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## Letter to our arts community

**KALAMAZOO, Mich.**— The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo seeks to serve artists and arts organizations in our community, including providing a platform from which their voices can be heard. Our core values speak to access, inspiration, dialogue, empathy, and sustainability. We work towards those values every day. We also fall short a great deal of the time.

As a community, we are once again at a crossroads. We have been here before. We have been asked to stand up for our neighbors, friends, coworkers, and colleagues, and too often we have failed. Right now, we are asked again to stand up, to embrace justice, to embrace equity, and to do what is right. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement, we cannot continue to move along, business as usual.

We believe that racism in any form is completely unacceptable. Institutional oppression and injustice are completely unacceptable. As a mostly white institution with a varied track-record in living up to our values, we must own our racism and our privilege to take real and lasting steps to remove barriers, change internal cultures and accept change. We will work daily to become a better organization, no matter how uncomfortable or painful it may be, to serve our community equitably. When we misstep, as we inevitably will, we will be open to acknowledge our shortcomings and commit to listening and learning with open minds and hearts.

Art can be a healing and transcendent experience. We know that one day of sharing and one town hall will not heal our organization or our community. Still, we hope that it will serve as an opening to a dialogue on how artists and arts organizations can come into community together and work towards ending racial inequality in the arts and in our society.

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