provided community members with a platform to discuss crucial subjects, share resources, and outline action steps. Open mic nights and community performances have further extended our reach.

Through our Neighborhood Programming, we have supported partners in Amani and Muskego Way, offering tickets, dinner, and guest speakers, as well as participating in neighborhood resource events. In Metcalfe Park, a collaborative project involving residents has been initiated to share the story of Ralph Metcalfe, showcasing the talents and voices of the community. This program not only builds community but also provides training in theater skills, pays residents to participate in productions, and fosters creative expression through various activities.

In Summer 2023, we launched our inaugural Summer Youth Ensemble, employing high school students to create and perform their own show for the community. This program provides young artists with training, job experience, and performance opportunities. We are excited to expand this program in Summer 2024.

Our second year of free Saturday Youth Programs, known as Drama FUN-damentals, focused on introducing young individuals aged 8 and up to theater activities centered on social-emotional skill development. Over 860 youth from various neighborhoods have been served through this program, which has been conducted in partnership with Milwaukee Recreation using ESSER funds. In Spring 2024, we will hold listening sessions with parents and students to gather feedback on future initiatives at our new Herzfeld Education & Engagement Center.

## **CUE hosts Board of Trustees Member Dr. Jeannette Mitchell to Kickoff Black History Month**



In celebration of Black History Month on February 1st, CUE hosted Milwaukee Rep Board of Trustees member Dr. Jeannette Mitchell, to share her remarkable career journey, contributions, and insights on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Dr. Mitchell delved deep into her life experiences, shedding light on how she navigated and overcame personal and professional challenges related to racism. She emphasized the importance of empathy and understanding, regardless of one's race, creed, color, or national origin. Dr. Mitchell's impressive portfolio includes leading initiatives such as the African American Leadership Program (AALP) and the African American Leadership Alliance-Milwaukee (AALAM), which aim to foster

and sustain Black leadership in Milwaukee. While she has passed on her leadership roles to other influential Black leaders in Milwaukee, Dr. Mitchell remains actively engaged in consulting with her leadership business. CUE expresses gratitude to Board of Trustees member Dr. Jeannette Mitchell for her invaluable leadership and enduring legacy that has left an indelible mark on the City of Milwaukee.

## Second Annual Open House & Career Fair



Milwaukee Rep held their second annual Open House & Career Fair on Thursday, February 15th, providing students from Milwaukee Public Schools with a unique opportunity to explore working at the renowned regional theater. The event kicked off with a warm welcome from Executive Director Chad Bauman, followed by department representatives sharing insights on working at the theater. Students had the chance to visit department booths, take tours, and engage with staff. A total of 130 students from Green Tree Preparatory Academy, Washington High School of Information Technology, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, and Ronald Reagan High School participated enthusiastically, showing a genuine interest in pursuing a career in theater. Special thanks to Milwaukee Public Schools' Director of Strategic Partnerships and Customer Service, Christy Stone, Cacy Masters, and the Milwaukee Rep Staff for their invaluable support in organizing this enriching event.

## Highlighting Current Productions for 2023-24 Season

While progress has been made by theater companies worldwide, there is still much work to be done to enhance representation and inclusivity within the industry. At Milwaukee Repertory Theater, we are dedicated to amplifying the voices and perspectives of all communities and ensuring that theater is accessible to everyone. We firmly believe that by cultivating a more diverse and inclusive theatrical environment, we can help dismantle barriers and create meaningful experiences for all individuals. Theater has the power to address a wide array of themes and issues that resonate with people from various backgrounds, including universal experiences like love, loss, and self-discovery, as well as specific cultural and societal matters. It serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a tool for education. As we witness diverse narratives unfold on stage, our horizons expand, exposing us to new ideas and cultures. The strides made towards increased representation and inclusivity at Milwaukee Repertory Theater offer a platform for underrepresented communities to share their stories and have their voices heard. This progress also serves as a catalyst for change, sparking conversations and discussions that can lead to positive impacts and advancements in our society. In productions like "Little Women," "What the Constitution Means to Me," "The Chosen," and "Nina Simone: Four Women," we are committed to honoring the playwrights' intentions by casting inclusively and authentically representing the characters' backgrounds and experiences. By embracing diversity in our theater productions, we are not only reflecting the rich tapestry of America today but also encouraging individuals to take pride in their heritage and identity.



## Chief Diversity Officer invited to University of Wisconsin- Whitewater



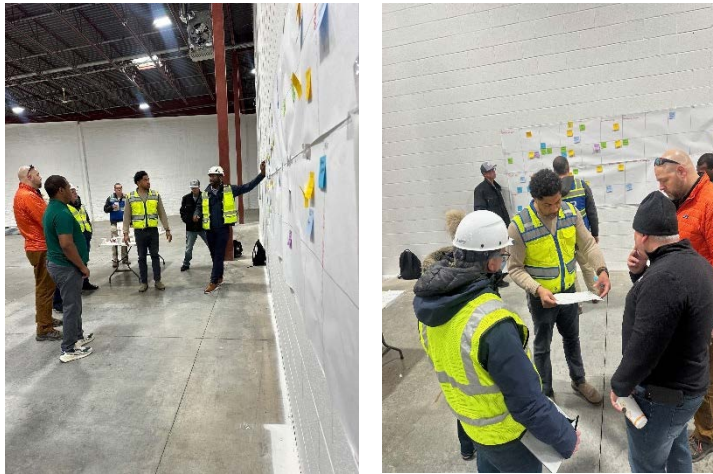
On Thursday, February 23, 2024, Milwaukee Rep Chief Diversity Officer Jermaine Murry was invited to take part in a panel discussion at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater that centered around inclusivity within Wisconsin Organizations. This panel was a one of many highlights during inauguration week for the new Chancellor, Dr. Corey King. Representatives from various organizations shared insights with the campus community on why discussions about inclusion and belonging are crucial, as well as the obstacles that hinder progress in this area. The student segment of the event delved into the significance of networking and career opportunities. I am grateful to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater staff, Chancellor Dr. Corey King, Dr. John Chenoweth Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and colleagues, for including me in this esteemed event.

## Milwaukee Rep Staff visits America's Black Holocaust Museum



Milwaukee Rep staff embarked on a meaningful journey on Friday, February 23rd, as they visited America's Black Holocaust Museum in Milwaukee, WI. Immersed in over 400 years of history, the tour guide traced the origins from Africa before captivity to the present day. The staff was captivated and deeply grateful for the insightful knowledge shared, sparking discussions on the significance of delving deeper into Black History.

## Milwaukee Rep is ramping up construction of its new Production Center facility....



Proper planning is essential for successful completion of the new Production center for Milwaukee Repertory Theater in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, a project led by JCP Construction. Milwaukee Repertory Theater is dedicated to working with local, minority-owned and operated businesses in the Greater Milwaukee Community. By fostering strong partnerships with owners, architects, and other stakeholders, JCP ensures smooth coordination of activities and resources, ultimately leading to an efficient and cost-effective completion of the project.

## Milwaukee Repertory Theater launches Milwaukee Rep University

The theater industry is currently grappling with an existential crisis of immense proportions, a challenge not seen since its inception. With longtime institutional leaders retiring rapidly and new, underprepared leaders stepping in to face daunting realities, theaters are being forced to make significant business model changes that could lead to dire consequences. The lack of support and investment in training and coaching is exacerbating the situation, while clinging to outdated systems during a period of disruption can prove equally disastrous. The field's current predicament can be attributed in part to a lack of investment in nurturing future leaders. Many individuals entering the industry have received training primarily in academic settings, leaving them grounded in theoretical knowledge that requires practical application. Fortunately, our team comprises energetic, curious, and intelligent members eager to deepen their understanding of theater, our organizational priorities, decision-making processes, and business drivers. In August, Milwaukee Repertory Theater launched Milwaukee Rep University to offer advanced, professional training to our upcoming and emerging leaders in the arts industry.

Led by Executive Director Chad Bauman, the MRU cohort engages with faculty and speakers carefully selected from our leadership team, board of trustees, and community leaders. Milwaukee Rep University's approach involves utilizing case studies to challenge the cohort with complex issues facing the industry and our theater, fostering a deeper comprehension of our business, culture, and strategies.



Through analyzing case studies and presenting innovative solutions, the cohort addresses pressing challenges collaboratively and enhances their teamwork skills.

Key skills to be developed include:

1. Active listening and constructive debate
2. Analyzing complex scenarios with inputs from diverse internal and external stakeholders
3. Reading, comprehending, and interpreting data and financial reports
4. Presenting findings and recommendations effectively and succinctly
5. Balancing organizational mission with financial realities to optimize impact.

Topics covered include leadership and decision-making, board relations and governance, audience development, financial planning and mission fulfillment, incentivizing performance through compensation, benefits, and culture, cultivating new work through commissioning and intellectual property considerations, labor relations, fund development, strategic planning, theories of evolutionary vs. revolutionary change, impact programming, randomized control trials, and more.

## **Cultural Celebrations**

As part of our REP Forward work CUE decided to lift and recognize some of the various cultural celebration months and holidays that happen annually. In the first half of 2023 we participated in person celebrating Black, History, Women's History and Pride Month.

For the 2023/2024 Season CUE has selected the following holidays/celebrations the organization is most interested in lifting for this year. [NOTE: each year/season the cultural celebrations selected will change and vary based on the suggestions of CUE and Rep staff.]

- Hispanic Heritage Month – Sept 15 – Oct 15, 2023
- Native American Heritage Month – November 2023
- Black History Month – February 2024
- Women's History Month- March 2024
- Mental Health Awareness Month – May 2024
- Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month - May 2024
- Pride Month – June 2024
- Juneteenth – 6/19/24

## Celebrating Women's History Month



In honor of Women's History Month, CUE recently welcomed Assistant Attorney General Miriam Falk, J.D., from the Wisconsin Department of Justice. Miriam, who serves as the Violence Against Women Act Resource Prosecutor and Law Enforcement Trainer for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, shared insights from her childhood and professional journey. Emphasizing the significance of self-advocacy and empowerment as a woman, she inspired us all to strive for excellence. CUE extends heartfelt appreciation to Assistant Attorney General Miriam Falk for her outstanding leadership and impactful work in the State of Wisconsin.

## On the Horizon...

As we move forward, ED&I at Milwaukee Repertory Theater will begin to delve deep into identifying our strategy process. What does this mean? It means, our Rep Forward Plan will have a framework lens to show who drives the work of ED&I through Milwaukee Rep. It will also have a Recommendation process model that will be a standardized process used to collect, analyze, recommend and implement ED&I strategic goals (Targets for Action) drive ED&I culture change. Stay tuned for more information.

## REP Forward Pledge

Milwaukee Rep's commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is reflected in our pledge. In August 2023 we asked all staff to renew their commitment to this pledge as we continue on this journey.

I Pledge To:

- Become a champion of equity, diversity and inclusiveness for all, to educate myself on issues impacting marginalized communities and share what I learn in my own communities even if it means challenging my family, my partner, my children, my friends, my co-workers and those I encounter on a daily basis
- Recognize dimensions of diversity that often intersect including race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, economic class/income level, ability, mental/physical/emotional health challenges and others
- Support anti-racist policies and procedures and the elimination of white supremacist practices and mindsets of the past
- Practice inclusion by treating people with respect as individuals, valuing differences and lived experiences
- Understand we are all in different places in our journey and be open to opportunities for continuous learning
- Allow grace and humility to actively and respectfully navigate the crucial conversations
- Work for unity and be part of the solution to end inequity together

*Looking forward to continuing our REP Forward journey together!*



**#WeRepMilwaukee**