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LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS

EDI at the SFS: Foundational Work and the  
COVID-19 Challenge      Communication Access  
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(Music)

>>> Welcome to the League of American  
Orchestras' online conference. I'm Jessica Schmidt and

I'm honored to serve as an external consultant to the League in their work. This session is made possible by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. I have a personal message as we enter the week, we continue mourning the recent murders and ask that we hold space for our black colleagues, friends and neighbors who carry generational trauma. I will name the need to continue in our own understanding of systemic racism and to dismantle our role in it. Action is necessary. Let's continue addressing the symptoms of racial inequity and the systemic causes. Black lives matter.

We want to thank our exhibitors, and to encourage you to visit their exhibit hall after the session, online. We will be taking audience questions. Please use the chat function in PheedLoop or Zoom to enter your questions. 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. We would love to hear about your experience. In the session below there's a link to a brief survey. The feedback is very valuable to us in informing and shaping future content.

This team from the San Francisco Symphony is very close to my heart. I've worked with them as an external partner, consultant in their EDI work. They model humility and curiosity, hard work and empathy. While we're in the early stages of building organizational change, it's been an honor to work side by side with such wonderful human beings and to learn from them.

I will turn things to Elizabeth Shribman, chief of staff at the San Francisco Symphony. Elizabeth, all yours.

>> Thank you so much. Good morning to our virtual audience. Many thanks to the League for shifting the year's conference online and enabling so many to participate by waiving fees, but also for inviting the SFS to share its journey. I will be the host for the discussion today.

We will establish some ground rules. The meat will be in the personal reflections each panelist shares. We will wrap up with Q & A and include an appendix with all the materials we wanted to share, but won't have time for in this session.

On behalf of all my fellow panelists, we want to say we are heart broken by the recently killings, even as we acknowledge that these deaths are the latest in a

historical string of racial injustices that run generations deep in America. We hold up all who are feeling pain and trauma, especially our black colleagues and friends, and acknowledge how beautiful it is to see so many developing awareness.

Members of the DEI work group collectively represent the board of the San Francisco Symphony. We have board president, Sakurako Fisher, and governor, Debbie McCoy. Debbie is in high demand so is currently on another call for work but will join us later in the session. Our musician representatives are violist David Kim, and my colleagues joining me from the administrative staff are associate director of archives and records management editorial director, Jeanette Yu.

I've been overseeing our efforts for two years. Things often don't go to plan. We would like to start by sharing a bit about the evolution of this session. When Jessica reached out she shared the hoped the San Francisco Symphony could speak to the foundational DEI work we are been doing and how we leveraged the work in a positive response to COVID-19, as a case study of practices we didn't feel entirely comfortable holding ourselves up as a case study of good practice in this area. When the virus first hit, we had crisis management load. Responsible for moving the work

forward, I admit the work group took a two month work, responding to COVID completely overwhelmed us as we adjusted to a new reality. While elements of our response to COVID-19 have reflected some of the values we were honing as an organization, we haven't figured it all out. The title of the session, EDI at the SFS: Foundational Work and the COVID-19 Challenge, which we submitted several weeks ago to the League, reflects the compromise approach, to reframe the response piece through the lens of opportunities and challenges rather than through the lens of best practices. This actually did not feel quite right, either.

We decided to make the session a reflection of how the group operates, honing in on vulnerability, openness, and raising tough questions. The bulk of the session will be spent with each of us reflecting on DEI, drawing on personal stories that put on display the vulnerability and trust that shape our group. They can be considered reflections on opportunities and challenges around DEI work in our field, at large. We want it to be a chance to model our internal practices by addressing head on the tensions and challenges the field shies away from. I'm sorry to those who expected to learn about the important sickness of our work on COVID-19, but what we settled on is just as meaningful.

We believe this will aid us. The ground rules are to make "I" statements, to step up, step back. If you're usually vocal, try to create space for others. I'm very uncomfortable publicly speaking so I'm attempting to step up. We don't have to agree. Be willing to be uncomfortable, accept a lack of closure, be fully present, assume positive intent.

We are representatives from the board, orchestra and staff, and meet monthly. When we first came together in September 2018, many of us had not met. We quickly discovered that we were all over the place, in terms of our individual baseline understanding of DEI concepts. The power differential in the room made it hard to name that tension, at the outset. We went through intense workshops on topics like power, the dynamic began to shift. We gained a deeper understanding in the ways our identities define us and the inequities. People began opening up, sharing vulnerable personal stories. Over time, we developed a culture of respect, trust and vulnerability and have become a little more comfortable with the cognitive dissonance. The committee is like nothing else I've experienced in my professional life. It has been humble to learn alongside staff members, musicians from our orchestra and members of the board, and has been

beyond inspiring to witness our CEO and board president model their own vulnerability within our group and advocate for the work outside of the group in the rest of the organization.

There are a few principles that have not only guided our approach to its DEI work, but also incorporated the work of our group that would be helpful to share. First, we have been almost exclusively focused on our internal culture. At the strong recommendation of Jessica, we forced ourselves to focus on understanding the issues, learning about the new way of thinking and approaching our work, developing a common internal baseline understanding, and changing our in terms culture.

It's important that this kind of introspection works across the whole organization. We have focused efforts on engaging stakeholders across all over. From retreats and board meeting, to a music -- organizational wide reading of the book, white fragility, we are working hard across the organization. Most challenging, we are learning to accept this is a slow process, with non-measurable outcomes. It's been exhausting work and takes time to develop the trust in the kind of environment essential to moving it forward. It has definitely been a journey.

I will turn it over to Adrienne, to tell you about another element of our work, the language we slowly developed for the organization, in an effort to define the words, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Adrienne?

>> Thank you. I was one of the members of the subgroup that helped write the first draft of our language document at the SFS. The other members were Elizabeth, Nick, and Jeff, who has been an engaged, thoughtful member of our work group from the beginning.

Between the four of us, we had a lot of discussion about what concepts we want include. Though we more or less agreed, it was exhausting to frame how we wanted to say it. When we finally had a rough draft, the response was varied. Some people resonated with what we came up, some felt strongly we should not include some of the terminology we felt were most important. Many of the concerned people were board members, and in the subgroup, some were relatively low in the power structure, it was challenging to navigate. Having a consultant made the difference between our work being able to move forward, and having our process become stuck and potentially destructive. With Jessica's support, we paused in the writing process and had several workshops about

concepts, about the language most debated.

This changed the dynamic from debate to collective learning . Some members chose to leave, but most stayed and we all learned from each other. It had been a challenging process, but led to the moment where there was no hesitation about ratifying the document.

One concept we tried to capture is that we have a lot to learn. The guiding principles we will need to change as we evolve. This will be a living document. One section is about the importance of us better understanding our context and history relative to broader social inequities, and systemic oppression of all kinds. We wrote that while we hope to contribute to the evolution of the larger orchestra industry and community, the best way to do that is to focus on the tremendous work we need to do internally.

Even though I was very involved, I did not appreciate what was really happening at the time. It's easy to feel impatient while establishing foundations because it feels urgently important to get to the real work, looking back, this process was real work, it helped us grow, how we see our organization, and the decisions we make in our roles.

The document continues to be a very helpful

document to help us stay on course.

>> Thank you. We have an appendix, so if you're interested in more detail, the substance of the language we came up, you can look at the appendix once the slides are posted by the League.

Each of us will reflect on our personal journey. I want to be clear that these are personal reflections that aren't necessarily the view of the organization, or of the constituent group we each represent. These are our individual experiences of the work in our lives and at the San Francisco Symphony. Jeanette Yu is the editorial director. Jeanette?

>> Thank you. As a Bay Area resident, as a woman, list maker, run on sentence builder, the world has often given me the space to be these things, to have a voice in all these ways. Two sentences in, I'm already acknowledging that being a run on sentence builder is the worst for public speaking. I can see it. I hope there is a nugget in the words to follow.

Two years ago, the San Francisco Symphony stepped in a new space of questioning itself, and questioning its need to be seen as having been solidly built. Elizabeth mentioned when our DEI group formed, rather than guaranteeing immediate answers, we began a wholehearted scaffolding, building with purpose. After

many months of DEI meetings, our scaffolding lies at the outer edge of a beautiful but platformed organization.

Only 1.8 of its existence, not denying its historically imperfect structure. We dedicated two years to this. We have only started recently to address our equity flaws.

We want to better scan things, laterally. There are no guarantees, but at least the opportunity to identify the good and bad construction that contributed to the unlevel foundation on which we have built on sustainably. Our DEI work became the start on functionality conversation for me as editorial director. The formation of our work group happened during an organizational shift in our content creation. A small example is our brochure, having been off loaded to outside -- we didn't question. Years ago, along business model way, this part of our story telling fell prey to scope of work over scope of what was really in play. We chose artificial efficiency over our privilege of acting on our greater artistic cultural responsibilities.

By some luck, DEI rose to the top of our conversation. Our -- 20 season brochure was written by the editorial team, and changed foundational work. We made small moves through and conversations among an expanded group of administrative colleagues at all levels. Unlike many, we had a voice and were

empowered to be intentional story tellers.

This time, ahead of our 2021 brochure, we upgrade ourselves to making contained, small moves to making, built in another level of accountability sharing the season message with our administrative colleagues as well as the full DEI work group of board, staff and musicians. We literally printed and laid out, laid it out on the table, we crossed our fingers. We didn't know if we would end up with all the papers on floor. We were looking at a season built provider to DEI considerations, but it was being heard in real time as we evolved our priorities. This was an opportunity that could not be missed.

For most of us the timing of the change will never be convenient. Many of us continue to learn how to embrace this. I loved a conversation the group had about our descriptions of programs featuring Florence Price and Beethoven. I love it did because it was said that our story telling was beautiful, but flawed. On the same page, we saw our story telling around a Beethoven program was beautiful, seemingly less flawed. Why? The questioning, even the opportunity to somebody in the room to ask why, modeled how our DEI start help us level the flaws.

After years of incomplete beauty, I believe in

our ugly scaffolds. The ceiling is cracking and I'm grateful for that. To unhide our not knowing. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much. We will hear from Margaret Tait.

>> Thank you so much. This moment in time presents us with dynamic challenges of racial inequality and violence, made all the more raw by the effect of the COVID-19 on marginalized groups. We must find the energy and commitment to work towards justice in our society. At the Symphony, we hope for more representation from the black community, in the orchestra, on the board, in management, and staff.

We want to see more people of color in our audience and volunteer groups and in the front of house. We realize we must use whatever influence and privilege we have as an organization to work towards societal change. The work in our group is very personal. It has to do with educating ourselves about race, institutional racism, about our racial history as a country, our own biases.

I have learned about white privilege and why it walks into the room before I do. We believe that this internal growth will help win authentic influence within and beyond our walls. We have -- trust, vulnerability, which is unusual in my experience, all the more

remarkable. We are all committed to the Symphony.

The conversations and exercises across what used to be barriers have brought us closer. Those us who are white and had the opportunity to see and publicly acknowledge our white privilege, and all of us have been able to share heartfelt stories. Jessica set a tone for our discussions, validating our feelings, opinions, and opens many doors.

I've rethought my own opinions, misunderstandings. During the planning process, one of our meetings' agendas changed suddenly so we could look at the draft of the next season brochure. I was moved with the document and we looked at plans for presenting new works, artists, a greater racial representation of participants, and repertoire. Several changes were made. We wanted to be completely honest about the fact that just because we had not performed a work did not mean it was new.

We also wanted to be sure to look at the brochure with an understanding of equity. Representation is one thing. We learned that through equity, is another. We worked to center around works we were not familiar with, to be sure they weren't perceived as some sort of side attraction.

There's definitely a tension between the training and performance practice, sense of perfection in

white orchestras, versus the ability to explore outside of the normal. I was not educated in world music. There's a lot of music I don't know how to play. Orchestral musicians talk about this. We realize we're specialists. We're worried that the challenges involved in expanding the repertoire could mean a loss in the quality of our performances.

I don't really know how the tension will be resolved, but if we're able to retain our curiosity, not be ashamed of our vulnerability, when we have to learn something new, we will be able to welcome fresh, exciting voices into our repertoire. As a final reflection, I was moved by something expressed in our group, especially the consideration of how very much we lose when we don't have more people of color in our organization. Do we truly want to tell the full range of American stories through music? If not, we should be honest about that. But if so, there's an abundance of opportunity ahead. Thank you.

>> Margaret, thank you so much for sharing that. I will use my time to talk about new instances of complex coexistence, and these are instances I stumbled upon that provoked a lot of thought for me.

My own journey, pushing our efforts forward, I'm the first to say I'm a very structured person. Yet the

issues are highly complex. Give me a spreadsheet, and I'm on it. But hand me the task of moving the San Francisco Symphony, a huge organization, toward becoming more diverse, I didn't know how to start.

I've had to become comfortable with things like -- agenda, unplanned emotional breakdowns and last minute 180s. The desire to impose structure on something that can't be perfectly controlled creates complex feelings. Our field has been obsessed on controlled perfection. I've learned that nothing about this work should be clean or perfect. If it is, we're probably doing it wrong. It's messy, hard, and we have to be okay with that.

Looking at orchestras like our Symphony as institutions in our society, while this one feels hard to talk about, these are the kinds of discussions we have had that were very uncomfortable but ultimately prompted a lot of learning and brought us closer together. We had a privileged institution, shaped by the systemic oppression embedded in our society's structures for centuries.

Adrienne has a beautiful way of opening my eyes to the ways orchestras like ours have been built. The reality is that white people, the demographic majority in most groups, have benefited from policies that give them more access to instruments, leisure time, and on and on.

We're a non-profit with access to wealth, have the luxury of an endowment and have become an internationally known institution in the cultural fabric of San Francisco.

Despite our position in the world of non-profits, arts organizations, we struggle with internal inequities. It's no secret that many organizations are not a case study in living and breathing equity principles. We went through a difficult, painful process of addressing just one kind of internal inequity, when we decided to undergo a comprehensive compensation study for the administrative staff. The goal was to create a tiered salary structure to eliminate inequities in how we compensate staff.

The process itself was painful. Change is hard and the emotional and labor it takes to reverse inequities is real. In our organizations, just like societal inequities, are often deeply embedded and cause us to carry on as we always have. As an organization can bring, it's our responsibility to do the emotional labor, talk about inequities and do the work itself. We still have much work ahead of as our internal conversation continues to evolve, we will make progress, one small step at a time.

I will turn it over to David Kim.

>> Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. This is my first League event. My own journey

with racism and the power of white supremacy goes back fairly early in my childhood, having grown up in a fairly traditional Korean household in the middle of the south. I went to a mostly all white all boys school, where we had no locks on the lockers, our shirt tails had to be tucked in. We had to say yes, ma'am and yes sir.

Growing up in a racism environment at home and at school, I began to resent everything about myself, my ethnicity, my sexuality, heritage. I literally remember praying many nights that I would wake up the next day as a white, hetero boy. Those were things I considered normal and most desirable. This led to tremendous insecurity and self hate.

I could not reconcile these within myself.

However, the turning point came at the end of my senior year in high school. I met a girl who asked me to hang out. We went to dinner. I ended up sitting with her for hours, talked about teenage stuff, friends, music. But we also talked about our dreams. The girl, who happened to be black, made me feel the things I was desperately seeking from my family and she did me feel valid, loved. This allowed me to begin my own journey towards self love and acceptance, which in turn allows me to love and accept others. Thank you to her, changing my life, 21 years ago.

The topic of race has become a normal conversation for me, and the people closest to me. I still have a lot of work to do. As a musician, I had had the immense privilege of being in a major Symphony orchestra, bringing people to music who listen. The work in DEI gave me a voice I don't necessarily have within my own orchestra, and not within the orchestra. I've felt valued and accepted and the trust has been something I will always cherish. Thank you to the efforts of this group to create that space.

Over the past several years, I've asked myself questions about my job, role as a musician, do I belong here, why does anyone else seem bothered by the overwhelming whiteness on stage, our hall, every corner of our building? The discussion of race, white supremacy, oppression, is not normal for orchestras. Especially for musicians. The industry is way behind. It's not just up to leadership, the musicians have a responsibility to examine the current system, as well. We all agree music is part of the human condition. We must look beyond its ability to comfort, entertainment value, the thing I hear most is, well, that's just the way it is.

That's a cop out. Ultimately, it's complicit. We start by holding ourselves accountable, taking ownership

of who we are. Normalizing conversations within our industry, because the world won't wait for us. The late poet -- once wrote, art is whatever makes you proud to be human. I leave you with the question, what does it mean to be human? Thank you.

>> Thank you for sharing, David. Now to Debbie McCoy, our governor. Debbie, over to you.

>> Thank you, Elizabeth. This is my first time participating in a League event as a speaker. I've been listening to some sessions, and thank the League for the session last week, especially, focusing on what it means to be antiblack and what is everyone's role in countering that. I'm many things in life, a black American is one of them. I have part of my family, come from the Spanish speaking Caribbean. I identify as black, and in the last few weeks, a lot has been going on, and it means a lot that the League and those involved with our music decided to speak right away about what's happening.

>> I joined the board in 2018, at the end of the year. This group had already gotten started. I knew there was an effort underway and I may be invited into it. I don't have a career focus on music in any way. Walking into a space with experts, musicians, staff members, getting to walk into a room of experts, and feel like I have a voice that matters, has been a gift entirely

of the DEI work we're doing. I sit on a few other committees. It's rare to be able to immediately bring your entire identity, like someone wants to show you if there's a place to talk about intrinsic characteristics.

I have a place to feel seen and safe. I didn't think that would be the case, and I thought, I'm not an expert of how to run a symphony. But bringing in the lens what we're doing and who we are gave me confidence and creativity. And imagination. That we can bring ourselves authentically has been the best gift and required vulnerability. The first meeting, I wondered, we have this construct, I understand this is a safe place. But could I say the risky thing? Bringing truth in the process has been beautiful. It's not possible to be vulnerable in a lot of spaces. With this group, I feel I can really say all the things on my mind, and be taken in.

What I experience with colleagues and friends is that we are unleashed to have more creative imagination, because of this effort together. Whether it's thinking about how might the world see, or idea generating, a few weeks ago, we jumped on a Zoom. We brainstormed about what might we say or do, where might we show up differently because of what we understand now about DEI? That is a gift.

When we make ourselves vulnerable, are

willing to really talk about hard things, but blessing is the ability to have new, different thoughts together.

Elizabeth, back to you.

>> Debbie, thank you so much. Now, we will hear from Nick.

>> Thank you. It feels strange to speak to you on the subject of equity, diversity, and inclusion. I don't really feel qualified to speak to racism as it's not my lived experience and I have no idea how it feels to fear the police. But I have a story to share. Promise if I make a joke, you will laugh, silently, at home.

I've been dating a wonderful woman, who happens to be black. I was at her apartment and want go for a run. I admitted I felt uncomfortable doing that in her neighborhood. This sparked an uncomfortable conversation, where I had to confront my racial bias. As a six foot three white man, I felt -- to exercise in daylight. It exasperated my girlfriend, who is going through one of the most emotionally draining weeks in her life. But I named my implicit bias. As a white man, in an interracial relationship, especially in times like these, I feel a strong desire to be an ally. It would be great if her friends saw me as such, too. Her boyfriend might be white, but he's woke.

It felt uncomfortable to admit my fear and she

felt troubled that I was afraid of her neighbors. This conversation went on for a long time. I felt more and more discomfort and wanted to yell, but, babe, I'm admitting my bias! I'm part of the solution, I'm an ally. Can I have my gold star now? Can we end this conversation? And I eventually ran outside her apartment. By that time the sun had gone down. It was dark and cold. Reflecting on the silly story brought a lot to light for me, mostly to do with my privilege.

While my discomfort about being confronted was real, it doesn't compare to the level of discomfort that millions of people in our country feel daily. For those, whites in the orchestral field, it can be hard to look at these problems. It's hard to see so few of people of color, in our rosters. It's hard to confront how fucked up this is. All the this pales in comparison to what so many people worry about every day, worried about being killed by the police. For many of us on the Zoom call, a pat on the pat, the recognition of being a good ally means relief from our temporary experience of living with the topic of racism. We can go back to thinking about which Beethoven symphonies we want to program next season, creative ways to procrastinate our practice sessions, switching off from thinking about racism is part of our privilege. My girlfriend's best friends don't get to

decide they're not afraid of the police.

This is where I've started to learn something really important. If you're separate from racial injustice, as I've been for most of my life, it can feel good enough to read a book or two, make a Facebook post, program a symphony by William Grant Still. This is the problem. Creating a more caring world needs to come from a place of love for our fellow human beings. We all know that acting from a desire to recognition is selfish. White people in white organizations trying to appear woke is not going to involve this. We must show case amazing musicians of color and speak to diversify our audience, we can't do these just to look and feel good. If we actually care for them, we will never stop this work.

My girl friend brought up a useful thought experiment. If we were to one day have children, how would I feel about them being seen by the world as black? Would my attitude toward systemic racism change? Would it make racism my problem, in a way it currently is not? This helped humanize the movement for me. Racism is an interesting topic to discuss from a distance. But it's a terrifying reality for those who live it. It's been more recently that I'm personally seeing people I care about experience those events every day.

She told me to use my platform. For now,

that's having the attention of a few orchestras for about six minutes. For you, that might mean programming your orchestra's next season, a more inclusive way, hiring that way, donating money to worthwhile causes. Holding meetings to discuss those things and asking people you love tough questions. If we don't, we can't call ourselves allies. We can't say that we stand with the black community and real allies don't care about recognition because they're too busy doing work for people they care about.

If you're white and find yourself feeling uncomfortable, you're probably doing something right.

>> Thank you, Nick. We will hear now from our board president, Sakurako Fisher.

>> Thank you. I'm president of the San Francisco Symphony, I speak from a place of both power and privilege. I also get to speak from a place where I'm a woman, and as an Asian American immigrant I have never in public strung these words together. I might secretly text it to the only other woman in the room during a meeting, but I never said them aloud.

This work has been profound work. It changed my life personally and it will change the San Francisco Symphony. We must change or we will evolve out with the dinosaurs. For the past two years, we did -- in

forests. Aspens, they have little roots building the structure underground. You don't know about what's happening -- we had COVID, like the great freeze that stopped our work. The fires of black lives matter, opened up our views, forced us to see things, just as when you walk through a burn, things that were never visible before. It's messy and charred, but you're seeing in ways you never imagined were there. Or you knew, but were not attentive to it. You see what you want to do when you're deep in the forest.

We have been skirting around the hard questions for a long time. Our work brought us to a place of deep trust where we are starting to see what that means and how it works for the San Francisco Symphony. We don't, call ourselves the one San Francisco Symphony. We used to think we were musicians, staff, board, and we all do what we're supposed to do but we were committed to the work, but never acknowledged at what cost, the fact that the only way to move our industry forward is by working together.

Because of the trust work we have done, and the language building around our document, now required as part of the orientation of new employees, it's required that our new board members read that, understand it and we talk about it. I will add white

fragility to the list of requirements for new member orientation because it has had a profound effect on me.

We are stopped, and need to finally add accountability. Does that mean we say to my CEO, your -- will be based on one part on how many hires of underrepresented, women of color, do I go to the head of all my groups and say that must be one of the measurements that we put throughout the organization? For anyone in charge of looking at bringing in a new hire, do we go to HR and say, the pool looks the same. I'm over that. You can't tell me there are other people, diverse boundaries, whether with disabilities, underrepresented minorities, women, that's a nice change in my world, to see so many women here -- we must add the layer the accountability and talk about why we don't look like our community. And it should. What does access mean? Being available, music being solace, and how it will help the world be a better place, it will only do that if it's as welcoming and equitable as we say we want it to be. It will take a lot of hard conversations, a lot of fearlessness, a lot of hurt feelings along the way. I love what our musicians here have said, it's easy for me at the top to install quotas in the board and staff but the musicians address the fear of learning new, and David says about is this art, how does

it create, relate to our humanness.

Nick is a such a diverse human, this is the most exciting thing, most heartfelt part of my work as president, it's an amazing group of people. I'm honored because they make me not afraid to say things I have sought the back door on sharing, not owning, not helping carry forward what, I'm incredibly grateful to my staff and musicians, and especially to Jessica, who held our hands.

Without her helping us not back away from hard questions, there have been tears, my heart can't hurt that much. And every time we go back, come together, it's a richer deeper conversation that continues to inform all aspects of life. With much gratitude to the DEI, to our institution for believing this is important work, we will be pushing it onward and throughout because without it, no joke, we will be dinosaurs. We will evaporate, be gone. I don't believe we have to do that. I believe we can have little roots, our forest might look different but it will be a far more interesting place with places to rest for all. Thank you.

Thank you. Our final perspective will be from our associate director of archives and records management, Adrienne Storey.

Thank you. When I was preparing for the

session, thinking about what I wanted to say, what came to me is how much active participation our leadership impacted our work so far. Social justice related work is often left to people with little to no decision making power who must have a tremendous amount of energy advocating to the leaders who have that power. We have board members, leadership team members, managers, creates a very different dynamic and it's significant to me that our CEO and board president have been highly engaged participants, and attended almost every minute of every work group meeting. I was imagining how it would be different if they were supportive, but not active participants. We would be in a much weaker position making changes.

This work can feel risky for staff members. The first time I cried in our work group meeting I was worried that I'd be looked down on for my losing my composure, being unprofessional in a work meeting. Over time, our top leaders showed vulnerability and it shows we could show emotion without losing respect. The first time I wrote an email with an orchestral critique, I was very worried about clicking send. I was afraid it would affect my relationship with the leaders I sent it to so I was very relieved to learn my perspective was valued. Identifying problems in the organization have made our work group

meaning if you mean, are critical and would be a lot riskier without that reassurance from leadership.

I talked about the process of establishing our, to do deep learning before we could come around to support the -- ratification. I witnessed -- dig into the question, we learn from various sources, including people lower in the power structure, and Mark emailed staff explaining social media posts we put out in support of the Black Lives Matter. His email named our complicity with systemic racism and our commitment to do better. I saw the post and cried because it, I was so moved having this learning process. Mark had asked that question two years ago and was willing to be a student as well as leader and I could see how his participation in our group contribute to our using our institutional voice to stand against racism, when we have historically been silent.

I hope that sharing this story assures any leaders attending the session that you don't have to have expertise to be impactful and helpful. The only thing you need is a willingness to learn. Thank you.

>> Adrienne, thank you. I want to extend my thanks all my colleagues for bravely sharing these personal, very moving reflections. We hope that everyone here in the audience, none of whom we can

see, were able to find something, in at least one story that speaks to you personally.

We will open it up to Q & A. Thank you for all being willing to share obviously personal experiences. Can you address how your findings flowing upward to senior management and the board? Both Sako and Adrienne speak to this. I will turn this to Sako to address.

>> Our Symphony is lucky because Mark and I are committed to make this happen. I get to control a certain amount of money, to be sure it continues. How do you get that going? It's a good question. I'd question any organization that shows their next leader that this was a priority. I don't know how to create that dialogue. It's an organic process. We spent a lot of time figuring out if there's a template. We were lucky in creating a diverse group, we tried, asked across the board, musicians made, had their process for choosing their, who they wanted to represent them. The board and staff, and we asked for volunteers, tried to be sure we had a cross section. On some level, there must be a few key members, especially on the board, who should be allies. There's a place now, corporations do it, other large nonprofits do it. It should be demanded, if you're not getting traction. Nothing like putting your money

where your mouth is. I will continue to push to make sure we go there but it takes everybody joining hands to actually get results. I am in a position of power and I'm fortunate. Having your voices heard now, let's start creating the conversations where we can't use work as an excuse to not go there, I'm too busy, I'm too this, too that. There are no excuses now.

>> Thank you. Another question, I work for an orchestra where the staff called in our upper management to engage in antiracism work or make a stronger statement in support of black lives. The response was, you seem to be asking us to make a statement that our organization is culpable and racist. It is not. And I will not. How can there be pressure for change when this is the response? One thing that helped us a lot, this was referenced by Adrienne, but when we began this work as a group, we were all over the place in terms of individual levels of understanding and expertise in where we were.

Something that was hugely helpful in getting everyone more on the same page was taking a step back and engaging in these intensive workshop sessions, learning together about things like identity, power, privilege, bias. Some phrases were really

controversial and hard work together, hours spent learning about these concepts, for everyone to emerge with a more common understanding. Adrienne?

>> It can be, it's so challenging when you don't have, not in a position of power and when leaders are not supportive. In my experience, that's the norm. That's why these issues are status quo, because they are in the infrastructures, people don't see the need for change, often, those in positions to make the changes.

Sometimes that's, it becomes where the work is. It's risky to advocate for changes that your leaders don't support. That's true. It's so important to do what is in your capacity, that you can take care of yourself, manage your energy around this, to advocate in ways you can. It's beyond our control when, whether leaders will buy in. It limits the ability to do this work when leaders don't support it. Point blank.

I feel for you. That's the situation in many places. That's why I encourage leaders who are listening to this to really consider how you may be able to contribute. If you're not feeling in a position of support, to consider whether you would be willing to be slightly more curious about how this work is, especially if you're hearing from people that it's important to them.

>> David was timed to speak to this question.

>> I'm sure it's a frustrating process for some orchestras. I feel that here we have had leadership that has made a point to be committed to the work. We're lucky in that respect. In my experience, as a musician, who feels, I have a voice, I have a right to speak, you must hold these people accountable. The staff and administration has to do that. The musicians have to. I've often written to my CEO and board president, in an effort to raise concerns that I felt were vital. The more people who speak up, the better chance you will have. If this is truly something you believe in. So support is also important. If you have the support of people around you, in the environment you're in, who can back you up, and individually write in their own concerns, and create a place where you feel not alone, that helps. A lot of this is about courage. To not be afraid of the hierarchy that's been well established in the industry, and I encourage you to keep speaking your mind, keep pushing. That's the only way people will come around, hopefully.

>> Thank you. Debbie?

>> The situation outlined it challenge. There is a challenge? Many institutions to advocate for different awareness. To have a little bit more careful study of my own so I can invite people into what Adrienne said. No one wants to be racist. It just turns out lots of survey

shows, nobody wants to be called a racist. They think it means you're doing something terrible, killing someone. Race is a construct. But we have to acknowledge that a description of my skin color is not just an objective description of skin color. There's a lot of meaning that's loaded into race, certainly in the American context. Some parts of Europe, also.

I think it's important to help people become curious. If race is just a description of color, why are there differences? It's a number of subtle actions, some obvious, so an invitation into framing a language, and inviting people around to be curious about how this thing happened. Help us see better that we have been in agreement with something, complicit would be one way to say it. Racism is around us. An encouragement for everyone struggling with that situation, offering different ways to draw people into curiosity.

>> Thank you. Nick will speak to this as well.

>> The question as I understand it was if you're a person of color and you don't have exactly a ton of power and freedom to speak to management, deliver difficult messages, what should you do. I don't have a good answer, but I feel compelled to say, to my fellow people who hold similar amount of privilege, I hold the privilege of being white and male and also within my

organization, being a tenured musician, which means there's nothing that I can say in meeting that will put any, my job is not going to be in danger. I encourage those of us hearing that question who have the power to speak and help those voices, our number one job should be to listen to them and leave space for them to speak and encourage when possible.

>> Thank you. I work for a large orchestra that's just now beginning to discuss our role in systemic racism and how to be anti-racist. We only posted on black out Tuesday and are starting to have meetings but currently have no planning to share an action plan with the public. What advice do you have for lower level employees to make this something we can share publicly? Adrienne?

>> I don't have a great answer, but since I shared the story about our public using our constitutional voice publicly, it's important that we not be performative. Having witnessed the process, I believe it not to be performative. If lower level employees, you must be where you are, and help your people around you grow from the point that they are now.

If that's slower than putting on an action plan in this moment, that will be more meaningful if there's deep buy in from the people who are, needing to back and

speaking to any kind of action plans, or actions you take because there's always pushback. If the leaders can't speak to the pushback, that will be different.

>> Thank you. Margaret will add something.

>> I agree with all the comments, but it's invaluable to have a consultant from the outside. We could not have come together as such a diverse group in terms of levels of power and influence without facilitation and guidance. Please take that to heart.

>> I could not agree more. We would never be where we are now without Jessica. We received wonderful questions in the chat that we could not get to, but we hope this has been thought provoking and that you will discuss these questions.

Thank you all.

>> Thank you, Elizabeth, and to every member of the team. Thank you to all who chimed in this afternoon. Wherever you are, you're not alone, in your discussions. We will work hard together. You will find others out there, ready to help and share experiences. Continue to push forward, as hard as it is.

Please take a second to complete the survey. The link is in the session description below. We thank the Mellon Foundation for their generous support of this session. Also, check your meetings in the schedule in

PheedLoop. The League is regularly adding sessions and want to be sure you don't miss out on your session. Remember to visit the online exhibit hall. You will meet great people there. We will see you in the next session, at 3:30 eastern. Thank you all. Have a thoughtful, wonderful Monday. Take good care.