

## Chantrell M. Lewis statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

Throughout the last 16 years of being an artist, I have acquired knowledge and insight to something I find fulfilling and substantial, that is an appreciation for the human experience . This led me to having a greater admiration and appreciation of every person. I believe that if we all were able to be more empathetic and community based the world would be a much kinder place . This is a part of the beauty of theatre and devising work. There are certain questions we ask in our work that many don't have the courage to . It is important to create spaces for these questions not only to be asked , but to be deeply and intentionally explored .

At age fourteen, I'd begun to mold my love for theatre into volunteer work which I later realized was the beginning of a fruitful career, assisting my uncle with theatre summer camps at the Euclid School of Music. I used the summer months to develop programming specifically for, my reflection, the inner city youth. Introducing the students to art as an outlet and as an engaging, healthy, fun way to spend time. I spent the next few years teaching at various locations, notably spending two years as a teaching artist with Cleveland Public Theatre. We engage youth residing in the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority offering various performing arts programs throughout the Summer days. During my undergraduate studies, under the instruction of Dr. Daniel Nadon, I became more familiar with LGBTQIA theater works and began studying LGBTQ+ history in Black culture, performing arts and literature. I went on to have the honor of an essay being published in a research journal, about sexuality in *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, titled "Addressing Bisexuality, Gender Non-Conformance and Performativity through *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker." During the last three years at UC Irvine, I have been able to use this past experience to push forward my mission of bringing EDI to the forefront of minds, classroom, and work spaces.

I incorporated a California Non-Profit called The Jar of Sunshine Inc., an organization whose mission is equity for women and children of the African diaspora. ([www.TheJarofSunshine.com](http://www.TheJarofSunshine.com)) In the process of my exploration, I authored three books; one, a children's book, is an introduction to the Black Lives Matter Movement from the perspective of a child. This book is titled "There Was a Movement Yesterday". Since writing "There Was a

Movement Yesterday”, I have had many appearances sharing the story and introducing the Black Lives Matter Movement to youth across the country.

As each year passes I continually reevaluate my knowledge of the world, it’s vast cultures and enjoy the consciousness and appreciation that comes from that exploration.

I carry an inviolable stance on the fact that our classroom and theatre spaces should be committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. Creating equitable spaces requires an acknowledgement of the imbalances, adjusting and allocating resources to create fair working environments for diverse groups. In specific, diversity meaning groups from a multitude of social, cultural and ethnic livelihoods with each being included active members within any organization or institution. One of the best routes to healthy EDI is empathetic listening and social and emotional learning competencies, including self - regulation and self-assessment.