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LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS

Anti-Black Racism and American Orchestras

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(Music)

>>> Welcome to the League of American Orchestras' online conference. I'm Jesse Rosen, president and CEO of the League. Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for being at our conference this afternoon. Big thank you. To our exhibitors and sponsors, please see them on the online exhibit hall after the session. We will be taking questions from the audience. You can use the chat function in PheedLoop or Zoom. A recording of today's session along with other materials will be available in the session schedule by tomorrow. As a tip, if you navigate away from this broadcast in the browser window you will leave the session. But you can easily rejoin. Just click on the

session. I want to give acknowledgment that there may be members of the press in the audience. At the end, it's important for us to understand how you are experiencing our conference. So in the session description below, you can find a link to a brief survey to share comments. This feedback is really essential for us as helps us shape our work going forward.

I want to acknowledge that our colleagues of color are living with deep pain and fear, subjected to the threat of police violence and ongoing oppression in the society. There's an urgent need for white people in mostly white organizations like ours to uproot racism. The work goes far beyond issuing statements. The League will continue to listen and learn and use its platforms to address racism. For right now, we're continuing the suspension of our fund raising campaign through the end of the week and encourage you to support those black led organizations, confronting racism locally and nationally.

For right now, we are pleased to add this afternoon's session. We will begin in silence, sharing photographs of ground breaking black musicians and hear from our League board member, Dr. Aaron Flagg, also chair and associate director of the Juilliard Jazz Studies Department. Thank you.

[showing photographs]

>>> Good afternoon, I'm Aaron Flagg. We started with a photo slide show honoring musician pioneers of the mid 20th century. They, like today's black classical musicians, were resilient. They honed their craft and were blessed to make playing the music they loved their life's work. The musicians' names and orchestra affiliations are listed at the end of this presentation. I can not but think of the civil rights activists who had enough over 50 years ago and stood up to protest by marching against the same injustice and violence we see today. I realized that their descendants of all reasons we are peacefully protesting today. Your participation is part of the recognition that things need to be better. Thank you for being here and thank you to the leadership for making this a priority. During our time together, I encourage you to share your concerns, experiences, to help us process the senseless killing of black people in our country, the current social unrest

while we battle the global pandemic and the challenge of using this incredibly intense moment to not just survive, but to improve ourselves, our organizations, our communities, and by extension, our country. We are here in a safe, virtual space and seek to better understanding the orchestra's heritage and legacy and examine how we can do better in eradicating systematic mistreatment and discrimination of black and brown peoples in classical music. The agenda today will define terms, looking at key processes in orchestra life, the audition process, in the context of some historical facts.

In the middle we will have time to share some of your comments and questions. I encourage you to make notes of them and don't be shy. This is a family conversation. Please put them in chat so we can learn from experiences. We're all in this together. I'm not an expert, just another human being out here. Then, we will engage the EDI committee of the board in sharing its work and challenges it has faced and some projects that are upcoming. We will then share eight ways of dismantling -- it's set up like a TV show but this is ideally a conversation and dialogue with all of us who care about this music deeply.

Let's look at some terms. Racism, for some people, even the title of this session, for some it took a

pause. Why antiblack? Racism is not about just black and white. It's discrimination, based on a belief system, no matter what the race. Our session is focused on how racism impacts black people, but we must differentiate that racism is a belief. Something like white supremacy is a belief system. That white people have their own, superior culture. If that's a belief system someone holds, it would seem to be logical to look at the fact, at a primarily white organization, art form, that people would view our field as representing and defending that tenet of white supremacy, that our culture is the only music we will program, so some in our field recoiled at the words, and taken personal offense. If we look at it as a belief system, then it is, we can understand where people are coming from.

Another word is bigotry. It's important to understand that bigotry at its core is an intolerance, an unwillingness to move off your personal perspective and to engage in understanding someone else's. This page, these terms are around beliefs. Terms like prejudice, stereotypes, flow from your belief.

Move from belief action, when we say the word, discrimination, we're talking about actions against people based on what we live, our assumptions, attitudes are. It's an individual act, an act of

discrimination. When you see a pattern of behavior, of policies, that point in a similar direction, a long history of practices, that starts going into the realm of, it's a pattern of treatment, systematic discrimination against a racialized person. That is what our industry is being charged with. It's important for us to look internally to our own personal beliefs and our institution's beliefs, personal actions, and our institution's actions.

We will look into one critical element of orchestra life, the audition process. For over one hundred years, I could not audition for a professional orchestra. I was not allowed to. That was commonly known. My teachers told me that. Orchestra members told me that. I spoke to artists like the great Ron Carter. The world still receives some of the great musicship of -- Ron Carter moved into the jazz area because a door was clearly closed in the classical world. That was not an individual thing, it was a systemic policy. In addition, those who we saw in the slides earlier, like Donald White, from the Cleveland orchestra, says the only reason he was heard in, he was studying at the University of Hartford, and I read about him. He was playing assistant principal cello in the Hartford Symphony. His wife noted that Donald was taking lessons with Leonard Rose, the great cellist, who

thought very highly of Donald. She asked him to recommend any major orchestra positions in the country. Donald says he was shy to do so. She stood behind him during his next phone call to Rose. Only because he asked, Rose said, I'm aware of one in Cleveland, and called the conductor directly. Szell arranged and audition in his apartment and he was awarded that position. It takes the advocacy of individual people, in this case, incredibly high profiled individuals, to create that access.

Another element is that to be a member of an orchestra, you need to be a member of the union. Here is another example of systemic discrimination. When orchestras were being founded in the 19th century, they were restricted to only white people. Even if you were able to audition for an orchestra, you couldn't join because you couldn't be in the union. Even when the first black union was sanctioned by the national League of musicians, they were segregated so often, those unions were not made aware of openings in orchestras. So job opportunities were differentiated, segregated. Later in the 20th century, 1941, the segregated unions were symbols of unequal access to auditions, representation in the national union, and one part of the Los Angeles merger, I said that must have been a great

thing. He said no, there was a lot of resistance from black musicians to integrate the unions, because we were officers in the national union because we led our locals. Once we merged, all the white people took all those spaces. So the representation for black musicians, we knew, would go away. We had to be prepared to give that up, to be together.

That type of sacrifice is not known. There were places of business, not just organizations, where musicians worked, that were segregated. That creates an unequal networking. You can't share information, advice, get to know people or get the support that Leoanrd Rose gave, unless you have those opportunities to be together.

Another aspect is how our society noticed this throughout the 20th century. People outside of the field said wait a minute, this is a problem. One of them is the job status of Negro professionals, there were articles written and it catalyzed a lot of conversation because the reports noted that since 1842, not one black orchestral musician had been hired for any in the New York Philharmonic or Met Opera. That brought pressure and embarrassment to the orchestra and by December, 1958, Elayne Jones, later played in the San Francisco Symphony, was hired to play extra on a piece, and the

manager of the Philharmonic proudly noted we now have had our first African American play in the orchestra.

But the fact that it took a report to catalyze that, is an interesting thing to note. In 1969, in the New York Philharmonic, the commission on human rights. They were proved as not guilty, in terms of permanent positions, but it was noted that the engagement and pattern of practice of discrimination in terms of substitutes, extras, and the understanding that the players engage their own students, not try to make that substitute apprentice opportunities open to all.

Michigan state legislators threatened boycotts and withheld \$1.3 million from the Detroit Symphony until they hired a second musician. He happened to be on tour with them when the report came out. They quickly engaged him. Our industry had to sometimes rely on outside people to help us do the right thing is an indictment and shows that the ideas of racism can not be said to not exist in our field. What has been called the subtle way, Malcolm X said they preferred southern racists because he knew where they stood. Northern racists were sly. Those types of beliefs take internal and personal self examination.

I wanted to pause, invite the EDI to join. I will try my best to go back to questions brought up, to see if

we can, together, answer them.

What advice can you give to administrations of all white orchestras, as they seek to attract black musicians to become members? That's one question. And, do you have ideas about creating more diverse boards in race, class, age and abilities within organizations that have had all white or predominantly white boards.

I will ask our board chair, Doug, to jump in on the second question, first. Given his, I'd say successful leadership in that very area. Doug?

>> Thank you. The process of ensuring that you have a more diverse board in my judgment is, first a matter of determination. It's a matter of creativity and outreach. If you devote your energy to it, and go looking for people, instead of relying on your typical network, and the people you already know, you will find people who are able to serve on your board and able to contribute their perspective. At the League, all it took was a push from Jesse and me with the support of the rest of the board and we were able to rapidly increase the number of people of color on the board. In an individual community, that can be more difficult.

You need to work hard at it, seek people out, go beyond your existing network, and find people. We

don't want to go down the hole of board member philanthropy, but in my opinion, while there are plenty of people of color who can meet predefined board minimums, if you allow those minimums to be an obstacle to bringing people in, then you will struggle to get to where you want to end up. It's important to have policies that are flexible enough that you can have diversity by relaxing that. You want participation, words, and ideas, so my view, it's hard work, going beyond your existing network and being flexible about policies.

>> In your recruitment, don't forget that people want to feel wanted for themselves, not just for their skin color. What talents, special abilities, that are going to strategically contribute to your organization, drive your interest in that person? Having been approached many times by many organizations, I was very direct and asked how excited are you to have my help, your diversity percentage, versus excited for me to help your organization in a specific way. To the extent you can answer that, that will increase the excitement of individuals wanting to be engaged in your organization.

Daniel? Question?

>> Good morning. We have two audiences, actually, three, held in confinement. That's a certain privilege, the privilege of shelter. We have an online

chat happening, which is lighting up. Of course, we have an line participants, well over five hundred. This is in real time. I like to say there are 522 plus people breathing and alive and there will be hundreds who are losing their lives. And we have musicians, out in the street, risking their lives. Anna, I've been protesting in Richmond. She's playing only music by black composers during black history month. How do we explain this is almost more important for white children, to perform? I hear you, we have 522 souls living and breathing. I thank the League for bringing us together. To the question of boards, diversifying a board centers on representation by invitation and inclusion. What are the guiding principles for your orchestra organization and audience? Are they all aligned? Does your current board speak directly to your values? Can your future board help you better define who you are. I look to the people in the community during this time of pandemic, look to the leaders, speaking to truth. There's a question about how can you manage a board that's not particularly diverse, or let's call it hostile board members. I'd say, center it on your home and if you have friends, family, children, ask who they would want to see on your board. If someone were in your home, and hostile, saying things, openly, that you did not agree

with, that were wrong, what would you do? Ask them to leave? Those are the behaviors you should bring to the board. See the board as a place, as your, not conference table, but dinner table. Let's make this a contract about specific systemic change based on morality and decency. Switch to artist mode, as a composer, it's easy for me to look to Zach as my child, sit at a table with him. Anything they say at the table I want it to be what's best for my child. That make it's easy. When you're at your next board meeting, if anybody says or does anything that you wouldn't want them to say in front of your child or mine, they should not be at the table. Let that be our guiding principle.

>> Thank you so much. Alan?

>> Thank you. On this question of recruiting an inclusive board, I've been a change agent for LGBT. When you want to create change, the organization must act like an ally, must have, people must come out as an ally of the cause they want to embrace and at the same time published this week by the League, and the session itself, those public acts, you must be willing to risk the controversy, that could come up either in your family or friends, or in an organization or community. But that's the kind of thing that makes the people who are themselves diverse and joining an organization feel

you're committed to the work and will have the courage to stand with this community. That's a real ally mindset. We need allies for all kinds of social change.

>> I want to be sure we don't lose of the track about engaging black musicians in orchestras. Hugh?

>> Of the two prongs of that question, number two is the easy one. Relatively easy one. My experience directly with full time professional orchestra is here in New Orleans, a medium sized city with a black majority population. If one goes way back to the old orchestra, clearly all white establishment on the stage and audience in the board room, five or six years ago we started our equity, diversity and inclusion committee of the board. We always, in my experience for the last 20 years, had one or two black members of the board. We reached out, built a lot of relationships, and now have an African American who is the president of our board and as the old adage is that in development, people give to people, diversifying the board racially has been important for people asking people. Our current board chair has done work, broadening the scope of our board. In New Orleans we always have gender diversity, LGBT diversity in the orchestra, board room and staff. Now, for the first time, I can say we really have a board approaching representation of the full community. We

already had a staff in that situation. Our big challenge remains the first part of the question, which is getting that diversity into the performing organizations whether they're performing in the traditional concert hall or out in the schools.

>> Thank you. To the question of players on the stage, to those orchestras say, in a freelance environment, how do I secure that support, finding black musicians to be in the orchestra. We're here. If you don't know, touch base with anybody. Any of us. We are a network. We will find that person and people for you. The issue is, it may feel, I don't know where to find people, that's easy. What's harder is making sure that your request to them so based on their ability to play which is what we spent our career developing. Not just, years ago, I finished up at Juilliard, I got calls. Of course, I said that's great. Oh, someone gave us a list of black trumpet players. I'm insulted, because you haven't heard me play. That's what I've been working on. To say you're only calling because of a list, maybe that's good for you, but it's insulting to me. Come to a concert and engage me because of my playing. As you make your efforts, building a network to find classical artists of color, go the extra mile, check out your YouTube clip. Listen to their playing, show respect for

their artistry, not just need for their color.

>> Thank you. This is a fantastic conversation. I want to address the question about being in an all white orchestra, and black music being limit black history month. It's actually important to play music by black artists for white children. There's lots of research that I've seen about the impact of diverse images, on children. Mostly about films and TV. But it applies very much to what we do, about how the images that, people that children see at these impressionable years impact their empathy, the assumptions they make when they encounter people in the world. There's a strong case, it's important to play music by diverse composers, particularly black artists for groups of children.

White children as well as more diverse children. And your point about black composers only playing during black history month, that strikes me. We talked a lot about that, and I was pleased in Brooklyn to develop an understanding organization, where black artists were not just put in side programs, branded as being about racial identity. Having work by black artists through the programs generally, made a powerful statement about the importance of the work and of the artists.

>> Other questions, about grant dollars. The use of programs and efforts to, the efforts to use communities of color in an effort to pull down DEI dominant dollars. How do we push for authentic inclusion, not the, I will do this to get a grant, mind set? I have positive news. The foundations and organizations giving those dollars are getting generally better and better at having accountability for long term impact. I'm associated with one right now, where orchestras are communicating due to the situation, a desire to diversify the grant money they have received to other critical areas of need. Instead of investing in supporting their organization to become more inclusive, they want to use the money to fund other aspects of their area. The answer is sometimes no, we need to demonstrate commitment to that. I have direct understanding of being in an organization, being told we have no money for payroll this week. My job as executive director was to solve it. I know what that pain is. But founders hold us to account. You and your colleagues within the organization are the leaders. You need to stand up and say what's the right thing to do here? Are we committed to this organization, or just getting signatures to get the money, and not commit to the work? I join the person

who asked that we, that concern. Speaking out is one way to address that.

How do we walk the line of an organization who struggled with a lack of diverse members, hope to engage black artists that Aaron brought up? How can you be intentional without being insulting, to be perceived as not just filling a quota.

>> We have had an, I want to acknowledge first, we have all been through trauma. The trauma of the last eleven days is real. There's historical trauma. Trauma, think of a wound, there's initial steps in the healing process. The immediate step, intermediary step, and the resolution. We feel like, I feel I've taken a blow. Abused. Bruised. Emotionally, I'm exhausted by it all. This is one step, convening. Just talking about systemic, specific changes. Then you don't have to worry about quotas, you're talking about the initial steps, which are the hardest steps. If you got a cut, why further pour iodine on it. This was an important part of his process. You saw it coming and knew the bottle. He held you down. But there was almost this, a contract, that in order to get through something better, you had to go through something that was shocking. Quotas may feel painful. Initial steps will feel painful. They should because you're going on, into a healing process. All this,

I see questions about blind auditions, I want to leave you with this thought. We're past aspirational postings. We have all done it. It was important. Now, we're onto action.

Specific, systemic change, over the next week to ten days, get together in your group and talk about it all. You don't need us to do that. What are specific changes you can publicly announce, your specific change. And the date. When is the date that these specific systemic changes will be happening? If you do those things, and they're painful, you will get your organization in a month, can be in a radically different place than you are now. I call that equity. And I thank Bob so much years ago towards the things we are talking about today.

>> Thank you. We will turn to this committee that everyone is looking at. And their work, what actions can you put a date to for the League. First, you had comments? Praticihi?

>> Thank you so much. One question was around staff, how do we get them ready to deal with this. Is there training or other things? We're recognizing all the various parts of the orchestra. We talked about boards, a little bit about musicians. As Daniel said, once you made the commitments, taking the action, the

actions ultimately have to be taken throughout the orchestra. So diversifying the board and getting staff ready, trainings and education being part of that. And also making sure there's a communication flow through, so people understand that the entire orchestra has embraced this. You may have to start with quotas, but it's about shifting the mindset in every aspect of the orchestra. Education is part of that. We have to know how to community with each other, about things not, that won't be comfortable. Having the skill sets is to talk about those things, the events of the last eleven days, and how people are affected differently, it's critical that we train not just the staff, but the musicians, and board. We all must shift and move forward together.

>> Thank you. My colleagues and I have been engaged in this committee of the equity, diversity and inclusion for several years. Bob, of the New Jersey Symphony, will help us understand how this started.

>> Thank you. For as long as I can remember, on the League's governance committee, we articulated the goal of increasing the number of persons with his color and year after year made very little progress. About nine years ago, Aaron of the Sphinx organization, agreed to join the board if there was a EDI task force. There was a general scope and focus of

League activity to help orchestras advance their work in the area of diversity and to identify activities the League is uniquely qualified to carry out. We considered our work to be two pronged, one, on the League itself, and that means our board and staff, and also looking how we can help the field.

We saw what the League did and were surprised at the large number of articles in Symphony Magazine. Articles were written with passion and seemed incongruous that we're only not starting to think about, the continuing commitment to this work and as a group, talked about the sustainability of it. This was aided by a grant from the Mellon Foundation. Internally, we focused on helping the entire board understand some of the complexities of EDI in the orchestra field. We had the support of engaged board leadership and Jesse Rosen leadership in voice and print.

The task force became one of the board's standing committees. We had a strategic plan for EDI. EDI was to promote top billing in the new plan and had a chance for more valuable board time to continue the discussion with the board. As Doug mentioned, we established a minimum of 25% members of the board being of people of color. As of last month, we exceeded that number. It's important as we stated in the strategic

plan, to always approach this work with curiosity and humility. There are no easy answers to the tough challenges. But this is a journey and are taking it together.

I'm grateful for Aaron for insisting and for Jesse Rosen for assisting, and for Aaron Flagg for persisting to push us forward to an equitable, diverse, inclusive League. Thank you.

>> I didn't know you had those lyrical skills.

That's great.

>> I'm a musician, what can I say?

>> I want to open this to other members to share what you have been learning, or we are learning? What's been your journey? Alan?

>> I want to build on what was said about the notion of training. I found that training has done a great deal to align people within our institution with a common understanding, common vocabulary, and tools to talk about this. What's been critical is the question of listening. We all need to do more listening. It's going, asking people of color to tell us about their experience. We don't experience the same things. As we built the diversity of our board, we found that it wasn't just about building relationships with people we didn't know. Turned out, there were lots of people in our own

audience. We have a chair elect, who's black, and she's not chair elect because she's black. She's the right person. It started with listening. The questions she asked us early on, like why me? The first thing was, we asked her for an increased gift. She made the gift. We said, without blinking, and she said, we would like you to chair the annual fund. She said, why me? Because you lead by example, we said. You responded graciously to our request, and the subsequent year, she chaired the annual fund, knocked it out of the park. We asked her to be the chair elect and again, she asked why. We said, you did this and this, it's clear you're passionate about the cause. A lot of what we learned about that and how to deal with the question, how can we attract more people of color to our orchestras, starts with listening.

Even as we had some success in Nashville, improving the situation with the orchestra, we started by asking questions, help us understand how to go about this work. It's been quite a journey. We're still not completely there. The training has produced alignment, and we have more of that to do. The listening has produced much better understanding of the concrete actions to take. You must be intentional about going about this work. Action means a lot more than the words. The listening thing.

>> Thank you. Gloria, Mary, would you like to share your experience in this work, either from your work on the League board, or other affiliations, in other organizations?

>> Hi, I'm a cellist in the Philadelphia Orchestra. I've been part of this work. I'd like to thank the League for the opportunity to have that growth and bring that to my orchestra and the League enables my organization to do this work as an organization from a grant from the catalyst fund. We had other funders that matched the grant, so we could hire an amazing group of people, professionals to guide us and help not inform our decisions, but help us reach our own conclusions. The process really had us evaluating our present state and all state colors involved in the process. It wasn't a top down thing but a full organizational representation. We assessed our current state, articulated what our actions would be and you will see some statements, actual results from the actions, which I can't make public at the moment. The Philadelphia orchestra, having this opportunity, I was able to be really listened to, partner in my orchestra because of my experience on the League board. The EDI committee, everybody's voice on this committee has been heard. It's been enriching and informative to our journey.

>> Thank you. Mary?

>> This is the committee that first taught me to use Zoom. The two words that came up in the conversation just now, patience and humility. Those, you have, we have over five hundred people listening right now, concerned enough to take an hour and a half of their afternoon because they really care. I say to all of you, care enough and continue to care. Understand that it's your individual responsibility. It takes a lot of patience to do this work. That's the biggest challenge, understanding that you don't just come through the door of your orchestra any place, people know individually the difference between what's right and what's wrong. They know what equality really is. So what the League has done by Bob's leadership, and you've heard everyone else coming together, caused me personally to think about this whole issue and to talk about it with other people and quote the League. You have the resources of the League to start out with your orchestra. If there's ever a time when they world would love to have good leadership, it's now. The orchestras in this country have the opportunity right now at this challenge to be the ones to lead.

Please do it.

>> Great. Doug?

>> I will ask my colleagues to chime in. The League board has been talking for a while, year or so, about the need for essentially truth and reconciliation in our field. The need for us to help people to understand that there's a past of discrimination, of inequity and it is still existing in the present in ways that sometimes are not easy to see. The full consideration of that past and present runs smack into how we view meritocracy and excellence. Exactly how we select musicians, exactly how we build staffs and board, and program seasons, so those values of equity, diversity and inclusion can really come alive in orchestras. We plan over the course of the coming months to engage with the field in a conversation about this, about what is the past and how it holds people back and what does it have to do with the representation we currently see in our field, how is it reflected in the traditions of our field that we must change. That's up coming education where we will spur conversation around this.

We want to acknowledge our role as individuals. orchestras and as the League in this discriminatory past. Think of it as the coming apology that we're in the process of convening a conversation around so we can acknowledge these things and confront them as human beings. There's a whole lot of

work we as your League have planned to engage in, some willing learning opportunities, some will be convening and we understand we're not perfect and that we need to first and foremost mirror the values we talk about before we can be a credible voice on them. We are working hard on ourselves. I encourage all of you to get engaged in and lean in.

>> Thank you so much. Jesse?

>> Thank you, Doug. We're not speaking to all of you who are listening from the standpoint that we have figured this out. Far from it. I wanted to cite two really important pieces of work that we still have to do as a staff. In case anyone has not noticed, the League's view has not centered race as different from among many different types of differences, who are marginalized in our society. The events in recent weeks, for myself personally, have changed my beliefs about the racism as a force in our society that's different. It doesn't eliminate the other issues but it's truly central. That's a different kind of conversation and work. We must come to grips with that as a League. This is new work.

Equity remains an enormous challenge. Fish in water don't know they can't breathe. We tend not to know how much power we hold. Compared to much, maybe most of the arts community, we are the wealthy

personified. We take up lots of space and room. Lots of resources. We haven't yet figured out how to be good partners with the rest of the arts community, and community, generally. We have a lot to do and look forward to do it with our board and all you who are listening. Aaron, back to you.

>> Thank you. As Doug mentioned, in the coming months, there will be a big article in Symphony magazine with more of the history, and facts that we hope will empower folks, arts managers, and others, how can I get engaged, and getting informed, find your voice of how to do that. What do we do with members of our orchestras, establishments, not as open to these conversations, so arming yourself with that information will be helpful.

Education, people are saying a typical thought process, well, we get our music from the schools. How do we get the schools to diversify? Primary, secondary, education, especially. That to me is a place to be, become an ally, a catalyst to those areas. If you're in an orchestra, you should be on the phone to the head of the school. The dean, saying what are your diversity goals? How are you working to address that? You will be feeding in orchestras. We have a vested interest to how those students are being prepared. What assets can we

share? At Juilliard, there's major change. Well before the recent situation, around equity work. The new president immediately hired a director of the work, and faculty have been meeting. Within a year, everyone has required training. There's an online source, looking at admissions, in different ways. Sometimes it's with learning, sometimes from the streets, from the bottom up, people want there be change. Whatever role you have in the field, you can make a difference. We need you to.

I can testify as someone who's been on the board over twenty years. When Bob started the task force, I had no interest because I viewed it as a potential tokenism to have a black guy on the committee. But the energy the committee generated, and I know all the people on this call are feeling the respect and humility, really inspired me to be honored to help carry the mantle that the leadership started.

Bob's story, the New York City police chief announced, offered an apology for stone wall. It was, I vaguely remember hearing about it. It didn't directly impact me. But he told how much that apology, recognition, meant to him. Someone who was not at stone wall. We were in California, at the time. But the impact for him changed me. To believe that we have to

fight our own laziness and complacency, to really make a difference. With leadership of Jesse and Doug and this committee, there's incredible work happening. You and your orchestra, find allies, find inspiration. And make some things happen. You're not alone. The violence in Virginia, if you feel alone, call any of us. We're with you, you're not alone.

people like ending sessions with things to think about. Our colleagues gave us hundreds of things to think about. I wanted to share another panel slide. Is everyone seeing a black square in the middle of their screen?

>> Yes.

>> I thought it was just me. It's helpful for us to note that the word, diversity, has been something orchestras talked about for decades. That has always meant bringing bodies into the setting. To someone who asked how to -- tokenism, if you're only thinking of bringing difference in the setting, that's diversity, and great. But it leaves itself open to tokenism. The equity part, looking for parity of outcome and experiences. Back to the board question, you want your members to be as engaged as every one of my colleagues on the panel. You want the same joy of giving, Alan mentioned, everyone should feel that way.

It goes to wanting to connect with people. And the sense of inclusion, they're energized and feel valued, that they belong. This committee and these terms are things we feel deeply. It's important to understand how they're different. They're often in the world looked at as a bunch of letters, rather than what they really mean.

This is the full list of the people on the amazing committee that I am privileged to serve with. Centers from around the country. The value of each of these people is incredible. We thank them for that.

These types of things can apply to all types of racism, beliefs that others are superior or inferior to you. Centering on the people being harmed. Often, questions can come from a me-centered place. How do I get what I want out of this situation, rather than understanding how might this person feel. If I'm how they feel, how do we want to feel? You work towards things, for example, how do we get more butts in seats? Ask what types of things do people want to enjoy? How can we make our orchestra experience exciting for them? It's about the harm. Systemic discrimination harm people, not just long ago. There are lasting effects, the legacy is deeper than I can articulate in the moment. The field needs to be perceived as a sensitive, responsive, rather than ignoring it.

The way to address it is to talk to people. Ask them their experience. How are they feeling? Learning the history of systemic discrimination, and becoming over time aware of one's own words, assumptions, processes. Stay open to new perspectives. I used the phrase, African American, people of color. Black people. And it was pointed out, those mean different things to different people. I learned that I'm 50. When I grew up, the term, African American was an achievement and if when my parents died, we're not Americans, from a place, like the Irish Americans. African Americans. That's a great thing.

However, my son is of a generation where he's faster to acknowledge that he has no connection to Africa. I've never been, either, I have no connection there. So I can understand why his generation connects more easily to black people. That phrase. So in that moment, I was in my backyard, thinking about this. I had to learn. It's not that my parents were wrong. But times change. The ability to stay tolerant and open, how do we avoid being intolerant? Stay open. Flexible.

Find your own way to stand up. For many of my friends, it's protesting, for me, last week, preparing for things like this, helping organizations conceptualize their way to be helpful. Be an ally, increase the number

of allies. Don't just sit with a stubborn board member. Try to understand them. Engage with them. See, learning their perspective in ways that will develop empathy within them to understand your perspective. Embrace discomfort. Have an unwavering commitment to these goals. Watching the board members of this organization show that point has been so inspiring.

I know what it feels like for people to watch the leader, and ask, is she really committed to this? Will they forget about this in two weeks? That's important for all of us. Finally, develop mechanisms that keep you accountable.

These are thoughts, I'd love to hear from colleagues, if are reactions, please feel free to speak up. Daniel?

>> A lot of love in the room. Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions. About representation, the apparent and not so apparent. I learn from my young son, who schooled me to tiktok last night. We were setting up my account. He made sure to block me. He had a black fist. I said, what is that! He said oh, that's BLM. That's black life matters. What does that mean to you? He said, dad, look, all lives matter. But black lives sometimes don't. He's ten years old. So I want to say that, we still have well over four hundred people on the

line. I'm always near tears. I think about, think about your own life at ten. The first time you heard an orchestra play. Think about that precious relationship you had when the only thing that mattered was seeing what was for you your community up on the stage doing something magical. Forget about who you are. Think about who you were. Think about the broad inclusive nature of a child's imagination. What they're going through, right now. Can you imagine?

One crisis on top of another. Think about who they look to, about the voices they're not hearing. It makes all all work so much easier when we just imagine, aspire and inspire. I'm learning all the time. You and everyone on the board, Mary and I couldn't obviously be more different. The differences are obvious. What are the things we share in common? That's where the art lies. Like Aaron, I enter sometimes an organization or conversation with deep suspiciousness, informed by my experience. Am I a victim of privilege? Probably. And I'd like to leave with this. If we can not be aware that in the coming days, we all going to fall victim to amnesia. We're all going to forget. That's the American way. We are not going to be able to hold onto the feelings of change and value that are embedded in us at the moment. Whatever you need to support yourself, write it

down, take a picture, make a video of yourself, post it on line so when the battle becomes hard, you want to retreat, the invitations aren't happening, your emergency muscle starts getting coarse, remember Mary. This woman, come here, sit down next to to me! The League of American Orchestras is truly a place where risk, purpose and love happens every day. I'm very proud to be one very small part of a very big idea, that Mary introduced me to and all of you will keep going through, with love.

>> Thank you. There's so many questions and experiences being shared on the line. I'm frustrated, that we won't be able to get to them all with the same way we want to.

One thread has to do with consequences. Someone asked, what's the League's guidance and some organizations put up statements and we hear from a number of constituents who are threatening to withdraw support or pulling back. As you start doing this type of work, gratitude will be in small supply from the people who like the status quo, except for, after some time, it will be, for the people who are the bruised ones, who you're trying to help. They have been beat up. Actually, your sincerity, they won't believe it right away. You have to be so committed that the rich donor who

gave you 30% of your funding, so you must be committed to being creative. The people on this call support you. You may need to activate other people. I remember Jackie Robinson. He had a relationship with Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the baseball commissioner, a judge who helped the (baseball) league after the scandal. He was a racist. In public he stated anyone was welcome. But in private, he made sure no blacks were allowed. We all talk about — but no one remembers there was an obstacle. Until that was knocked down, or left, they had to wait. Bob Wagner has carried this load while I was too impatient. He carried it, carried it, then, suddenly, the environment was right. Two years ago. When we started all the work Doug is talking about. Statement the League made, I don't want to speak for Jesse, but he had a legion of people helping him pull that together in a way that is sincere to the organization. And to the person who's worried about people who will be upset, the real question, is, is your organization aligned? Does the staff commit to the statement you put out? If so, buck up. Why do we expect it to be an I see ride? It's not supposed to be easy. A hundred years of segregation, four hundred years of enslavement, this is not simple. It doesn't just go away so we must be committed and

creative. Find a new donor. Unless you do a baseball gig and wait until Landis died.

Let's celebrate the musicians we saw at the top of the session. They're a sampling of the many wonderful artists who are in our field who can be resourced to you, in terms of how to find musicians in my area. I don't know where to find them. There are a lot of people in the world. This is not everybody but it's a sampling. They care deeply. I want to thank Jesse and Doug for prioritizing in this time to change things around on no notice and make this happen, for my panel colleagues on the equity, diversity and inclusion committee, to change their schedules to be here. They're here because they care. And for the hundreds of you who joined us in the time, to listen and engage and be together. We're a family dealing with a family problem. But I'm so encouraged at the end of this session even more than at the beginning because you're there with us.

Back to Jesse. Thank you so much for your time and the work you will put in to fight anti-black racism.

>> Thank you, Aaron. It was fantastic, and I want to thank all the members of our EDI committee and League board. I was grateful to all of you for being the

wonderful board that you are. The participation and questions signal to me we must have lots more conversations like this. There are lots of big issues and questions. We will have more opportunities to dig into these questions. I want to point out that Aaron, with the help of this committee, kind of a catalog of emotions, of being beat up, frustrated, exhausted, and these are the feelings, the experiences. Aaron's first point on one slide was to center the people being harmed. That's an appropriate, strong message. I'd like us to close with that idea in mind. And to asking everyone to please go to the little evaluation at the bottom of your screen, and we will see you again tomorrow. Thank you all.