



August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* featuring Cameron Knight
and Michelle Wilson
Plowshares Theatre Company (2004)

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

A REPORT ON THE HEALTH OF BLACK THEATRE IN AMERICA

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Statement of Purpose.....	2
Acknowledgements	3
Notes on Methodology	4
Introduction.....	5
Early History and Legacy	6
Summary of Study Findings.....	9
Current Demographic Trends.....	16
Conclusion	18
Timing of A Plan for Change.....	20
Strategy to Address Individual Giving	21
Successful Grassroots Fundraising Models	23
Black Theatre History Timeline	26

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Objective

To examine the current state of sustainability in Black Theatre in the U.S. in order to identify shared challenges these theaters face regardless of pedagogy, geographical location or budget size.

Goals

To propose remedies to address those challenges in order to place these institutions on stronger footing going forward.

Outcome

To develop and disseminate a national action plan for Black Theatre that will bring a greater level of stability, creativity, public awareness and support for their work and the well-being of their institutions, artists, audience and other stakeholders for the foreseeable future.

Methodology

- Interviews with a sample pool of representative Black Theatre artists and administrators across the country.
- Online survey from a larger pool of Black Theatre companies, ensembles, festivals and community groups.
- Review of several key studies from the last thirty years addressing diversity and inclusion across the arts.
- Identify the “fault lines” that exist within the cultural and financial landscape of Black Theatre
- Determine other strategies to directly address solutions to those issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank and recognize the support of The Kresge Foundation. As a 2016 recipient of one of the Kresge Artist Fellowships, I was able to invest myself into this project without the burden of earning a living. Kresge provided me with the much-needed time to do deep analysis of my life's work and reintroduce myself to the reasons why it is my calling. The Foundation gave me the opportunity to become a better artist and arts administrator.

I want to acknowledge specific persons who gave me the gift of their time, expertise and observations: Wren Brown, Pearl Cleage, Reginald Edmunds, Ben Guillory, Ron Himes, Gary Jones, Woodie King Jr., Ekundayo Bandele, Jonathan McCrory, Dafina McMillan, and Jackie Taylor. All of you helped me focus this report in a way that has resulted in a far more practical and useful document than it would have been otherwise.

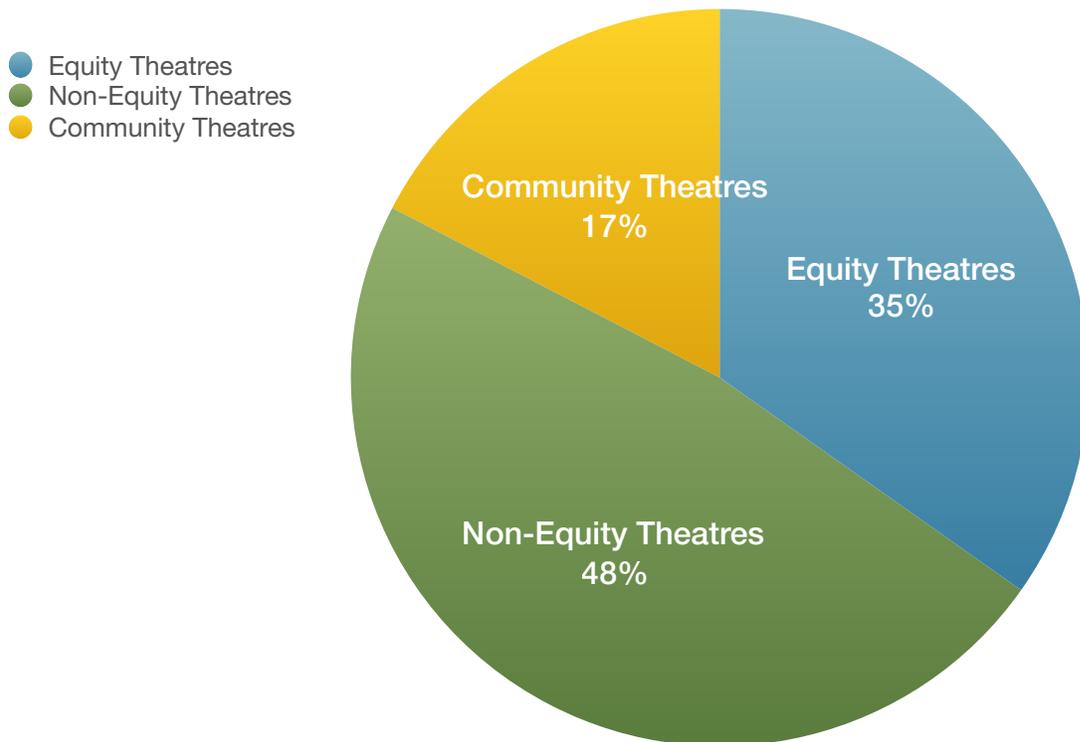
I want to thank all of those people who took the time to respond to the survey and share their information for the benefit of all. Your contributions have made this document possible.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Dr. Addell Austin Anderson. Her encouragement has been critical to my efforts in this project.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

A sample group of personal interviews with several Black Theatre administrators and artists from across the country were conducted between the months of September and December in 2016. Regional research trips to the West, East, Midwest and South were conducted in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Memphis and St. Louis.

Following the personal interviews in Fall of 2016, an invitation was sent to 70 Black Theaters, ensembles, and play festivals to participate in an online survey to collect information on their programming, organizational makeup, facility needs and marketing strategies. Additionally, research on current trends in philanthropy regarding diversity and racial equity was conducted to create context and fill in the back story of how we got here. Of the survey respondents, thirty-five percent were Equity theaters, forty-eight percent were non-Equity theaters that pay their artists and the remaining seventeen percent classified as community theaters.



INTRODUCTION

“A fish doesn’t know it swims in water.” - Derek Sivers

This study began as an effort to develop a business plan for my own theater, Plowshares Theatre Company. My original idea was to discover how other Black Theatre artists withstood the economic challenges of the last fifteen years:

- What weaknesses they feel that have impaired or are impairing their effectiveness?
- What strengths did they possess that allowed them to overcome a challenge?
- What are the obstacles to “sustainability” amongst Black Theatres.

The project became something more significant almost immediately. What this project evolved into was a deeper examination of the inherent instability of Black Theatre underpinning our sector of the nonprofit community as well as illuminating some of the causes for the instability. Regardless of where the theatre resides or its pedagogy the challenges to sustainability were remarkably consistent from region to region. Initial reactions might be that there is something inherently flawed with this particular type of theatre organization, or that the mission or group of artists cannot see themselves growing beyond a small percentage because they represent a minority interest. In actuality evidence shows there is something far more familiar and pervasive at work.

The threats impacting this sector of the American Theatre have progressed over more than 30 years and cannot be neglected any longer. The conditions that makes space for this imbalance to exist - and allows for it to continue - has to change if this situation is to improve. Rather than being the fish ignorant of its environment, we have to recognize the dynamics of these circumstances before we can address them.

This study concludes the American Theatre community has allowed a power imbalance to exist and be sustained far too long. It reveals some key findings that point to the specific challenges faced by African American artists and offers some potential solutions for addressing them.

EARLY HISTORY AND LEGACY

The first Africans to become a part of the fabric of the American tale arrived in 1619. On August 20 of that year some twenty of them were brought ashore in shackles at the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia. These twenty nameless figures and all of the other enslaved African men, women and children who would follow them, harbored and nurtured a rich and powerful culture that began transforming the developing American culture just as it was attempting to transform them. It is this original group who inspired many African American artists - such as playwright August Wilson - to create art that echoes back to them. For Wilson, the character of Aunt Ester is an ancestral touchstone for connecting 20th Century Africans in America to the first generation.

The first known African American theatre company - the African Grove Company - was founded in 1821. It was a short-lived operation, closing two years later in 1823 due in part to reporters ridiculing the idea of Blacks believing they could be actors. Reinforced by a harassing police force that would regularly break up their performances, all but one of these artists eventually relinquished their dreams of the stage. The one that didn't, Ira Aldridge, would leave his native land and become the most famous Negro Shakespearean actor of the 19th Century.

Here in America, freed men and women of color had to endure the distorted representation of their lives as depicted on the professional stage. Less than a decade after the closing of the African Grove Company, the first blackface entertainer - Thomas "Daddy" Rice - introduced his Negro impersonation act with the character "Jim Crow." This one-man song and dance routine would eventually be imitated and evolve into a more elaborate ensemble of singers, dancers and comics. Known as Minstrelsy, the entertainment form fueled the invention of a host of stereotypical depictions which remain with us today.

In 1843, Dan Emmett and his Virginia Minstrels (a white, all-male quartet) introduced what would become the Minstrel Show format to the American stage. Using burnt cork and white greasepaint, white men would darken their faces, outline their mouth in white, wear curly wigs, tuxedos and white gloves. They would perform as both Negro men and women delivering stump speeches filled with malapropisms, comedy skits, musical numbers and a sketch parody of a popular stage show. The Minstrel Show quickly became the first indigenous American entertainment form to achieve popularity during the 19th Century. Eventually, Minstrel show performers would find themselves in demand in the finest theaters in Europe. But this popular entertainment had its biggest influence in the United States. The development of the American two-man comedy team can be traced back to these shows. But the greatest impact it had on American culture is the introduction of stereotypical images of African Americans - the Coon, the Mammy, the Mulatto, the Pickaninny, and the City Slicker, among others - that can still be found in popular media today.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

Following the end of the Civil War freed men and women of color found new job opportunities opening up for them, if still in very limited fields. A group known as the Georgia Minstrels became the first African American song and dance company to earn national acclaim. Their handbills and posters would promote them as "The Real Coons." The not-so subtle advertising message being that, for the first time theatergoers were experiencing the authentic Black buffoons. African-American performers such as the Georgia Minstrels took the path of less resistance. They adopted and endorsed the distorted caricatures created by white minstrel performers as a way to make a living. Unfortunately, this would become a pattern for Black entertainers going forward.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, most Black performers seen on Broadway were performing in musicals or musical revues. Black performers had been fully accepted as musical entertainers, singing and dancing, while adopting the stereotypical caricatures whites had developed of them more than a half century earlier. These productions were primarily thinly veiled adaptations of scenarios from earlier Minstrel shows. From 1900 to 1908 two Black blackface performers, Bert Williams and George Walker, joined forces to become one of the most successful musical comedy teams of the early 20th Century. The shows were *The Sons of Ham* (1900), *In Dahomey* (1903), *Absynnia* (1906), and *Bandana Land* (1907). Williams, the light-skinned partner, wore blackface due to his superior ability to play comedy. Following the death of Walker, Bert Williams would eventually join the Ziegfeld Follies as a headliner. Although he had reached the pinnacle of career opportunities of his day - one that no other African American could even dream of - Williams was still ostracized by his fellow cast members. In fact, when the Actors' Equity Association (AEA) union began, Blacks were prohibited from joining. The night of the first AEA walkout Williams found out there was no show by walking out of this dressing room to find out why the stage manager hasn't called places only to discover he was alone in an empty dark theater.

For African Americans who sought dramatic work, plays by Black writers were few and very far between on Broadway. If they were produced, the plays had very short runs, sometimes in non-traditional venues or at later start times than regular shows. At the time, most Broadway dramas featuring African American characters were written by white authors. Examples such as Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) continued a tradition of the American theater as a place where Black life was exclusively interpreted through a white gaze.

In 1924, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL) announced the establishment of annual literary competitions in their official organs, *Crisis* and *Opportunity* magazines, respectively. For three consecutive years the contests were designed to encourage the writing of dramatic plays, essays, poetry and short stories by African Americans with cash prizes as an added incentive. The contests ended in 1927 but the effort inspired many Black authors to write for the theater. Some of these plays would eventually be published in the magazines and even produced by small

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

companies across the country. This began an effort at professionalizing and supporting Black Theatre, since it placed the creation of works by African American writers at the center.

Two years later W.E.B. DuBois published an article entitled “Krigwa Players Negro Theatre: The Story of a Little Negro Theatre Movement” in *Crisis*. This piece was a call to action providing a manifesto promoting a national movement for the founding of theaters “for, by, about and near’ African Americans all over the country. Also, in the article, “Criteria of Negro Arts,” DuBois advocated for the work of this movement to uphold the necessity for social protest. This movement was to build a theater community that placed activism at its core and served as a catalyst for change in the lives of African Americans. He inspired a huge number of poets, civil rights activist and entertainers to establish “Little Negro Theatres” all across the U.S. in any community where there was a significant interest and the potential for an audience. A watershed moment, for the first time African American artists were being called upon to tell their own story and to create their own spaces for the performance of that story. It was this call for an art form devoted to self-definition and self-determination that has motivated the need for a Black Theatre movement ever since.

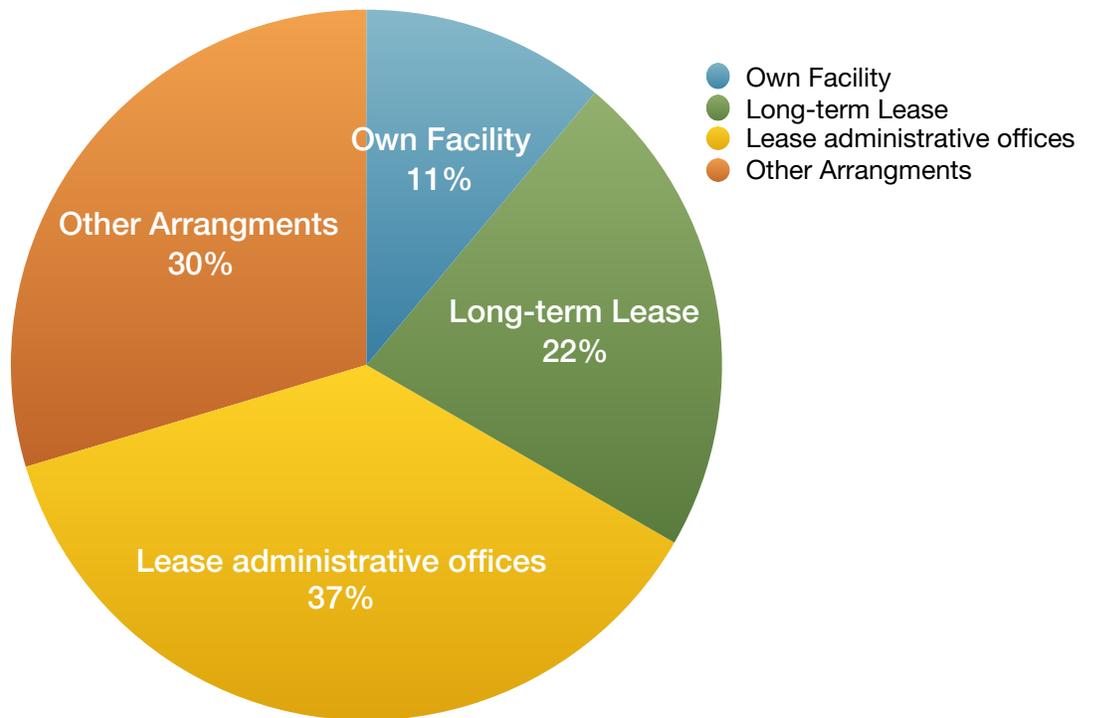
NOTE: An attached timeline will conclude the listing of historical and theatrical achievements by African Americans through 2017.

SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS

INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY

Finding 1: Only 16% of respondents owned their own facilities. Of the remaining, 32% work under a long term lease while more than half (53%) of respondents leased their administrative offices, but not their performance space. (Fig. 1)

FIG. 1 - FACILITY RELATIONSHIP

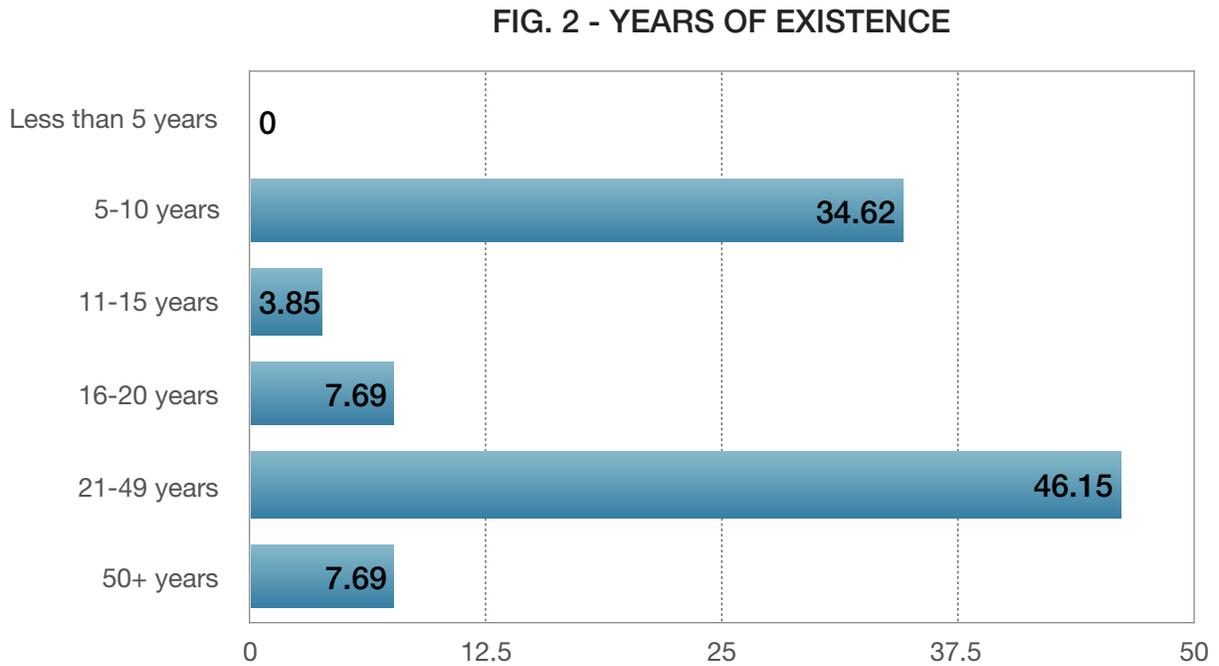


Among the thirty percent who work under other facility arrangements, the respondents answered:

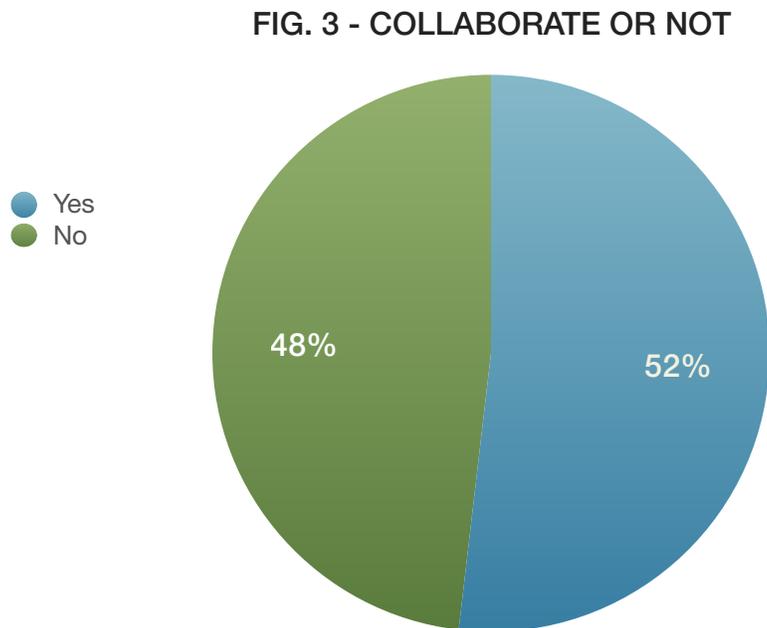
- We partner with an arts center. - 1%
- We rent various spaces as needed. - 19%
- We are under the auspices of a government agency. - 1%
- We collaborate with other theaters who have space. We have no administrative space. - 4%
- We recently lost our space to a more mainstream company with deeper pockets. We rent. - 5%

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

Finding 2: A majority of respondents - more than half - have been in existence for over 20 years. (Fig. 2)



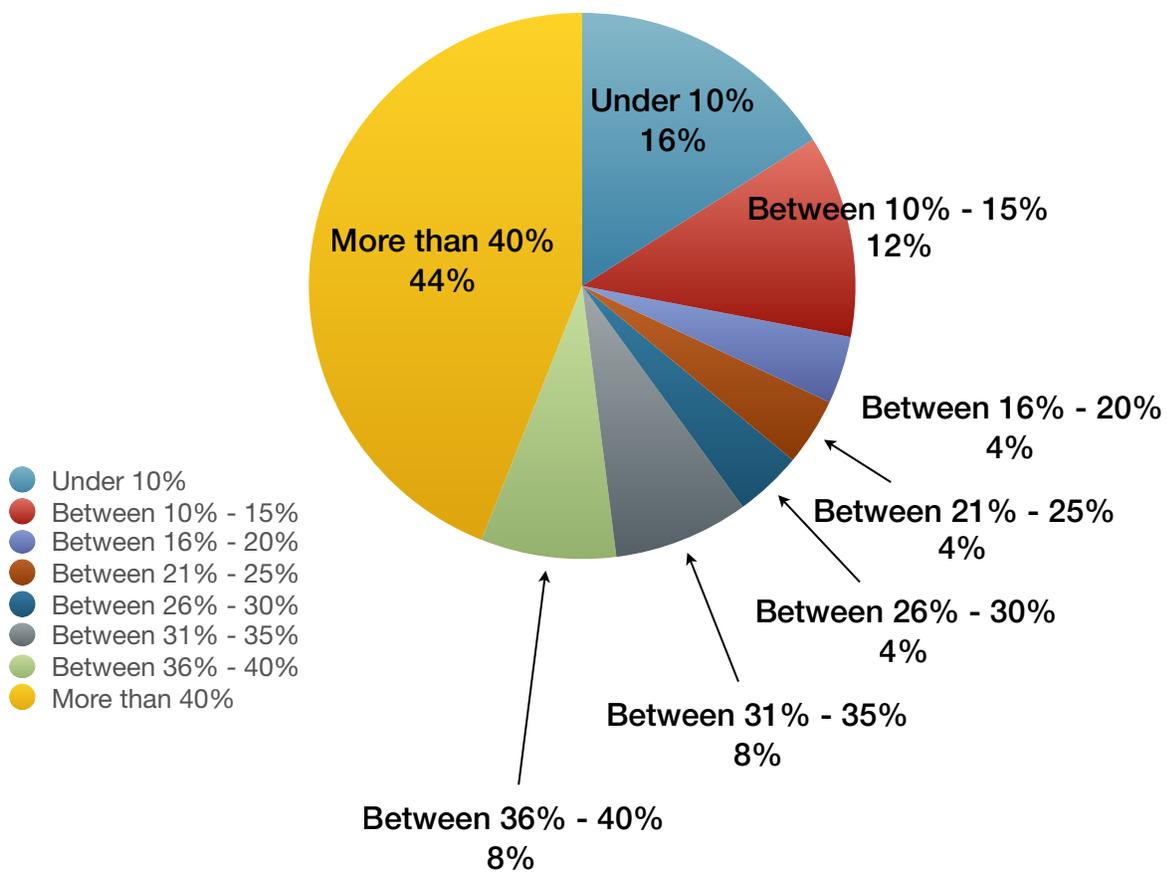
Finding 3: A majority of organizations surveyed said they collaborate or share costs on productions. (Fig. 3)



BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

Finding 4: Black Theaters depend more heavily on earned income as an aspect of their revenue than predominantly white regional theatres.¹ Almost 44% percent of respondents said ticket sales, program fees, and contracted services account for more than 40% of their operating budget. While 16% said such earnings made up somewhere between 31-40% of their budget. (Fig. 4)

FIG. 4 - EARNED INCOME



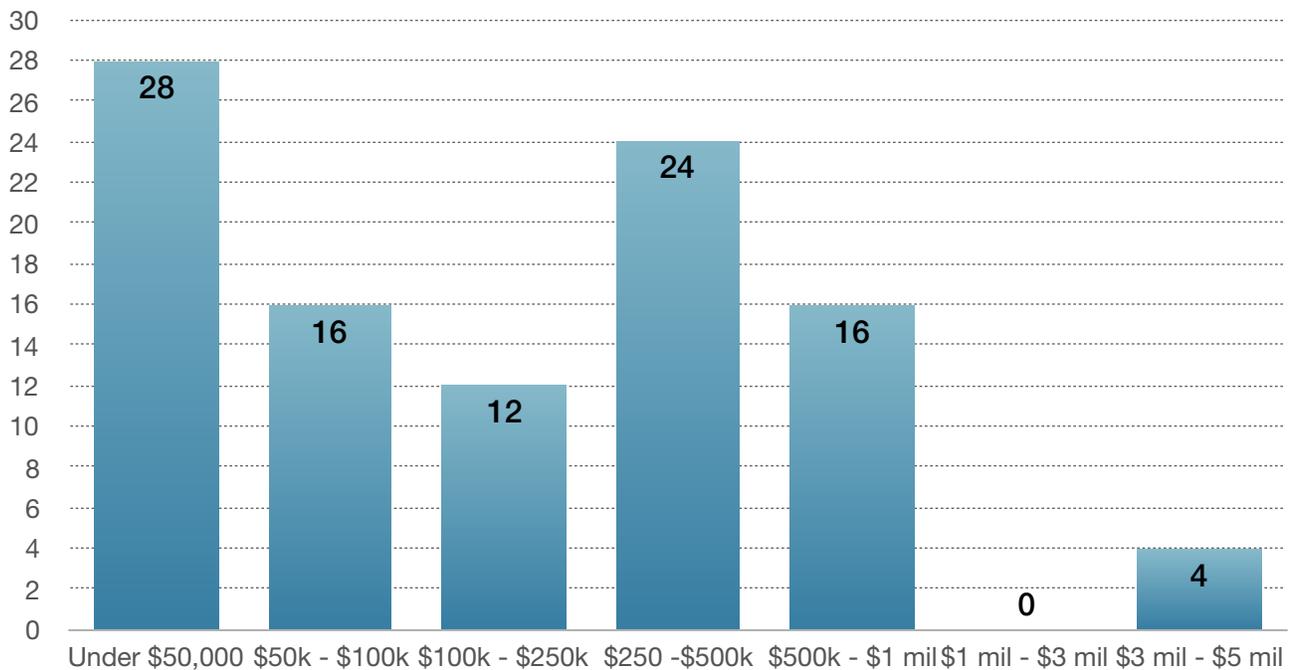
¹ SMU National Center for Arts Research, *Does "Strong and Effective" Look Different for Culturally Specific Arts Organizations?* January 2016

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

Finding 5: Government, foundation and corporate funding make a larger portion of the operating budgets of Black Theatres than predominantly white institutions. Revenue from grants and corporate support comprise more than 20% of the annual operating capital.²

Finding 6: Roughly 56% percent of respondents had a operating budget somewhere between \$50,000 and 250,000. Of the remaining, 24% percent had budgets between \$250,000 and \$500,00, 16% percent \$500,000 and \$1 million. and 4% percent of respondents had budgets between \$3 and \$5 million dollars. (Fig. 5)

FIG. 5 - BUDGET SIZE



■ Percentage of Black Theatres in Budget Categories

² Ibid.

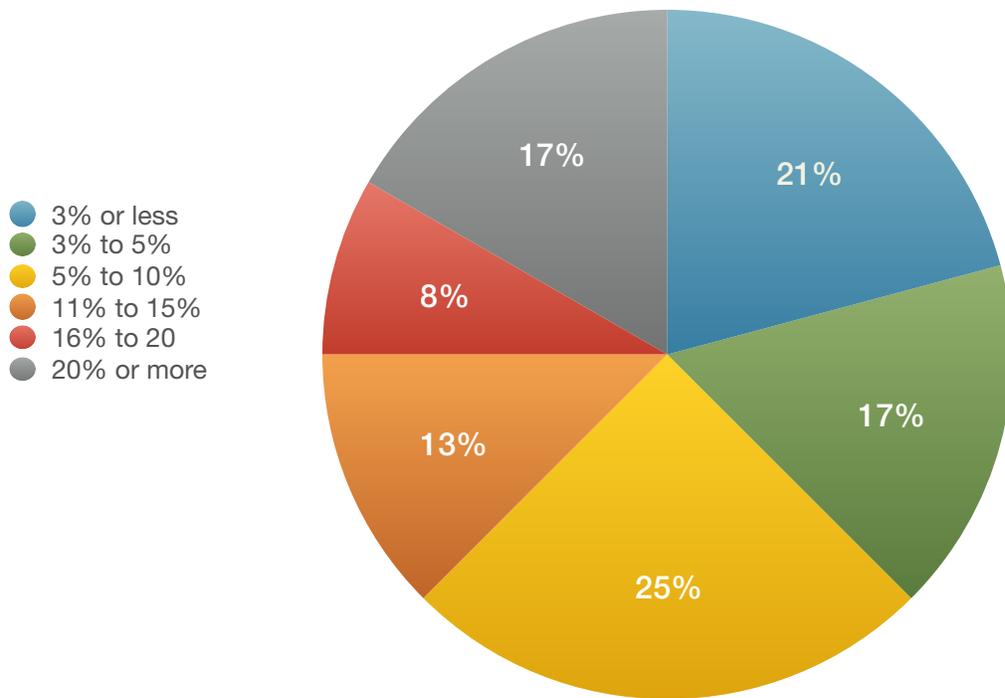
BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

FUNDING

Finding 7: Exactly 84% of all respondents cited fund development as the #1 focus area they wished for assistance to address.

Finding 8: Exactly 63% of all respondents said individual donations make up 10% or less of their operating capital. 21% of those respondents said individual donations made up less than 3%. Finally, only 17% could show financial statements where individual donations made up 20% or more. (Fig. 6)

FIG. 6 - INDIVIDUAL GIVING



Finding 9: Since 1991 the foundation community has sponsored efforts designed to help diversify the audiences and workforce in the arts by developing funding initiatives to inspire inclusion strategies for programming and hiring practices. In the American Theatre these initiatives have primarily been targeted at large predominantly white nonprofit institutions (PWI).

Finding 10: In spite of significant resources invested into efforts to diversify white regional theaters for almost thirty years, the employment statistics in nonprofit and commercial theaters show little-to-no change. Moreover, additional evidence

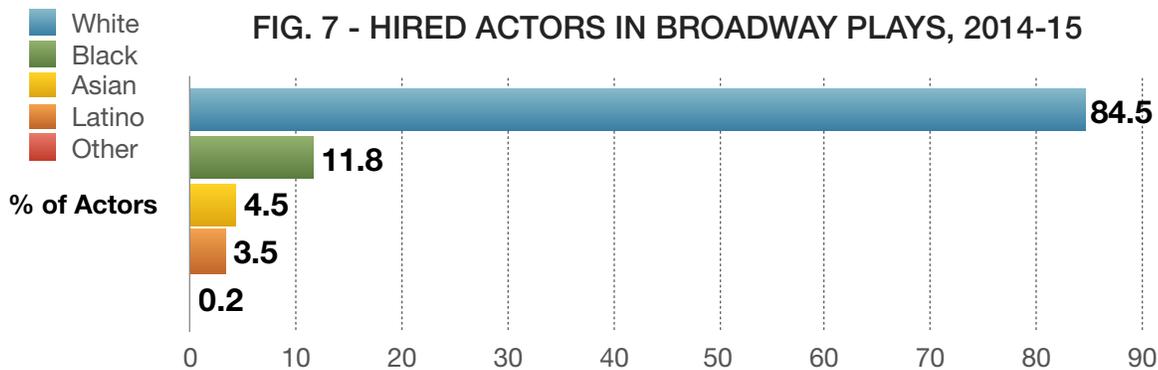
BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

shows no real progress in the composition of key staff members and boards, audiences or programming amongst predominantly white organizations.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND CULTIVATION

Finding 11: A 2017 national diversity study conducted by Actors' Equity Association (AEA), the professional union for actors in America and Canada, analyzed acting contracts from 2013 to 2015. The study found the majority of the 63,603 acting and stage management contracts went to white men. Additionally, the study found women regularly commanded lower salaries than men paid.³

Finding 12: In a report conducted by The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) that tracks the racial demographic data for Broadway and Off-Broadway casting since 2011 showed that white actors are hired eight times more often than Black actors on and off Broadway⁴. At the conclusion of the 2014-15 season, the season *Hamilton* premiered on Broadway, the numbers were as follows: (Fig. 7)



Finding 13: Since 2001, each Black-authored play presented on Broadway, or at the Public and the Lincoln Center Theatres, have been developed and produced by a predominantly white theatre institution or producing entity. Only two of those plays received early development at a Black Theater: *Jitney* by August Wilson was originally developed at Penumbra Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota and Lydia Diamond's *Stick Fly* premiered at Congo Square Theatre in Chicago.

Finding 14: Although 78% of respondents produce new plays, very few of these new works receive one or two additional productions. This reduces the profitability of the playwrights when developing a play with a Black Theatre. Also, this is much less

³ *White Men Get Majority of U.S. Acting Jobs, AEA Study Finds* American Theatre Magazine June 29, 2017

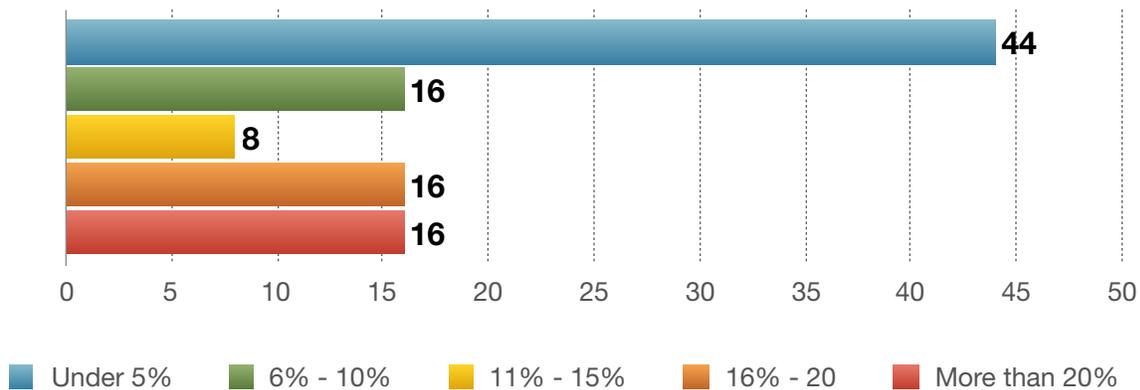
⁴ *Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages 2014-2015* The Asian American Performers Action Coalition April 2016

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

than the average five-to-seven subsequent productions a Black author may receive if his or her play premieres with a white regional theater.

Finding 15: In spite of the fact that 74% of respondents said they have an arts education or youth theatre program, almost half of them (44%) devote only 5% or less of their operating budget to such programming. (Fig. 8)

FIG. 8 - % OF BUDGET DEVOTED TO ARTS ED/YOUTH THEATRE



MEDIA AND AUDIENCE AWARENESS

Finding 16: Overall, 64% of all respondents cited crafting an effective marketing plan as their second most important priority, while 62% identified creating a social media campaign was the third priority most respondents chose.

Finding 17: Traditional media (i.e., TV, radio and print), on both the national and local levels, have repeatedly reduced or eliminated their arts coverage in the last 30 years. This has led to fewer outlets the general public can access for arts-related information.

Finding 18: Three-quarters of all respondents stated having difficulty receiving regular coverage - i.e., preview articles, interviews or reviews - for their programming even among media outlets that traditionally target 1) African Americans or 2) arts-inclined audiences.

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Key U.S. Census Bureau Demographic Information

According to information from the U. S. Census Bureau⁵:

- Between 2008 and 2016, the percentage of the U.S. population that classifies itself as White or Caucasian and Christian shrunk from 54% to 47%.
- By 2020 the majority of American children – those under 18 – will be either of African, Asian, Latino or Native descent.
- White Millennials will be the last generation of white Americans to benefit from a simple numerical population superiority.
- By 2042 no one racial group will hold a numerical majority in the United States.

Since the 1980s, accommodating hiring policy changes have been devised in order to address these demographic shifts. Such ambitious programmings as Non-traditional or color-blind casting - casting women and or a person of color in a role traditionally written to be played by a white male - were advocated by Actors' Equity Association (AEA) and others to address inequities in hiring. In spite of such efforts employment statistics have shown little to no changes. According to Richard Florida, almost three-quarters (73.8 percent) of all creative class jobs nationwide are held by white (non-Hispanic) workers, compared to about nine percent (8.5 percent) by African Americans.⁶

In June 2017, AEA released the findings of their diversity study that analyzed the makeup of actors and stage managers nationally from 2013 to 2015. It found that, white men made up the majority of all acting and stage management contracts, out of 63,603 contracts. In addition, women regularly commanded lower salaries than men. The racial breakdown for principal actors was as follows: Caucasians at 67 percent, African Americans at 9 percent, Latinos or Hispanics at 2 percent, and Asians at 2 percent. The 20 percent balance either chose other or declined to identify their ethnicity. For principal roles in musicals, Caucasians held 71 percent, African Americans had 8 percent, Latinos or Hispanics had 2 percent, and Asians had 2 percent. Again, the balance declined to choose to identify. There are even fewer people of color in stage management positions, with Caucasians at 74 percent, African American at 2 percent, Latinos or Hispanics at 3 percent, and Asians at 1 percent.⁷

⁵ Projections of the Size and Composition of U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060, Population Estimates and Projections, Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, March 2015

⁶ Citylab , The Atlantic Magazine, Richard Florida *The Racial Divide in the Creative Economy*, May 9, 2016

⁷ White Men Get Majority of U.S. Jobs, AEA Study Finds, American Theatre Magazine, June 29, 2017

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

These changing demographics paint a nation that has two options for its future: embrace the representation and cultural expression of people who reflect this change or slowly morph into a national arts community that resembles the power dynamics of South Africa during apartheid. We would become a two-tiered theatre industry where a clear dividing line would be drawn separating institutions solely delineated by race. A theater industry where financial resources, media attention and jobs are clotted in the top-tier organizations. American Theatre would remain separate and unequal.

Today, inclusion initiatives and attempts to improve hiring statistics for artists of color have failed to appreciably move the needle in the positive. For every exceptional situation where an artist of color has found work - such as *Hamilton* - there remains an 8-to-1 advantage white actors have over the random actor of color. Administrators of color who are put into associate or deputy positions below senior management are tasked with masking the reality that American Theatre has become no more progressive on race and inclusion than their fathers and grandfathers. The myth of a "post-racial America" has been largely dispelled. And there seems to be a growing awareness among many sociologists that "colorblindness" of any kind - including color blind casting - does more to entrench racial disadvantage rather than rectify it.⁸

Due to the lack of sufficient media coverage, poor public awareness and precarious financial support Black Theatres endure under a deliberate system of imbalance. They find stiff competition from predominantly white institutions who can offer higher wages, greater attention that can lead to future work. When a regional Black Theatre seeks to hire top-line African American talent they might find those artists unavailable. For the royalties for well-known Black-authored plays, a Black Theatre can find itself denied for several seasons in a row on the mere possibility that a white regional Theatre might be interested in producing the same show sometime in the near future. The royalty companies such as Samuel French or Dramatists Play Publishing will always favor the organization that can pay greater royalties. This imbalance is structural. It has to be addressed with structural solutions.

This report does not advocate abandoning all inclusionary efforts. Rather, the study showcases the ineffectiveness of achieving the desired goals of racial equity representation and increased opportunities for Black people within the American Theatre working in those institutions dedicated to the creativity of Black people. Greater equity and inclusion of African American artists cannot hinge on us convincing white institutions to tell our stories. If true inclusion is the desired outcome, then the best way to achieve it is for corporate and private funders to support and assist in scaling up the capacity of institutions of color, specifically Black Theatres, to develop African American artists. We need greater access to resources, greater financial support and greater public exposure. Otherwise, the problems of inequity and disenfranchisement that exists today will continue to plague us as we go forward.

⁸ Color-Blindness Is Counterproductive by Adia Harvey Wingfield, The Atlantic, September 13, 2015

CONCLUSION

The harsh reality is that sustaining of a Black Theatre – or any other ethnically-specific arts organization – does not exist in some kind of cultural vacuum divorced from the constraints of this country’s 400+ years of discrimination and disenfranchisement suffered by people of color. To paraphrase Ta-Nehisi Coates, you cannot create and sustain a society that doles out favors based on class, nationality and ethnicity over two hundred fifty years of slavery, ninety years of Jim Crow, sixty years of separate but equal and some thirty-five years of discriminatory economic policy, and expect the current generation to soar.

If we expect the primary patrons and donors for Black Theatres to be African Americans - which is the case based on the response from this study - then their institutional sustainability is linked to the financial stability of African Americans in this economy. Therefore, without acknowledging the statistical facts that African-Americans a) are paid less than their white counterparts for the same job, b) have build up less accumulated wealth from generation to generation, and c) have suffered centuries of discriminatory government and corporate policies that stopped them from doing so, you cannot talk about sustainability of Black Theatre.

As Coates says, “Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole.” A portion of that moral debt is the inequity of opportunity and advancement existing within our nonprofit cultural industries.

As theater people we should recognize the importance of narrative. How we interpret circumstances and tell a story depends on perspective. It’s critical we remember that HOW you tell a story is equally as important as the CONTENT and THEME of that story. Currently, the impression is that Black Theatre, as a sector of the National American Theatre, is a weak and dying segment due in part to poor business practices, a lack of adequate financial support, and stiff competition from predominantly white regional theaters that are cultivating a new generation of successful Black playwrights, directors, actors and other administrators. Once again, the white savior rides to the rescue because Blacks can’t do for themselves.

This is similar to the way we talk about inclusion and diversity in the arts. In this way, support for such policies are based more on the presumption of paternalism and “generosity” from white arts organizations. But this is a false narrative. For one reason, hiring practices still overwhelmingly favor white artists over artists of color, as has been stated earlier. This shouldn’t continue exists at the same time funders are throwing massive amounts of money at those same institutions in order to diversity. The reality denies the effectiveness of this strategy.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

The other theory, the generosity of white institution to open their doors to artists of color - no matter how little - can't be sustained overtime. Eventually, enlightened self-interest will intervene and experiments with inclusion will be reduced or eliminated. It has happened at The South Coast Repertory with their Hispanic Playwrights Project and at the Center Theater Group with their playwrights units for Blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans. All gone as soon as the funding dried up. The rubber band of inclusion will only stretch just so far. Eventually, due to shifting priorities, leadership changes or a downturn in the economy, there will be a recoiling. This is when the generosity of inclusion will give way to the realities of self-interest and survival for the white institution. It has happened in the past. It will happen again and again, in the future if we continue to pursue that course of action.

When you examine the current condition of Black Theatre in this country we need to refrain from framing the current circumstances as some beleaguered aspect of the field with a handful of stronger organizations and a broad field of failing institutions. Yes, there are critical fault lines that exist within the field but they are not insurmountable if addressed soon. This line of thinking leads to a call to action among foundations to save only the strongest by "culling the herd" and eliminating funding to the weakest organizations. Such was the framing argument as presented by Michael Kaiser in his September 2015 report from the DeVos Institute. This is not a cure. It's a prescription for stunting greater diversity within the American arts community in order to secure the current funding imbalance that favors predominantly white arts organizations. It's a prescription for creating white gatekeepers for the next generation of artists and administrators of colors.

Therefore, I argue that efforts to create greater racial equity in arts funding and a more balanced representation within the American Theatre, specifically, are best served by raising the scale and profile of theater companies with a culturally-specific missions, i.e., Black Theaters, Latino Theaters, Asian-American Theaters and Native Theaters. The dramatic demographic changes going on in America makes this the more plausible strategy for the future. Census data indicates we live in a world that is rapidly becoming more ethnically diverse than the one my generation inherited.

It's our job to prepare the way for a nation where conversations of diversity, equity and inclusion are ancient history. More specifically, to improve the state of Black Theatre we need to improve the level of financial support for Black Theatre, build greater awareness of the genre among the general public, and increase representation of Black artists in theatre. The solution is a combination of self-determinative strategies, including - but not limited to - increase the percentage of charitable gifts from individuals so as to improve financial stability, Black Theatres reclaiming the responsibility of cultivating new Black-authored works and new Black artists, and finally, addressing the effectiveness of foundation and corporation giving programs that claim to want to improve inclusion or diversity but really perpetuate the status quo of arts funding. If we tackle these problems we can stop having conversations about survival.

TIMING OF A PLAN FOR CHANGE

To build the scope, infrastructure and enthusiasm for such a nationwide fundraising and marketing effort, at least 18-months to two years running time would be required for 1) getting buy-in from African-American theater leaders and administrators, 2) informing funders, corporate leaders, political figures and other stakeholders, and 3) planning and organizing. In considering when to have an official kickoff I would suggest August 20, 2019 to be followed by series of special events throughout the following twelve months. My reasons are multi-folded:

- August is already designated Black Philanthropy Month although few are aware of this designation.
- The first week of August is usually the date for the biennial National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, NC. The next Festival will be held in 2019.
- August 20, 2019 will mark the 400th anniversary of the first 20 Africans brought to the British colony in Jamestown VA in 1619. Playwright August Wilson referenced this group of African ancestors with the creation of the character Aunt Ester who was supposedly a link back to this group.
- August is a month that traditionally has little to no activity on the fundraising calendar. The lack of competing interest is one of the reasons why the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge of 2014 was so successful.

For these reason and more, I would recommend a kickoff event beginning in August of 2019.

STRATEGY TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL GIVING

To attack the current low level of individual giving to Black Theaters it is recommended that national fundraising campaign be established. This campaign could be similar to the UNCF Annual Campaign, #GivingTuesday or Broadway Fights AIDS. If successful, Black Theatre companies would be asked to commit to an annual national effort specifically targeted to increase individual donations.

Such a successful fund development campaign has to identify *Growth* as its key strategy orientation. A growth strategy is best characterized as a dynamic action plan, seeking to attack an audacious goal. The underwriting and financial stabilizing of America's Black Theaters is such a goal. Primarily, the plan would focus on generating low, entry-level gifts from new donors to each theater participating, but it must be incorporated into a fully integrated and diversified development plan. Major gift development strategies from corporations, foundations and individuals, as well as a legacy or planned giving program, are essential for long-term stability during this growth period.

Circulating dollars into Black-owned businesses is critical to sustaining those businesses—it enables them to keep their doors open. The reinvestment of funds into Black businesses presents not only an opportunity for those businesses but also gives them the ability to employ other African Americans.

It is recommended grassroots fundraising strategies needs to include direct mail, internet fundraising, special event(s), merchandising and media. Each technique has its benefits and pitfalls, but all are more successful when incorporated in an integrated strategy. Two case study models are provided for examination: Broadway Cares and the United Negro College Fund. In the case of UNCF, it has a diversified and well-integrated fundraising program. It has developed a broad base of support nationally, and the fundraising cost-per-dollar raised ratio is reasonable.

Best practices that should be adopted by each participating theater include the ability to articulate a clear mission and case for support, a strong national identity enhanced by aggressive branding efforts, efficient administration supporting a development plan with measurable results, and the building of partnership relationships in local communities with clear understanding and responsibilities.

Unrestricted gifts from individuals are a critical strategic focus. Successful grassroots efforts include a diversity of activities from special events to e-merchandising to direct mail in an integrated approach. New donor acquisition would be the primary goal of grassroots fundraising.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

The essential elements for long-term fundraising success must exist or be cultivated throughout each participating theater. These include market-oriented programs and services; well-informed constituencies capable of and willing to serve the mission; a well-defined workable fundraising plan that can be monitored, evaluated, and adapted; dedicated leadership, staff and boards, and other volunteers willing to work, to give, and to ask others to give; and a high level of professional accountability and prudent stewardship.

SUCCESSFUL GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING MODELS

EXAMPLE #1: BROADWAY CARES/EQUITY FIGHTS AIDS

Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS is one of the nation's leading industry-based HIV / AIDS fundraising and grant-making organizations. We fund the social service work of The Actors Fund and award grants to AIDS service organizations nationwide. With your help, what we do together makes a difference.

MISSION

To mobilize the resources of the entertainment industry to raise funds to provide grants to AIDS service organizations and promote awareness of HIV / AIDS issues.

FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

Financial information in this report is derived from the organization's 2015 Form 990.

Revenue	
Assets	\$3,207,809
Income	\$21,253,773
Expenses	\$20,864,910
Liabilities	\$3,320,310

EXAMPLE #2: UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) is the nation's largest and most effective minority education association, UNCF is national in scope and impact. It has awarded thousands of scholarships to students from all fifty states to attend over 900 colleges and universities across the country. Its 37 member colleges are located in ten southern states, Texas and Ohio.

MISSION

Since UNCF was founded in 1944, opportunities for African American and other minority youths have increased dramatically. But the national need for minority education has proven as timeless as UNCF's motto, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" Far too many African American and other minority students still lack the financial and other support or the rigorous pre-college education they need to gain admission to and succeed in college.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

It is to the success, in school and beyond, of these young men and women that UNCF is dedicated, as much today as it was when it was founded.

FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

Financial information in this report is derived from the organization's 2016 Form 990.

Revenue	
Assets	\$873,406,884
Income	\$250,300,346
Expenses	\$180,253,042
Liabilities	\$49,579,435

FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES

Special Events

Area offices conduct one or two events annually as part of their overall development plan. Often, if there are two events one is at the high end (i.e., Black & White Ball in Chicago) and the other a grassroots effort (i.e., Walk for Education in Los Angeles). The national office is discouraging more than that, and the organization reduced the number of annual events to 50 in 2006. They refocused volunteers to other events and the individual giving program.

There are three criteria for the national office to approve an event:

1. Net revenue greater than \$50,000.
2. Cost ratio of less than 30%; and
3. \$650,000 raised per full-time employee dedicated to the event.

These are benchmarks that have been developed and are now evaluation targets.

Direct Mail

UNCF has a traditional approach to direct mail solicitation. They don't use names or lists from their member universities, nor do schools provide the names of alumni. They do not solicit direct scholarship recipients.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

Direct Mail efforts are principally focused on prospecting. UNCF has recently engaged a new online partner to integrate internet solicitation in support of direct mail efforts.

Workplace Giving

Workplace giving campaigns are a significant strategic focus and area of potential for UNCF.

BLACK THEATRE HISTORY TIMELINE

- 1513 *Born in West Africa around 1480, Juan Garrido, a freeman and veteran conquistador, is the first documented African person to arrive in the Americas as the first African conquistador. In 1513, he joined Diego Velazquez de Cuéllar and the legendary Juan Ponce de León in the colonizations of Cuba and Puerto Rico, respectively. Then, in 1513, he joined de León's well-known expedition to Florida in search of the Fountain of Youth, when he became the first known African to arrive in this country.*
- 1519 *Freeman Juan Garrido is among the invading Spanish conquistadors that enter Mexico along with Hernando Cortés. The expedition would go on to lay siege to the Aztec empire.*
- 1619 *To satisfy the need for more cheap or free labor in the rapidly growing North American colonies, white European settlers turned away from indentured servants (mostly poorer Europeans) to a more plentiful labor source: African slaves. Beginning around 1619, when a Dutch ship brought some 20 Africans ashore on August 20 at the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia, slavery spread quickly through the American colonies. Though it is impossible to give accurate figures, some historians have estimated that 6 to 7 million slaves were imported to the New World during the 18th century alone.*
- 1680's – 1710 *Development of the plantation system in Colonial America*
- a. *House slaves and field hands represented the 2 main divisions of labor.*
 - b. *Slaves retained elements of their African heritage in music, dance, oral traditions, and religion.*
- 1754 – 1763 *The French and Indian War.*
- 1775 – 1783 *American Revolutionary War*
- 1790 *U.S. pop. = 3,929,214 African Americans = 19.3 % of total pop.*
- 1795 *One of the first stereotypical African Americans fictional characters to be portrayed on stage was **Sambo**. He was played by a white actor in John Murdock's *The Triumph of Love*. Until the early 1930's, it was more common for whites to play African Americans characters in blackface.*
- 1821 -1823 *The first known African American theatre company, African Grove Company was organized in New York City by Mr. Brown, company manager, with James Hewlett as a leading actor. The first black-produced, directed and performed by was *King Shotaway* by Mr. Brown. The company was shut down by New York thanks in part to articles written by Manuel Noah ridiculing the seriousness of African American actors.*

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- 1832 Thomas “Daddy” Rice introduced his Negro impersonation act with the character Jim Crow in New York. This song and dance routine is the precursor of Minstrelsy.
- 1843 Dan Emmett and his Virginia Minstrels (a white quartet) introduced the minstrel show format to the American stage. The Minstrel show becomes America’s most popular entertainment form during the 19th Century. It influenced American comedy going forward. Minstrelsy establishes stereotypes of African Americans that can still be seen in popular media today.
- 1852 *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* – adapted from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel for the stage by George Aiken – begins an unprecedented unbroken tour run of 80 years.
- 1861 – 1865 *U. S. Civil War*
- 1863 *The date January 1, 1863 is usually considered the day the Emancipation Proclamation officially took effect, however, Lincoln first proposed the idea of such an action to his cabinet in the summer of 1862. It was designed as a war measure to cripple the Confederacy. Lincoln surmised that if the slaves in the Southern states were freed, then the Confederacy couldn’t use them as laborers to support the army in the field, thus significantly damaging the Confederate war effort. On September 22, 1862, following the Battle of Antietam, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued, this preliminary proclamation would go into effect three months later on January 1, 1863.*
- 1865 *13th Amendment to the Constitution abolishes slavery.*
- 1865 – 1866 The Georgia Minstrels become the first African American song and dance company to earn national acclaim. They are billed as “The Real Coons.”
- 1866 - *Following the abolishment of slavery, and during the Reconstruction, America saw the rise of white supremacy groups and campaigns to disenfranchise African Americans via the law, violence and fear.*
- 1877 Black manager Charles Barney Hicks and 19 African-American minstrel performers set sail for Australia to tour as “The Far-famed Original Georgias.” Whereas the mainly white U.S. minstrel market is hostile to black artists, other English-speaking countries are both less racially biased and not oversaturated with minstrel acts. The company tours Australia and New Zealand for three years before returning home.
- 1890 Sam T. Jack organized *The Creole Show*, a revue of 16 African American female dancers that ran in Chicago and New York, including a yearlong run at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair.
- 1896 *U.S. Supreme Court case Plessy vs. Ferguson decision approved “separate but equal” public and private facilities.*

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- 1898 The two plays premiered that were considered to be the first African American musicals to break from the minstrel format. They were:
- a. *Clorindy; the Origin of the Cakewalk* by Will Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar
 - b. *A Trip to Coontown* by Bob Cole and Billy Johnson.
- Both shows were performed in nontraditional spaces and featured amateur talent.
- 1900 – 1908 Bert Williams and George Walker, become one of the most successful musical comedy teams of the early 20th Century. The shows were *The Sons of Ham* (1900), *In Dahomey* (1903), *Absynnia* (1906), and *Bandana Land* (1907). Williams, the light-skinned partner, wore blackface due to his superior ability to play comedy.
- 1910-1917 Over an eight-year period beginning in 1910 there is an obvious absence of African American performers on the Broadway stage. In comparison to the number of Broadway shows featuring African American talent that were presented during the first decade of the 20th Century this complete absence call attention to itself, yet, it's never been explained.
- 1909 *NAACP was founded. W.E.B. Dubois served as the organization's only African American officer.*
- 1914 – 1918 *World War I (USA entered the war in 1917)*
- 1920 - 1935 The New Negro period (a.k.a. The Harlem Renaissance) reached its peak. During these years, African American art, music, theater and literature reaches new level of popularity.
- 1920's – 1930's The "Chitlin Circuit" is formed by the production of many African American touring shows and acts promoted by the Theatre Owners Booking Associations (TOBA). TOBA served more than 80 theaters in the industrialized North and cities throughout the South. Though it provided opportunities for many African American performers, TOBA was often condemned for poor pay and abuse of the performers.
- 1921 Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle's musical, *Shuffle Along*, helped to promote the vogue of Negro Art and revived interest in the production of all-Black musicals.
- Shuffle Along's* contributions to American Theatre:
- a. Influenced contemporary dance by popularizing the Charleston.
 - b. Influenced the style of musical theatre composition with such songs as "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and Honey Suckle Rose.
 - c. Introduced a serious Black male- female love relationship to Broadway.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- 1923 Chicago's Ethiopian Art Players perform Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* the first drama produced on Broadway written by an African American.
- 1924 *To promote the writing of plays by African American authors, Crisis magazine (NAACP) and Opportunity magazine (National Urban League) offered cash prizes as part of their literary competitions. The contest ended in 1927. Some of the plays were published in the magazines.*
- 1925 *Alain Locke publishes The New Negro, and advocates the Art-Theatre School.*
- Ethel Waters becomes the first Black woman to star as a single act at the Palace Theater on Broadway.
- 1926 W.E.B. DuBois' article, "Krigwa Players Negro Theatre: The Story of a Little Negro printed in Crisis magazine. This manifesto promotes a national movement of theaters "for, by, about and near' the African Americans. Also, DuBois advocates for the work of this movement to uphold the necessity for protest in an additional article "Criteria of Negro Arts."
- 1929 - 1942 *The imbalance between the rich and the poor, with 0.1 percent of society earning the same total income as 42 percent, combined with production of more and more goods and rising personal debt, could not be sustained. On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed, triggering the Great Depression, the worst economic collapse in the history of the modern industrial world. It spread from the United States to the rest of the world, lasting from the end of 1929 until the early 1940s. With banks failing and businesses closing, more than 15 million Americans (one-quarter of the workforce) became unemployed.*
- 1935 -1939 During the Great Depression, the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) of the Works Progress Administration created Negro Units in 22 cities including New York, Washington D.C., Detroit, and Chicago. They employed 850 African Americans, many of whom were new to the theater. Credited with training many artists and technicians.
- 1939 - 1945 *World War II (USA entered the war in 1941)*
- 1940 -1949 Abram Hill and Frederick O'Neal founded Harlem's American Negro Theater in order to fill the void left by the FTP. It served as the training ground for many prominent actors and writers (Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Isabel Sanford, Earle Hyman, Alice Childress, and Harry Belafonte).
- 1950's *The Modern Civil Rights Movement brings the inequities of America's segregated society to the awareness of the general public and the forefront of national policy discussion. With the advent of television evidence of the brutality began to flood into America's living rooms In 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court ruling in the Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka KS case renounced "separate but equal" public and private facilities, making desegregation the law of the land.*

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- 1950 Juanita Hall became the first Black woman to win a Tony Award. She won the Best Supporting Actress in a Musical Award for portraying Bloody Mary in the original Broadway production of *South Pacific*.
- 1954 *Trouble in Mind* by Alice Childress looks at the unequal treatment of African American actors during the rehearsal of a play. A Broadway run is proposed for 1958 but is cancelled due to the reluctance of the writer to make changes in the script.
- 1959 Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* became the first Broadway drama written by an African American writer and directed by an African American.
- 1962 Diahann Carroll breaks through to become the first African American woman to win the Tony Award's Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical for Richard Rodgers' *No Strings*.
- 1964 LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) heralds the beginning of a more militant Black Revolutionary Theatre Movement with his one-act drama *Dutchman*. This period reflects a surge in African American consciousness and pride. It is informed a Nationalistic perspective. The following year, Jones/Baraka creates the Black Arts Repertory Theatre to present his works and those of other revolutionary writers. Although short-lived, BART inspired many imitators across the country.
- 1964 *The Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on July 2, prohibited discrimination in public places, provided for the integration of schools and other public facilities, and made employment and housing discrimination illegal. It created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to ensure fair hiring practices, and established a federal Community Relations Service to assist local communities with civil rights issues. The bill also authorized the US Office of Education to distribute financial aid to communities struggling to desegregate public schools. This document was the most sweeping civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.*
- 1965 *The Voting Rights Act of 1965, signed into law by President Johnson signed on August 6, outlawed poll taxes, literacy tests, and other practices that had effectively prevented southern Blacks from voting. It authorized the US Attorney General to send federal officials to the South to register Black voters in the event that local registrars did not comply with the law, and it also authorized the federal government to supervise elections in districts that had disfranchised African Americans. The act transformed patterns of political power in the South. By the middle of 1966, over half a million Southern Blacks had registered to vote, and by 1968, almost four hundred Black people had been elected to office.*
- 1966 Founding of Freedom Repertory Theater as a community theater component of Philadelphia's Black Power Movement.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- 1967 Founding of the Negro Ensemble Company by Douglas Turner Ward, Robert Hooks and Gerald Krone. Funded for three years by a \$1.2 million Ford Foundation grant, NEC trained and developed many of today's well-known artists. Plays developed include *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, *The River Niger*, *Home* and *A Soldier's Play*.
- 1969 By playing Jack Jefferson in *The Great White Hope*, James Earl Jones makes history as the first African American actor to win Best Leading Actor in a Play.
- 1970s –1990s A new perspective of African American Theatre emerges. No longer are the companies concentrated in New York. A group of theaters are developed wherever there is a significant African American community, primarily in the Midwest and in urban settings. Aesthetically, greater focus is given to works examining the African American identity. Moreover, these companies attempt to create institutions rather than be founder-centric organizations.
- 1970 Woodie King, Jr. founded the New Federal Theatre. Inspired by the Negro units of the WPA's Federal Theatre Project. It has been instrumental in the production of many world premieres by Ron Milner, Ed Bullins, Charles Fuller, and Ntozake Shange.
- Charles Gordone wins the Pulitzer Prize for his play *No Place To Be Somebody* and becomes the first African American to receive that honor.
- Actor Cleavon Little won the Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Musical for the title role in *Purlie*.
- 1972 Vinnette Carroll makes history as the first Black woman to direct on Broadway with the musical *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope*. The production received four Tony Awards nominations. The success of this production would lead to Carroll returning Broadway in 1976 with the gospel musical *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God*. The show received three Tony nominations.
- 1976 St. Louis Black Repertory Company founded.
- for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* opens at the New Federal Theatre in March of 1976. Later in June of that year it moves Off-Broadway to The Public Theater. Even later that same year the show opens on Broadway, September 15 at the Booth Theatre and ran until July 1978 for a total of 742 performances. The production was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play.
- 1978 Three significant companies start this year: Jomandi Productions in Atlanta, GA, Crossroads Theatre Company of New Brunswick, NJ and Penumbra Theatre in St. Paul, MN. Crossroads will become the first African American Theatre to enter LORT and best known for discovering playwright George C. Wolfe (*The Colored Museum* and *Spunk*).

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- mid - 1980's The re-emergence of the Chitlin' Circuit with the tours of *Beauty Shop*, *Beauty Shop 2*, *Mama, I Want To Sing*, *How to Love A Black Woman*, and *Don't Get God Started*.
- 1987 August Wilson emerges as the most significant new voice in African American Theatre with his play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Develops a productive creative relationship with Lloyd Richards.
- August Wilson wins his first Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play *Fences*.
- James Earl Jones wins his second Best Leading Actor in a Play Tony Award for the role of Troy Maxon in the Broadway premiere of *Fences*.
- Mary Alice wins the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play for her performance as Rose in *Fences*.
- 1989 The 1st National Black Theatre Festival is organized and sponsored by the North Carolina Black Repertory. Almost 18,000 artists, scholars, students, and patrons attend workshops, performances and panel discussions.
- 1990 Playwright Wilson goes on to win his second Pulitzer Prize for Broadway premiere of *The Piano Lesson*.
- 1992 For his performance as Sterling Johnson in the Broadway premiere of *Two Trains Running* Laurence Fishburne wins the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Featured Role.
- 1994 Only two years after making her Broadway debut, singer/actress Audra McDonald receives her the first of eight Tony Awards nomination and the first of six wins. Audra won the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical for her performance in *Carousel*.
- During his Broadway debut playing the dual roles of Mr. Lies/Belize Jeffrey Wright wins the 1994 Tony Award's Best Featured Actor in a Play for *Angels in America: Perestroika*.
- 1996 August Wilson delivers his dramatic speech entitled, "The Ground On Which I Stand," at the Theatre Communications Group's National Conference calling for a National Summit of African American Theaters.
- 1998 The National Black Theatre Summit is convened at Dartmouth College by August Wilson, Victor Leo Walker, and William Cook. Subtitled "On Golden Pond," the intent of the gathering is to build consensus around an agenda to improve the conditions of African American Theaters.
- 1998 Tyler Perry successfully stages his musical *I Know I've Been Changed* in Atlanta after six years of unsuccessful productions, first at the House of Blues and later at the Fox Theatre.

BLACK THEATRE SURVEY 2016-2017

- 1999 The American Theatre Critics Association together with the American Theatre Wing and the League of American Theatre and Producers presented Crossroads Theatre Company with 1999 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre for twenty years of artistic excellence.
- In August of 1999 Crossroads Theatre co-founder and Producing Artistic Director Ricardo Khan steps down. Within a month, the Company's board cancels their 1999-2000 season and suspends operations to address a mounting deficit that jeopardizes the Company's continued existence.
- 2001 Five years after making her Broadway debut in the New York premiere of August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* Viola Davis wins the Tony Award for Best Leading Actress in a Play for her performance as Tanya in August Wilson's *King Hedley II*.
- 2002 Suzan-Lori Parks wins the Pulitzers Prize for Drama for her play, *Topdog/Underdog* becoming the first African American woman to receive that recognition.
- 2004 Detroit native Playwright Ron Milner died of complications from liver cancer.
- Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee are two of six recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors for a lifetime of achievements.
- Phylicia Rashad became the first Black woman to receive a Tony Award for Best Leading Actress in a Play for her performance as Lena Younger in a Broadway revival of *A Raisin in a the Sun*.
- 2005 On October 2, 2005, August Wilson succumbed to a battle with liver cancer. Prior to dying he concludes *Radio Golf*, the 10th play in his 20th Century Cycle.
- 2006 On June 29, 2006, Lloyd Richards died of heart failure ten days after his 87th birthday.
- 2007 On January 29, 2007, August Wilson was posthumously inducted into The Theatre Hall of Fame at the 36th Annual awards ceremony.
- Larry Leon Hamlin, founder of the National Black Theatre Festival, died on June 6, 2007. The Festival that year was the first without his direct guidance. However, organizers did continue on with preparations and produced the Festival on schedule.
- 2008 ***Barack Hussein Obama, the junior Senator from Illinois, won the Democratic nomination for President by beating Hillary Clinton. In November he was elected the 44th President of the United States and the first of African descent.***
- 2009 On January 26, 2009, actor Roscoe Lee Brown was posthumously inducted into The Theatre Hall of Fame at the 38th Annual awards ceremony.

Lynn Nottage wins the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for her play *Ruined*.

2010 Continuing her relationship with the works of August Wilson, Viola Davis wins her second Tony Award for Best Leading Actress in a Play for her performance as Rose in the Broadway revival of *Fences* starring Denzel Washington.

2011 On September 22, 2011, Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop* opens on Broadway at the Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre. The two-person show stars Samuel L. Jackson and Angela Bassett.

Stick Fly by Lydia Diamond opens on Broadway at the Cort Theatre on November 18, 2011.

2012 Audra McDonald becomes the first African-American 5-time Tony Award winner when she awarded for her performance in *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*. McDonald had won previously for *Carousel* (1994), *Master Class* (1996), *Ragtime* (1998), and *A Raisin in the Sun* (2004).

September 5, Penumbra Theatre, the nation's largest African-American Theater, announces that they are suspending productions for the foreseeable future due to a \$500,000 shortfall.

2013 On February 26, 2013 Dominique Morisseau's *Detroit '67*, premiered at the Public Theater in New York City. The production is a collaboration between the Public with the Classical Theatre of Harlem and the National Black Theatre. The production was nominated for 8 AUDELCO Theatre Awards including Best Playwright and Classical Theatre of Harlem. The play was the winner of the Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by History.

2014 For playing the leading role in the Broadway production of *Lady Day at the Emerson's Bar and Grill* Audra McDonald wins the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Play, the Drama Desk Award for the Outstanding Actress in a Play, and the Outer Critics' Circle Award for Outstanding Actress in a Musical.

2016 A revival/reinvention of *Shuffle Along* opened on Broadway April 28, 2016. The production featured a new book written by George C. Wolfe. The cast included Audra McDonald, Brian Stokes Mitchell and Billy Porter.

On March 6, *Eclipsed* by Danai Gurira opened by making history as the first Broadway production to feature an entirely Black and female cast and creative team. Directed by South African theater director Liesl Tommy, the cast featured Oscar winner Lupita Nyong'o, Pascale Armand, Akosua Busia, Zainab Jah and Saycon Sengbloh.

The 2016 Tony Awards announced an historic number of nominations for artists of color, including: Best Featured Actor in a Musical (Daveed Diggs), Best Featured Actress in a Musical (Renée Elise Goldberry), Best Costume Design of a Musical (Paul Tazwell for *Hamilton*), Best Lead Actor in a Musical (Leslie Odom, Jr. for *Hamilton*), Best Lead Actress in a Musical

(Cynthia Erivo for *The Color Purple*). Two special Tonys were also awarded to African Americans: Detroit Public School educator Marilyn McCormick received the Excellence in Theatre Education Award and Brian Stokes Mitchell was awarded the Isabelle Stevenson Award.

2017

Playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney's unproduced play, *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*, is adapted into the film *Moonlight* by Director Barry Jenkins winning three Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor (Mahershala Ali), and Best Adapted Screenplay for Jenkins and McCraney. Also, it won the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture - Drama and four Film Independent's Spirit Award: Best Feature (Dede Gardner, Adele Romanski, Jeremy Kleiner), Best Screenplay (Jenkins, McCraney), Best Director (Jenkins), and Best Cinematography (James Laxton).

Sweat opens on Broadway at Studio 54 on March 26. Playwright Lynn Nottage wins the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Drama with her play *Sweat*. This is her second Pulitzer. The first was for *Ruined* in 2009. She becomes the first woman to win two Pulitzer Prizes for drama and the first woman of color to win two Pulitzers in any category.

The 2017 Tony Awards announced a series of nominations for artists of color, including: Best Play (Lynn Nottage - *Sweat*), Best Direction of a Play (Ruben Santiago-Hudson - *August Wilson's Jitney*), Best Featured Actor in a Play (John Douglas Thompson - *August Wilson's Jitney*), Best Featured Actress in a Play (Michelle Wilson - *Sweat*), Best Featured Actress in a Play (Condola Rashad - *A Doll's House, Part. 2*) Best Costume Design of a Play (Toni-Leslie James - *August Wilson's Jitney*), Best Lead Actress in a Musical (Denée Benton - *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*). The Best Revival of a Play Award was won by the production of *August Wilson's Jitney*. The Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement was given to James Earl Jones.

Award-winning playwright Katori Hall is appointed as Artistic Director of Memphis' Hatiloo Theatre.

Playwright and director Jackie Alexander is named as Artistic Director of the North Carolina Black Repertory Company, producer of the biennial National Black Theatre Festival.

Dominique Morisseau honored in October by Samuel French Awards with the Award for Impact & Activism in the Theatre Community, given to an individual or creative team who has significantly impacted the theatre community over the past year through their activism.