

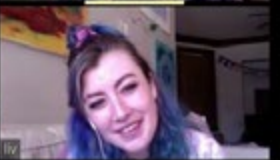
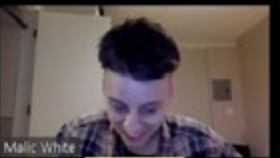
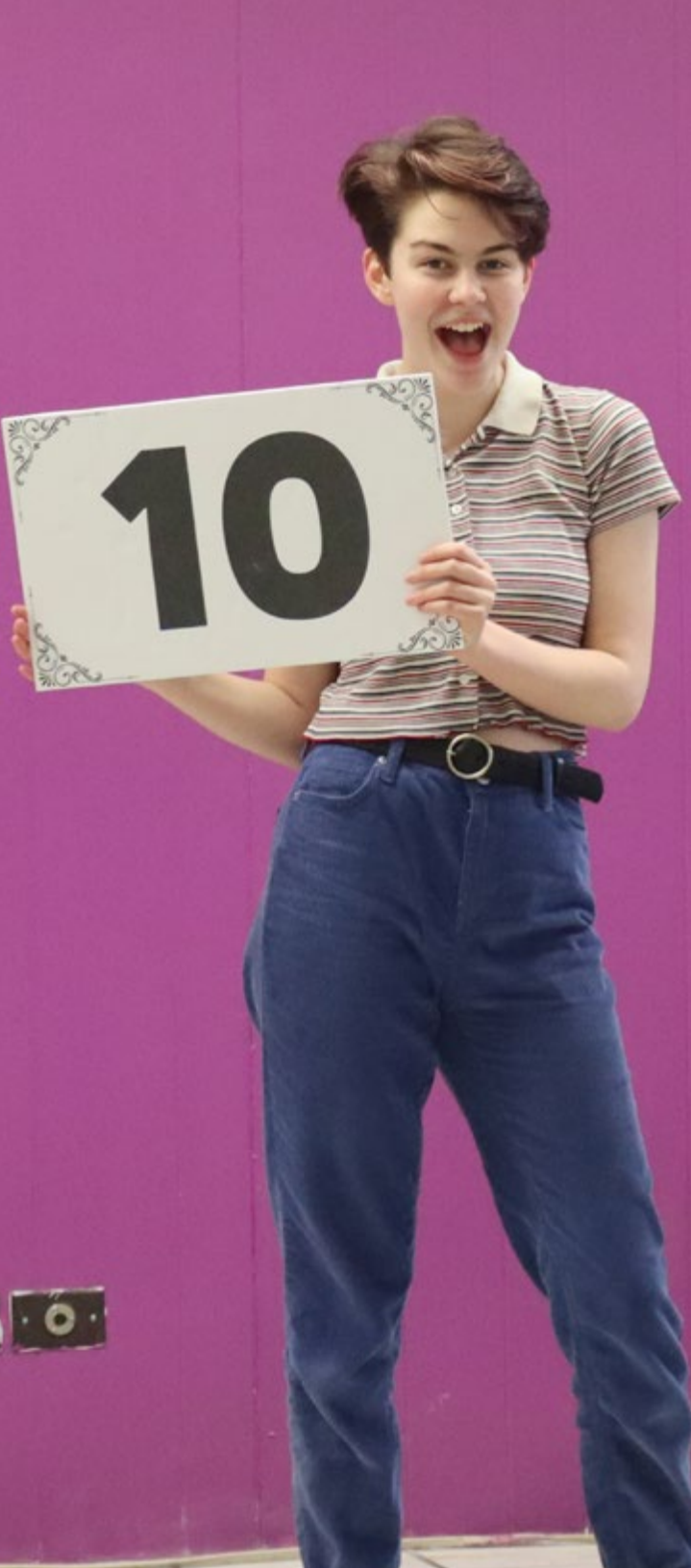


ABOUT  
**FACE**  
THEATRE

2019-2020

# EDUCATION IMPACT REPORT





**BLACK LIVES MATTER**





# MISSION & VISION

About Face Theatre exists to create exceptional, innovative, and adventurous theatre and educational programming that advances the national dialogue on sexual and gender identity, and challenges and entertains audiences in Chicago and beyond.

We strive to be a nationally recognized, intergenerational, and community-focused LGBTQIA arts organization by creating theatre that fosters awareness, understanding, and celebration of all forms of sexual and gender expression.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff and board of About Face Theatre honor and uplift that Chicago is the homeland of the original stewards and guardians of Chicagoland: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. Their alliance is known as The Council of Three Fires, first formed in the year 796 of the common era at Mishimikinaak, also known as Mackinac Island, in Michigan. These peoples did, and do still exist. Without their committed stewardship, we would not be enjoying this place today.

We also recognize and acknowledge the enslaved Africans who have lived, been subjugated to free labor, and toiled the grounds where many theatres have been built and resurrected. This organization, and the people behind it, believe that Black Lives Matter. We cannot serve our mission to advance dialogue on gender and sexuality without including the voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) in everything we do and create.

About Face Theatre 5252 N Broadway, 2nd Fl, Chicago, IL 60640  
(773) 784-8565 • [AboutFaceTheatre.com](http://AboutFaceTheatre.com)



[/AboutFaceTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/AboutFaceTheatre)



[@aboutfacechi](https://www.instagram.com/aboutfacechi)



[@aboutfacechi](https://twitter.com/aboutfacechi)



[/aboutfacetheatrechicago](https://www.youtube.com/aboutfacetheatrechicago)

# The People of **ABOUT FACE**

---

## **STAFF**

**Megan Carney**  
*Artistic Director*

**Logan Boyd Jones**  
*Managing Director*

**Amy Sheahan**  
*Interim Education Manager*

**Dave (Dylan) Toropov**  
*Director of Individual & Major Giving  
and Special Events*

**Benjamin Sprunger**  
*Director of Institutional Giving*

**Mary-Helen Pitman**  
*Development Intern*

**Charles Riffenburg**  
*Marketing Manager & Graphic Designer*

**Benjamin Rezko**  
*Operations Coordinator*

**Ruby Muñoz**  
*Bookkeeper*

**John Olson**  
*Public Relations*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Becky Huinker**  
*Chair*

**Derek Blin**  
*Treasurer*

**Aaron Kacel**

## **BOARD FELLOWS (EX OFFICIO)**

Lauren Buethe

## **HONORARY BOARD**

Rob Abernathy  
Jim Andrews  
Pat Ewert  
Ted Grady  
William W. Greaves

## **YOUTH TASK FORCE**

Angelica Grace  
Micah Manternach  
Sharon Pasia

## *Secretary*

Shelley Bloch  
Kathe Elwell  
Angelica Grace  
Maxwell Koziol  
Delia Kropp  
Geoff D. Robinson  
Ed Talideh

Carlyna Carvalho  
Amartya Chatterjee  
Davida Schwabsky

Chris Landgraff  
Michael Leppen  
Dwight A. McBride  
William J. Michel  
Mary Morten  
Mike Sullivan  
Denis Weil

## **ARTISTIC ASSOCIATES**

Patrick Andrews  
William Boles  
Scott Bradley  
Sheldon Brown  
Mikael Burke  
Philip Dawkins  
Scott Duff  
Scott Ferguson  
Armand Fields

## **ARTISTIC ASSOCIATES EMERITI**

Amy Beck  
Alexandra Billings  
Precious Brady-Davis  
Joel Butler  
Megan Carney  
Brad Cawley  
Geoffrey M Curley  
Jane C. Cho  
Shelley Echerd  
Mark Emerson  
Mitchell Fain  
Steve Futterman  
Brian Goodman  
Sarah Gubbins

John Francisco  
Keira Fromm  
Delia Kropp  
Bob Kuhn  
Elizabeth Ledo  
Lexi Saunders  
Kelli Simpkins  
Benjamin Sprunger  
Paul Oakley Stovall  
Mieka van der Ploeg  
Alex Weisman

David Hyman  
Kyle Hall  
Ted Hoerl  
Eric Hoff  
Jessica Hudson  
Patricia Kane  
SK Kerastas  
Julia Fabris McBride  
James McKay  
Amy Matheny  
Jacob Padron  
Andre Pluess  
Dida Ritz  
Rebecca Rugg  
Tanya Saracho  
Arturo Soria  
Daniel Stermer



## *Introduction*

# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MEGAN CARNEY



Thank you for your consistent faith and support during this extraordinary season. As people who believe in the transformative power of the arts, we hold so many different capacities and this year demanded we use every one of them. About Face Theatre is strong and ready for the next chapter because of you.

Inside this report, you'll get to meet several people who shaped the season. Their narratives offer different perspectives on the multiple facets of our educational programming and the ways we changed throughout the year to meet the demands of the moment.

When the global pandemic hit, we had just closed the second production of the season and decided to use all available resources to deliver on our commitment to LGBTQ+ youth. We shifted online and created original content in AFT's bold signature style. When uprisings for racial justice began across the country, we adjusted production schedules and listened to

Black-led organizations. We maintained virtual meet-up spaces for LGBTQ+ youth and created artistic processes to add their voices to the national conversations on equity.

I hope the stories and statistics laid out in this report bring you closer. We're in this together. Even in this very different landscape, the work continues. Thanks for being here and for making our mission possible.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Megan Carney  
Artistic Director



# *A Commitment to* **EDUCATION**

Education is at the center of our mission to advance dialogue on gender and sexuality. The programs highlighted in this report account for half of AFT's work each year.

About Face Theatre's Education Department has three main programs:



**ABOUT FACE  
YOUTH THEATRE**



**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT &  
TOURING SHOWS**

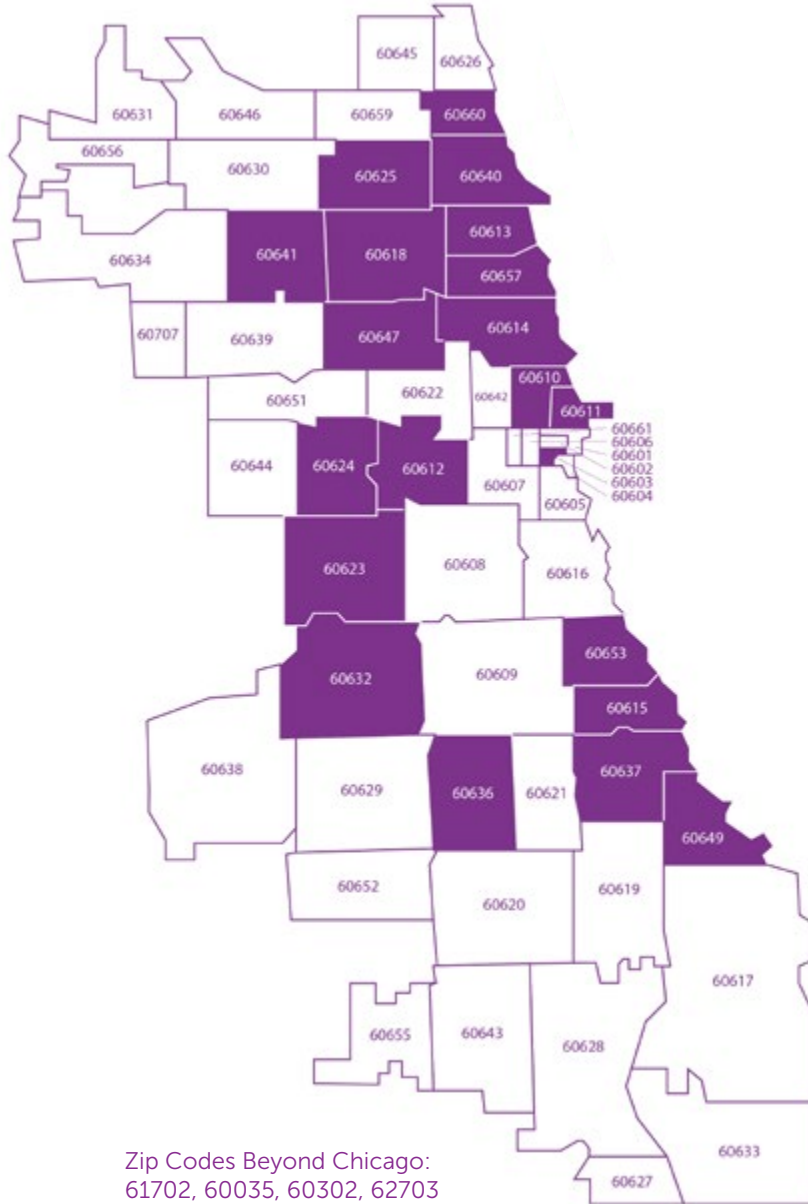


**YOUTH  
TASK FORCE**

Together, these programs increase the safety and leadership capacity of LGBTQIA+ youth and their allies, and catalyze youth-led theatre making and civic dialogue within schools and communities.

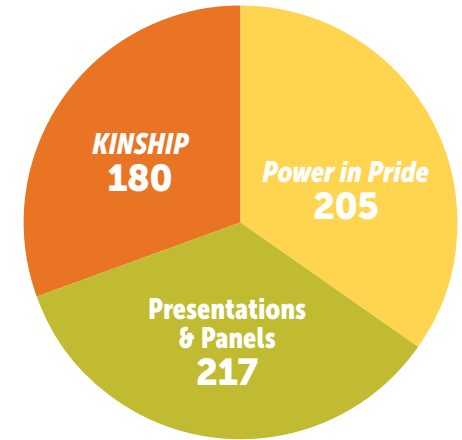
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOUR 2018-2020

## REPRESENTATION BY ZIP CODE

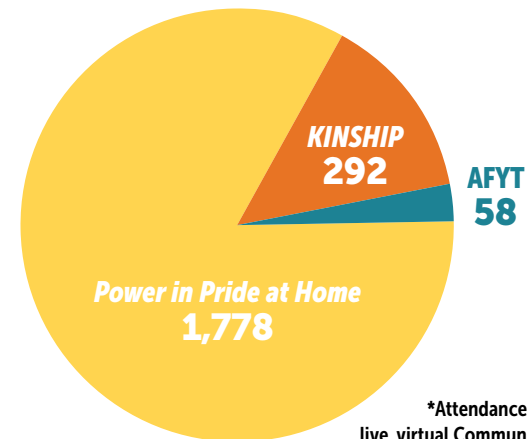


# EDUCATIONAL IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

## IN-PERSON EVENT ATTENDANCE



## VIRTUAL EVENT ATTENDANCE\*



\*Attendance at live virtual Community Engagement events not measured





# ABOUT FACE YOUTH THEATRE

---



# ABOUT FACE YOUTH THEATRE

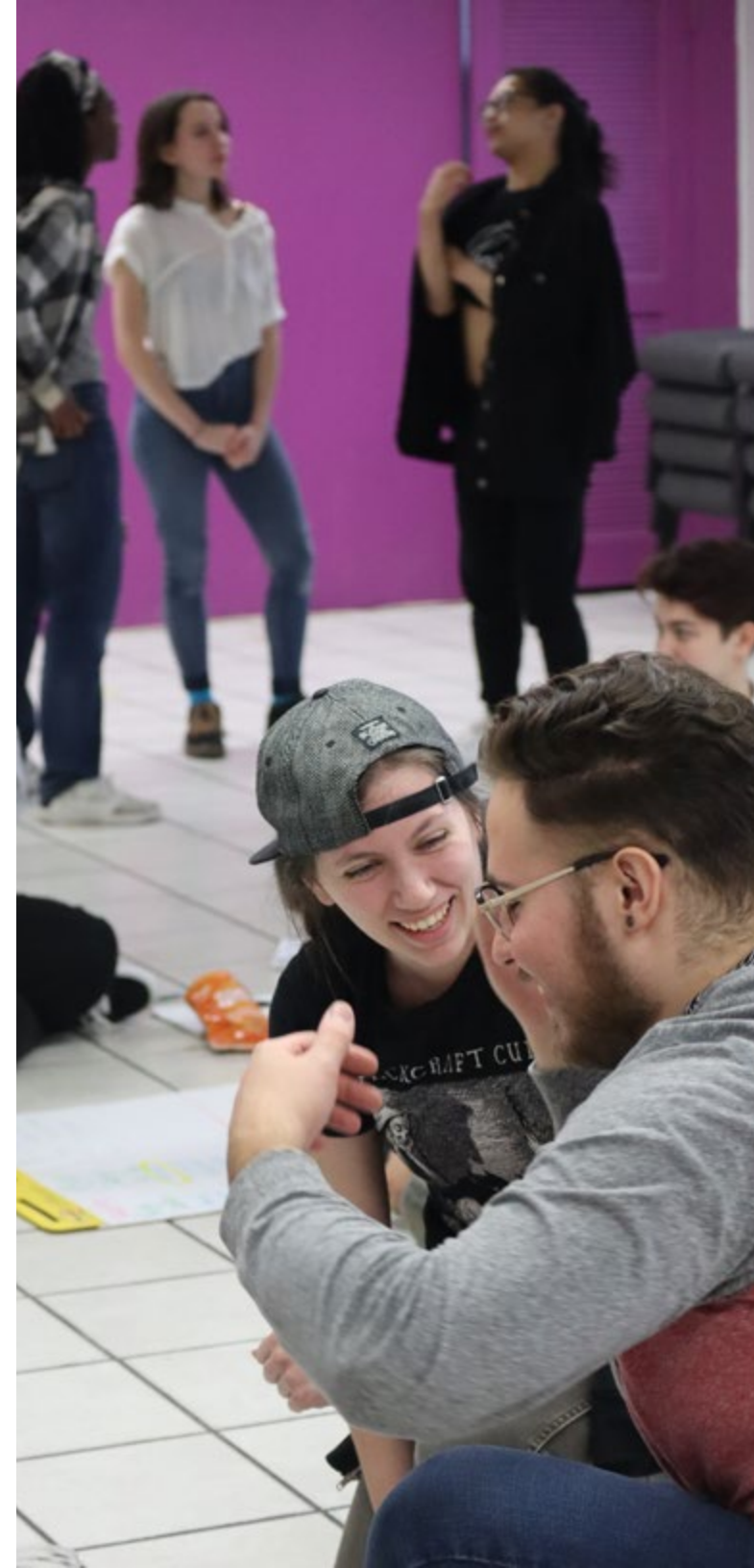
Found in 1999, **About Face Youth Theatre (AFYT)** is a brave and creative space for queer youth to find and empower their artistic voice in the performing arts. Our award-winning, nationally-recognized program provides rigorous training in devised theatre, lessons about social justice through history, and opportunities for leadership development and activism. Through original ensemble plays, created in dynamic collaboration with accomplished adult artists, we encourage and support LGBTQIA+ youth and their allies to become powerful agents for change.

As a result of this program, AFYT has developed and performed **16 original mainstage productions**, plus this season's digital streaming showcase, ***A Glow Up: The Hot Take From AFYT***.

In 2018, AFYT also developed a new performance series called ***KINSHIP***. Curated and led by the About Face Youth Task Force, *KINSHIP* provides a safe, all-ages space for young queer artists previously unaffiliated with AFYT to perform new and experimental pieces in an intimate variety-show format.

## **AFYT Program Highlights and Benefits**

- Connections with a diverse network of peers
- Rigorous artistic training with professional artists
- Access to professional mentorship from local leaders and activists
- Connections to resources for support in different areas of life
- Lessons about social justice and LGBTQIA+ history
- Leadership training and opportunities
- CTA cards and snacks at weekly workshops



# AFYT BY THE NUMBERS

## ENSEMBLE DEMOGRAPHICS

**14-23**

AGE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS

**19**

AVERAGE AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

**50%**

IDENTIFY AS PEOPLE OF COLOR

**41%**

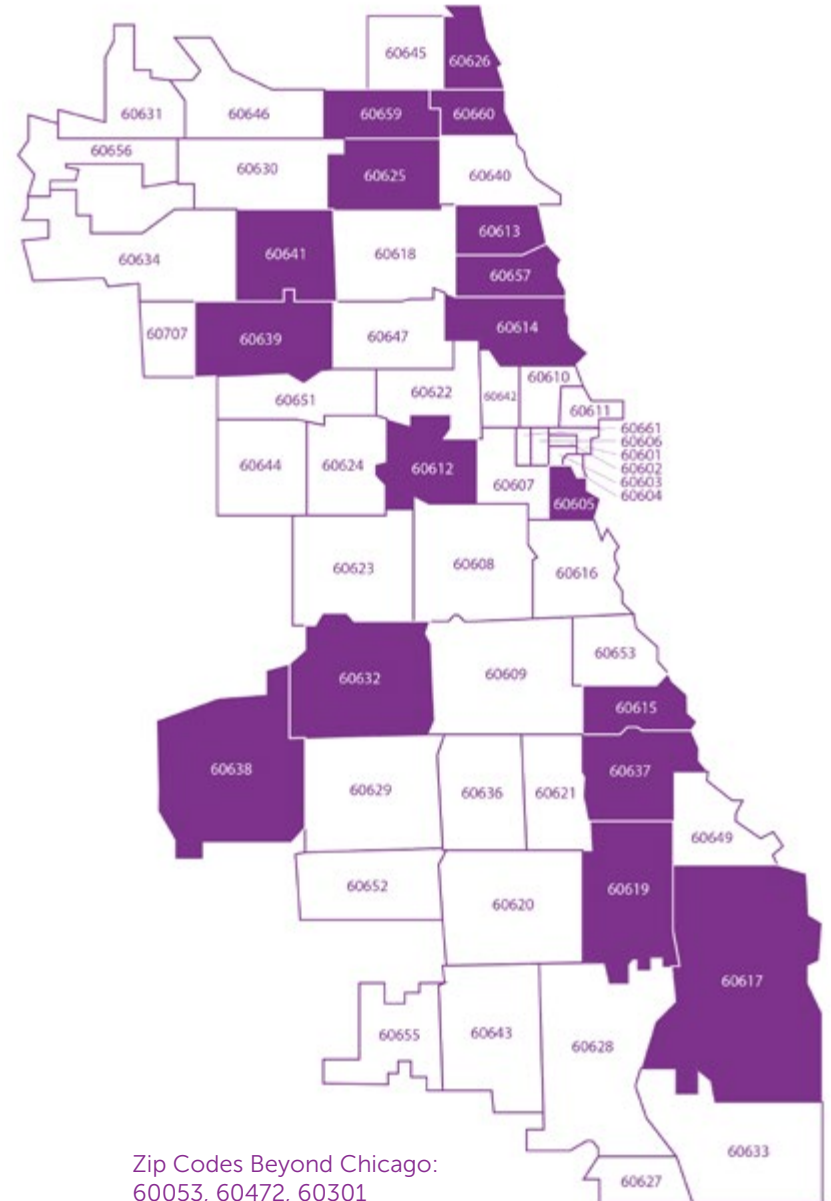
IDENTIFY AS TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY, AND/OR GENDER FLUID

**41%**

CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Data collected at the end of 2018-2019 season. The majority of 2019-2020 participants returned from the previous season.

## AFYT ENSEMBLE MEMBERS 2018-2020 REPRESENTATION BY ZIP CODE



Zip Codes Beyond Chicago:  
60053, 60472, 60301



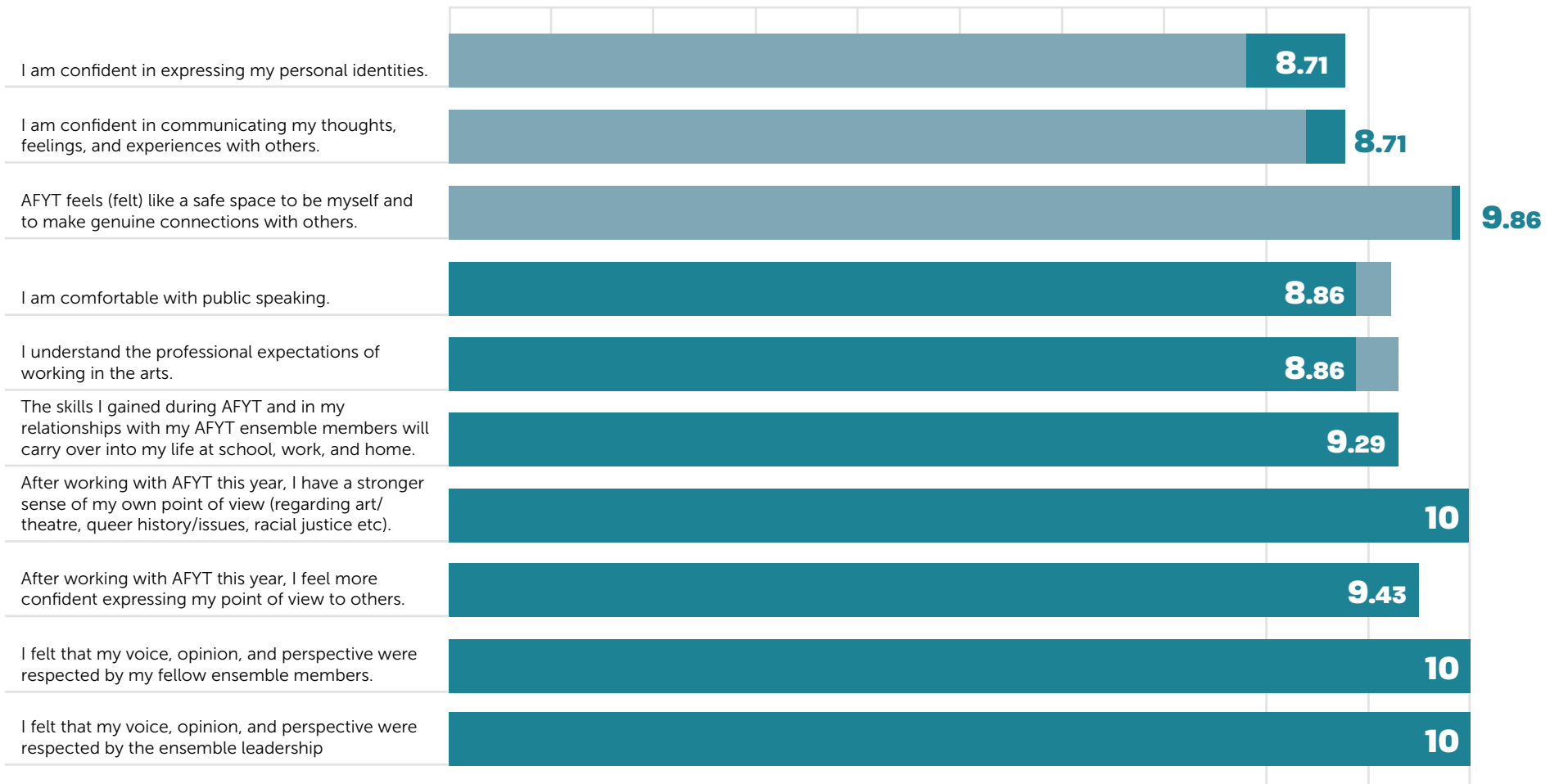
# ENSEMBLE SURVEY RESULTS

The following survey responses were all individually self-reported by AFYT participants. Many members of the ensemble began this year with previous experience or formal theatre training. As the program progressed, the members of the ensemble gained the tools and knowledge to more accurately rate themselves on this scale. The spring term shifted to virtual meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a small decline in attendance. Unfortunately, virtual communication issues resulted in a low response rate to the post-season survey.

**15** FALL SESSION PARTICIPANTS

**13** SPRING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Pre-season Survey Average      Post-season Survey Average







## Reflection

# ENSEMBLE MEMBER

## BENJAMIN REZKO (HE/HIM)



“ I worked for AFT as their Operations Coordinator and then auditioned to be a member of the AFYT Ensemble. I had duties separate from our Education programming, but when COVID hit I was directly assisting Amy Sheahan, our Interim Education Manager. While in workshops, I felt like I was just one of the cast members. Amy did an incredible job keeping a balance between my role in assisting them and my role as an ensemble member. They never overwhelmed me with work and I was able to keep an active voice in the workshops, too.

What I admired most about the workshops this spring/summer was that we, the ensemble, were given space to speak and process the civil unrest that followed after the killings of Auhmad Aubrey, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. We spoke, we cried, we listened, and we were there for each other. We wanted to respond in the best way artists know how, using our showcase to process, to protest, and to support the BLM movement.

I was able to find solace in stand-up comedy. All throughout this pandemic and staying home, I looked to talk show hosts like Stephen Colbert and Trevor Noah to make me laugh and also serve the daily bad news with a softer, comedic touch. I took after their example and crafted my own comedy routine with observational quick-laughs and critical-thought observations in tandem.

Looking back, these workshops and the time with the ensemble taught me we can have a sense of community despite these times of social distancing. We were there for each other during one of the most turbulent times of our young lives and we will continue to support each other moving forward.

”



# AFYT WORKSHOPS

## WORKSHOP SUBJECTS & TEACHINGS ARTISTS

### FALL 2019 SESSION

- Nov 2: Diction for Actors featuring **Sojourner Zenobia**
- Nov 9: Devising featuring the cast of About Face Theatre's *Power in Pride*
- Nov 16: Movement featuring **Angelica Grace**
- Nov 23: Audition Support featuring **Catherine Miller**
- Nov 30: Comedy featuring **Malic White**
- Dec 7: Playwriting featuring **Jesse Alana Robkin**
- Dec 14: Devising featuring **Bonsai Bermúdez** and **Black Pruitt** of YEPP (Youth Empowerment Performance Project)

### SPRING 2020 VIRTUAL SESSION

- April 11: First virtual workshop
- April 18: Stand up comedy featuring **Malic White**
- April 25: Poetry with **Khloe Janel**
- May 2: Review day
- May 9: Scene writing featuring **Jesse Alana Robkin**
- May 16: Writing your River Story with **Megan Carney**
- May 23: Personal creation sharing & revising for showcase
- May 30: Racial justice and protest art with **Amy Sheahan** and **Megan Carney**. Collective Statement created (pg ##).
- June 13: Feedback and showcase work featuring **Malic White**
- June 20: Writing a group performance
- June 27: Postponed to focus on Black Trans Lives Matter March
- July 6-10: Tech week
- July 11: *A Glow Up* showcase live stream with invited audience
- Aug 20: Public streaming release of *A Glow Up*



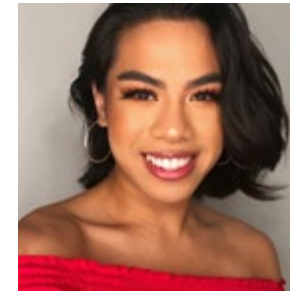
## WORKSHOP TEACHINGS ARTISTS



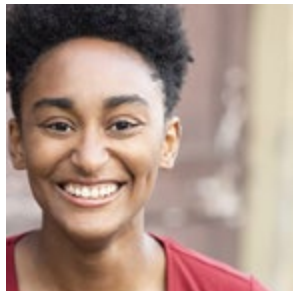
**Bonsai Bermúdez** (he/him) is the co-founder and executive artistic director of the Youth Empowerment Performance Project. He has been working in the social justice-service field for over 20 years focusing on trauma, transformative justice, and harm reduction practices.



**Megan Carney** (she/her) is a director, playwright, and teaching artist, and co-founder of About Face Youth Theatre. She served as the Director of the Gender and Sexuality Center at UIC before returning to AFT as Artistic Director.



**Angelica Grace** (she/her) is a trans, Filipino, Chicago-based actor and drag performer. She serves on the Youth Task Force, where she co-created and curates *KINSHIP: An All Ages Queer Variety Show*.



**Khloe Janel** (they/ them) is a Chicago-based poet, actor, and singer. Their poetry has appeared in *The Jade Plant Project*, *A Farther Room*, *Woman Made Gallery*, *Scout & Birdie*, *Soft Openings*, and *Lez Spread the Word*. They are a co-chair of the SAG-AFTRA next gen performers committee.



**Catherine Miller** (they/them) is a queer non-binary casting director who advocates and educates theatre companies about breaking the binary in casting and making audition rooms safe spaces for all.



**Black Pruitt** (they/ them) is the Youth Programs Coordinator for the Youth Empowerment Performance Project. They have been a coach and director for multiple youth theater and poetry groups as well as a freelance multidisciplinary artist.



**Jesse Alana Robkin** (she/her) is a playwright, dramaturg, and teaching artist. She has served as literary assistant at Victory Gardens and teaches playwriting workshops around Chicago. She is a passionate advocate for transgender representation.



**Malic White** (they/them) is a Chicago-based writer, actor, comedian and One Liner Madness champion. Malic's comedy has been featured nationally, and they are a former ensemble member at the Neo-Futurist Theater.



**Sojourner Zenobia** (she/her) is a freelance solo artist, director, and storyteller. Her artistic process lives at the intersection of spirituality and performance, specifically centering love and the brown body.

## Reflection

# ENSEMBLE MEMBER

## K ECHEVARRÍA (THEY/THEM)



“ So far my favorite workshop has been our poetry workshop with Khloe. I have always loved poetry and writing in general, but needed a reminder not to overthink it (something that I tend to do). Khloe created a safe, comfortable space for everyone to share their work and I ended up writing a poem that I am very proud of! I actually ended up submitting that poem for a poetry fellowship days after.

For our online workshop, we meet via Zoom during a three-hour window, though we were not online the entire three hours. We do our regular check-in at the beginning. Everyone has a chance to express how they are doing, what's going on in their lives, or talk about anything they want to talk about. Then, we usually have a teaching artist speak about their expertise and offer an exercise for the Ensemble to work on.

By this time we've come to the end of the first hour and we log off to work on our project individually. After 30 to 45 minutes (depending on the task), we all come back to the Zoom meeting and we share our creations! No one is required to share their work, as we can touch upon some personal topics, but for those who do share: we listen, we praise, and we heed the teaching artist's very helpful comments and suggestions. By the time everyone who wants to share has, we have come to the end of our final hour.



### RADIANT

I don't remember the last time so many of you were looking at me  
Or the last time I enjoyed being perceived.

Debuting the brand new extension of me,  
Opulent reflections through a rainbow glow.

Words of affirmation and applause fill  
negative space.

Here where the sweetest champagne  
spilled  
is where I don't mind indulging in a few  
cheap thrills...

-eartha slicc

## Reflection

# SHOWCASE DIRECTOR

## AMY SHEAHAN (THEY/THEM)



“ This season, we started the fall learning about theatre-making and social justice from outstanding guest artists in the Chicago area. We learned about vocal techniques from Sojourner Zenobia, stand-up comedy and social justice theatre from Malic White, casting processes in theatre and film from Catherine Miller, playwriting from Jesse Alana Robkin, and devised theatre for healing and justice from leaders of the Youth Empowerment Performance Project.

As we began our spring session, we were aiming to put together a showcase of original work, drawing from the skills we had learned from our fall guest artists and continuing that work with new guest artists. Then, COVID-19 came to call!

After a two-week delay, we pivoted to move our sessions over Zoom. The ensemble met nearly every Saturday in April, May, and June to refine our personal work and learn from our incredible guest artists. At the beginning of each virtual workshop, we had a check-in with the ensemble to follow up on any mental health and/or individual needs. Our original plan for our end-of-season showcase was to follow the example of AFT's *KINSHIP*, which presented a virtual cabaret performance in May with individual performances of poetry, dance, drag, scenes, and

comedy. Through experimentation, we found that music, dance, and drag wouldn't be viable for us, so we adjusted our workshop artists to help us generate content for our showcase.

Then, when George Floyd was murdered on May 25th, the ensemble pivoted again. After a workshop in which we took the time to mourn and rage led by Black ensemble members, we took time to become acquainted with the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression protest toolkit.

We joined protests for social and racial justice, and moved our art in a different direction. It became a response to the injustices we continue to see, a light for the people we love and remember, a message of hope and demand for change now.

Every Saturday session of AFYT, we ended with the same phrase, which was featured in our showcase: “I Will Hold You Up, I Will Not Let You Fall.” In person, we would stand in a circle and say this to one another. Over Zoom, we did our best to bring that same care to one another. With our showcase, we extended it to our audience as well.





# STATEMENT OF PROTEST FROM THE ABOUT FACE YOUTH THEATRE ENSEMBLE

**“Chaos i the mother tongue of us all.  
Change is the child of protest.”**  
–Cori Wash, AFYT Ensemble member

We believe it is our responsibility to speak out because so much of our art comes from Black people, if we don't speak up for them, all of it is exploitation. If you aren't there when it's time to be on the picket lines, then you are just exploiting the culture and appropriating their struggle.

It's June. The best way to act in this Pride Month is to stand with the protests. Stonewall started with a riot led by Black trans women. This is our history and we stand with protestors. We can't say that we stand for the queer community if we do not stand with our protestors. If we're not fighting for BLM, we're not fighting for queer people. BLACK LIBERATION IS QUEER LIBERATION.

## IN SOLIDARITY

To all of our Black siblings who are living in this time; you are doing enough. Even when you unplug from the world and take time for yourself that is enough. You are enough. Finding peace, rest and joy is a form of resistance. Never forget that the same system who tries to break you does not have the right to tell how to react to their injustice.

We stand with the victims: (Black Trans People to the Front) Muhlaysia Booker, Zoe Spears, Marsha P. Johnson, Layleen Polanco, Bailey Reeves, Paris Cameron, Ashanti Carmon, Brooklyn Lindsey, Chynal Lindsey, Tracy Single, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor,

Ahmaud Arbery, Atatiana Jefferson, Philando Castile, Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Laquan McDonald, Walter Scott, Botham Jean, Freddie Gray, Stephon Clark, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Natasha McKenna, Tamir Rice, David McCatee, George Floyd. And all the names not listed. And everyone we don't know.

**If you believe in this cause, speak up.  
Silence and being neutral means you are siding with the oppressor. If you are silent, you are part of the problem.**

## CALL TO ACTION FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Donate to Brave Space Alliance and Chicago Freedom School. Defend and protect Black queer youth.
- Donate to the Chicago Community Bond Fund
- Do your own research and limit relying on the Black community to combat their own oppression. Allyship is earned, not given (we shouldn't have to wade through white tears in order to march).
- Mobilize your community out of complicity
- Amplify Black voices and create physical barrier between them and the police
- Donate snacks, medical supplies and other essential items to protesters

## DEMANDS FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO

- We demand for the release of all protestors and their records expunged
- We demand the conviction of killer cops

- We demand that Lori Lightfoot de-weaponizes the CPD AND OPEN PUBLIC TRANSIT.
- We demand BADGE VISIBILITY on cops. And turn ON the body-cams.
- We demand the health and safety of Black lives to be prioritized over capital.

**“Protest is when I say this doesn't please me. Resistance is when I ensure what does not please me occurs no more.”**  
–Ulrike Meinhof

## IN CLOSING

Please know that this is not an attack. Please know that we are not here to say other people do not matter. When we say Black Lives Matter, we are not excluding the lives of non-black individuals. However, all lives can't matter until black lives matter. All lives matter is an untrue statement created to silence black voices to keep us oppressed. The system does not include us. The system was built to destroy us, to dehumanize us, to keep us on the bottom. We are simply demanding equal rights and equal treatment. If you are homophobic, transphobic, ableist, everything in between, then you are not pro-Black. You are picking and choosing what narratives matter. All Black lives matter, not just the ones you deem worthy. If you believe in this cause, speak up. Silence and being neutral means you are siding with the oppressor. IF YOU ARE SILENT, YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM.

XOXO,  
The About Face Youth Theatre Ensemble



# A Glow Up

## THE HOT TAKE FROM AFYT

JULY 11, 2020

### AFYT SHOWCASE

**WORLD PREMIERE!**

Written and performed as a response to the past and continuing violence against Black people by police and society, the About Face Youth Theatre ensemble focuses their rage, pain, protests, and healing into monologues, songs, comedy, and other techniques in this unique showcase of work. Combining live and prerecorded performances in an experimental streaming event, this necessary work captures a unique time in our history.

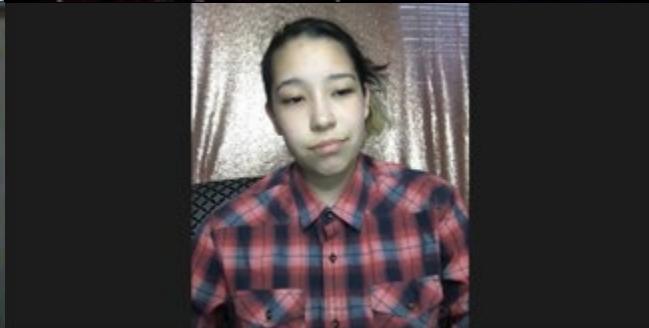
Directed by **AMY SHEAHAN**  
Featuring **BEN REZKO, CORI JEAN, JADEN SALAZAR, KEYONNA JACKSON, KIRSTEN BAITY, MICAH MANTERNACH, and SHARON PASIA**







**BLACK TRANS  
LIVES MATTER**



**SAY THEIR  
NAME(S)**



**NO JUSTICE  
NO PEACE**





## RESPONSES TO THE GLOW UP

"Ensemble,  
Thank you for that showcase. Thank you for your willingness to share, to be vulnerable, to inspire us, to help us confront our own inadequacies, to help us envision a better future. Hope to see more from you soon."

–Aaron Kacel

**"Very powerful. Very moving."**

–Abby Armato

"It was WONDERFUL. So impactful and beautiful. I miss AFT so much and all the incredible work you all do. Truly, thank you!"

–McKenzie Wilkes

"It was so good. So so good. I did get candle wax on my keyboard but it was #worthit."

–Kat Knoerl

"Congratulations to the whole ensemble on a very very beautiful show <3 <3 <3!!!"

–Megan Otto

"Everyone was so talented and moving <3 <3"

–Katie Dembinski

"Beautiful!!! Congrats"

–Ed Talideh

**"WE LOVED. RADICAL POETRY THEATRE KIDS. Gen Z is going to save the world."**

–Katherine Conolly

Workshops and rehearsals via Zoom in the AFYT spring session







# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*Power in Pride | Presentations | Power in Pride at Home*



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH STORIES AND CONVERSATION

For over two decades, About Face Theatre's Community Engagement Ensemble has toured productions and workshops to schools, organizations, campuses, churches, and conferences around Chicago to deliver LGBTQIA+ stories and advocate for safe and equitable environments. Our performances and discussions provide opportunities for people of all ages to have important conversations about gender, sexuality, and intersecting identities while exploring ways to be a better ally and support healthy relationships. Offering a touring show, customizable interactive workshops, and guest speakers, our Community Engagement program is a flexible means by which to build community, allyship, and foster understanding of LGBTQIA+ expressions and experiences

About Face Theatre understands that exposure to the arts and opportunities to engage with professional artists supports well-rounded education and provides students with opportunities for emotional growth and community involvement. We are committed to creating performance and dialogue programs that provide safe and brave spaces to talk about LGBTQIA equity and inclusion.

This program intentionally highlights the new Illinois Inclusive Curriculum Law which took effect July 2020, and offers educators greater access to and inspiration for incorporating LGBTQ+ historical figures into lesson plans. It also centers the lives and narratives of LGBTQ+ people of color to increase awareness of multiple and intersecting identities.





# WHAT IS AN ENGAGEMENT EVENT?

These are the steps of an Engagement Event with About Face Theatre:

1

**PRE-CONSULTATION** is an essential part of our process, by which we determine the needs of the school or community organization we're coming to, and we also learn about the environment in which we'll be performing.

2

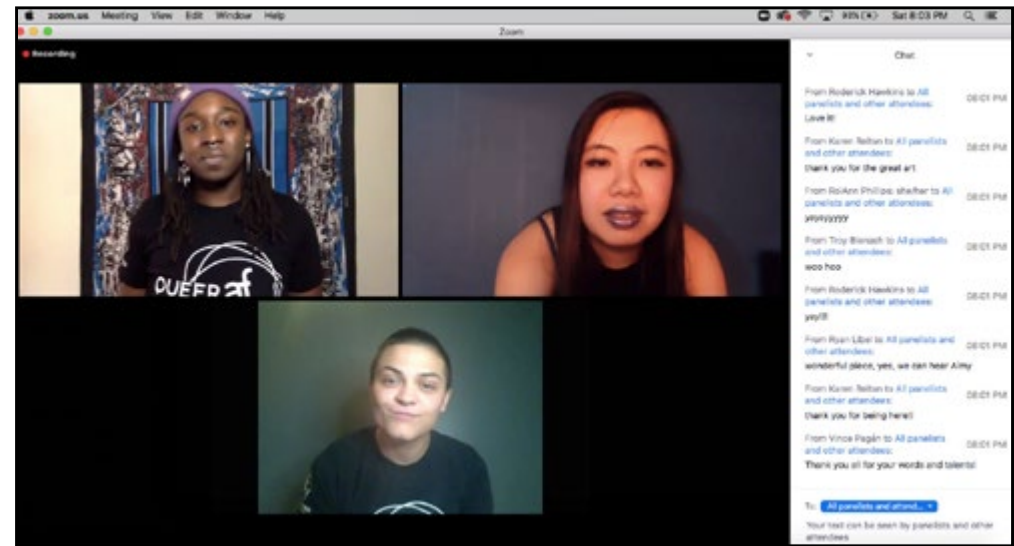
**THE EVENT** can feature a performance of our touring show, a performance and a **TALKBACK**, or another kind of interactive workshop or **GUEST SPEAKER**.

With each event, we aim to:

- Model community building and allyship through LGBTQIA+ representation and storytelling on stage.
- Increase understanding of evolving gender and sexuality experiences with regard to language, identities, and expressions.
- Embolden individuals and communities to identify actionable strategies for cultivating inclusion.

3

**FOLLOW-UP** on our event consists of a brief survey filled out by the school or performance venue to let us know how best to continue our partnership. We also provide access especially in schools for students to follow-up with us in case they would like to join our Youth Ensemble.



## Endorsement

# EDUCATORS AT KENWOOD ACADEMY



“ I want to THANK YOU all immensely for today’s performance. Every performance that AFT gives is heartfelt and has moments of joy, discomfort, and learning—the kids loved it and the kids were able to learn new perspectives.

One of the teachers reached out to thank me for bringing AFT to Kenwood and said:

Kristian,

Thank you so much for putting together the KEN Talk. My students were so enthralled and engaged. I have several students in class who were so excited to be there and be seen and ask questions. Thank you for providing this experience for them!

Thanks,  
Emily

Today during our GSA meeting the students said it was incredible and specifically said the following:

- Soundtrack was really fun.
- Really enjoyed it.
- It was awesome.
- The part with the gym was really powerful.
- One student said she would have liked to know their names and pronouns before the performance - introduce themselves earlier

Lastly, I wanted to reiterate that I will be working [...] to get AFT approved again as a CPS vendor so you all can be paid by us and future schools. If you all need any affidavits or anything about the impact AFT has on students in high schools then please let me know.

Best and I’ll be in touch once I get the check,

Mrs. Kristian Coerper  
Kenwood Academy



# COMMUNITY EVENTS

## LIVE PRESENTATIONS & EVENTS

### Arts in the Dark Parade

AFYT members represented AFT in this arts-focused city-wide parade through downtown Chicago

### Elevate YOU(th)

Featured performances by AFYT members for a youth job fair sponsored by Center on Halsted Women's Group  
*Attendance: 25*

### American Blues Theatre: Roan At the Gates talkback

Interim Education Manager Amy Sheahan led a post-show discussion on the LGBTQ perspective in the production

### Andersonville Chamber of Commerce: "Being A Stronger Ally: Trans/GNC Business Affirming Symposium"

Daylong symposium featured stories and discussion with members of *Power in Pride* cast. *Attendance: 75*

### Marriott Theatre staff professional development event

*The Gender Revolution* presented by Artistic Associate Delia Kropp *Attendance: 15*

### University of Michigan Theatre Studies: "History of AFT & Politics of Queer Theatre"

Presented by Artistic Director Megan Carney  
*Attendance: 35*

### Purdue University Music & Theatre Studies: "Trans+ Folx in the Entertainment Business" panel

Curated by Artistic Associate Delia Kropp  
*Attendance: 30*

### Columbia College Chicago Theatre Studies

AFT staff Presentation *Attendance: 25*

## ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

### Night of Noise online benefit for the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance

Online presentation featured an excerpt from *Power in Pride at Home*

### Chicago Foundation for Women: "Beyond the Binary"

Online webinar featured panelist Angelica Grace, Youth Task Force member and *Power in Pride Ensemble* member

### The Drama League: "Queering the Theatre: A Special Pride Week Event"

Online event featured Artistic Director Megan Carney <https://vimeo.com/431895548>

### Arizona Theatre Company's "Hang & Focus Live with Sean Daniels"

Online program featured Megan Carney and AFYT Ensemble member Sharon Pasia as special guests

### Federal Trade Commission: "Supporting LGBTQ Youth: Local Perspectives"

Online panel featured Megan Carney and AFYT Ensemble member Sharon Pasia



TOTAL DOCUMENTED  
IN-PERSON  
COMMUNITY EVENT  
ATTENDANCE



At the beginning of the season, About Face Theatre was chosen from a competitive application process to appear in the annual Halloween **Arts in the Dark** parade, an arts-focused event that draws together institutions such as the Art Institute of Chicago, Lookingglass Theatre Company, and After School Matters. With a grant of \$2500, AFYT ensemble members built their own costumes around the theme "Monsters Out of the Closet!"

The company commissioned local musician and DJ Ariel Zetina to create an original music track using "Monster Mash" and "Thriller," while Angelica Grace choreographed an original dance piece.

The number of parade attendees was estimated at approximately 100,000 people.



# POWER IN PRIDE

Written by **THE POWER IN PRIDE ENSEMBLE**  
Directed by **LEXI SAUNDERS**

*Touring*  
**SEPT 2019 thru Feb 2020**



## AFT TOURING SHOW

*Power in Pride* is an original touring show developed by About Face Theatre's celebrated Community Engagement Program. Reinvented for its second year and featured new cast members, this new iteration of *Power in Pride* uses humorous and brave stories about gender & sexuality to spark conversations with students, educators, and community members of all ages. Written and performed by artists of color about their true life experiences, this play explores their dreams for the future and how understanding the role of LGBTQ+ people in history can change your life.

*Featuring* DIONNE ADDAI, ANGELICA GRACE,  
NICO QUINN, AIMY TIEN, and VIC WYNTER  
*Produced by* AMY SHEAHAN

**205** ATTENDANCE

**4** LIVE IN-PERSON  
PERFORMANCES

## LIVE PERFORMANCES

**University of Chicago Booth School of  
Business Pride Group**  
*Attendance: 22*

**Urban Gateways Teen Arts Pass Members  
Performance**  
*Attendance: 24*

**About Face Youth Ensemble**  
*Attendance: 14*

**Kenwood Academy**  
*Attendance: 145*

## Reflection

# ENSEMBLE MEMBER VIC WYNTER (THEY/THEM)



“As a newer member of the ensemble, I didn’t know what to expect, as the majority of the cast had already been a part of *Power in Pride*’s previous seasons. Initially, I was nervous, but after the first few rehearsals, I knew I’d be taken care of. The director, Lexi Saunders, had the ability to hold space and make room for everyone’s voices to be heard and, more importantly, valued.

The process of bringing all our stories together into one cohesive piece felt like healing. We were vulnerable and uplifted one another as we shared different aspects of our lives. I am forever grateful to the ensemble. I felt seen, held, and understood throughout the process of creating *Power In Pride*.

The few times we got to perform, I was delighted by how we were received. From the queer youth to the adults in the room—we could see them receiving and listening deeply to our stories. There was an excitement and a genuine curiosity to engage with us. The talkbacks we held gave us the opportunity to connect and educate folks on our identities. For the first time, I got to be an example of what I wish I could have seen and/or been exposed to growing up. By showing up as our authentic selves and sharing our stories, *Power in Pride* was a reminder to queer youth that their identities should be celebrated and honored always.





# POWER IN PRIDE

## at Home

Streaming  
**June 17 thru July 9 2020**

When the pandemic shutdown in March necessitated cancelling all in-person performances of *Power in Pride*, About Face began working to find ways to bring the show online to stay connected with our communities. What emerged was a series of six videos adapted from segments of the show along with three Q&A segments modeled after the post-show discussions that accompany the live touring shows. This format also provided a unique opportunity for the ensemble to respond to the protests and calls for racial justice happening around the country.

Directed by **LEXI SAUNDERS**  
Featuring **DIONNE ADDAI, ANGELICA GRACE,  
NICO QUINN, AIMY TIEN, and VIC WYNTER**  
Video Editing by **CHARLES RIFFENBURG**  
Produced by **AMY SHEAHAN**

1,778

ONLINE VIEWS  
through Sept 1, 2020

9

VIDEO  
EPISODES



## STREAMING VIDEOS

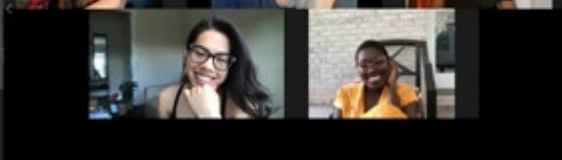
### About Face Social Media

All videos available on Facebook and YouTube

### Chicago Parks District Night Out in the Parks

Select videos presented as part of the "Your Night Out At Home" program





## POWER IN PRIDE AT HOME EPISODES

### **"The Constitution of Queerdom"** *June 17, 2020*

The *Power in Pride at Home* series kicks off with a declaration of positivity and inclusivity.

### **"LGBTQ+ Community Q&A":**

***Power in Pride Kiki*** *July 23, 2020*

The ensemble answers questions about the LGBTQ+ community they get commonly asked during post-show Q&A talkback sessions.

### **"Black + Queer"** *June 25, 2020*

Cast member Dionne confronts the overlap of black and queer identities within the Black community.

### **"Family Fortune"** *June 25, 2020*

Cast member Aimy examines her relationship with her grandfather and his subtle acceptance of her identity.

### **"Right Now": *Power in Pride Kiki* Q&A**

*June 30, 2020*

The ensemble answers urgent questions about addressing racism in the queer community and how to be an effective accomplice.

### **"Whose History?"** *July 2, 2020*

Cast member Aimy contrasts her family's struggle with accepting her identity with the ancient history of queer identities.

### **"Letter To My Younger Self"** *July 2, 2020*

Ensemble members Dionne and Vic send insight and encouragement to their younger selves about love and self-acceptance.

### **"Hey Allies!": *Power in Pride Kiki* Q&A**

*July 7, 2020*

The cast answers questions about being an LGBTQ+ ally.

### **"My Power Is..."** *July 9, 2020*

In the conclusion of the *Power in Pride at Home* series, the cast reflects on and celebrates where they center power within themselves and their identities.

Aimy Tien radiates a similar boldness with "The Constitution of Queerdom," adapted from the *Power in Pride* touring community engagement show.

"So many people think Pride is just rainbows and glitter and naked people. I'm like no, Pride started as a riot. We celebrate, but we have to keep fighting," Tien said. "The work is not done, not when the life expectancy of a Black trans woman is around 35. All lives can't matter until Black Lives Matter. All Black Lives can't matter until Black trans and queer lives matter."

"The Constitution of Queerdom" is part of About Face Theatre's *Power in Pride at Home* series, which focuses on amplifying queer voices, often drawing upon autobiographical stories.

"The more stories we can tell, the better," said Tien. "Queer stories matter. Queer people matter. You don't get to look away. We are right here. We are not going anywhere."

—from "COVID can't stop the Pride celebration"  
by Catey Sullivan, *Chicago Reader* June 24, 2020

## Reflection

# DIRECTOR LEXI SAUNDERS (SHE/HER)



“When we first found out we were pivoting our *Power in Pride* show to a digital format [in response to the COVID-19 pandemic], the ensemble immediately started to dream big. With all the online content already available for youth right now, we wanted as high quality as we could realistically achieve so that we could hopefully reach as wide an audience as possible. This meant narrowing down and selecting only pieces from the show that felt the most important right now—which is really a huge part of our devising process every year anyway, so in a way it felt like an extension of our fall rehearsals. The process consisted of weekly rehearsals, remote video shoots, production meetings, and constantly finding new check-in questions that weren’t just “How are you doing?” (because how is anyone doing in a global pandemic and a violent political climate?).

The main rule of our touring show is usually to be as minimalist as possible because we perform anywhere from school libraries to parks, so any design elements are not really an option. But reimagining these pieces as videos meant ditching all of our blocking and choreo, and focusing almost entirely on the design—including the background, framing, lighting, and music. Directing all of that remotely with varied resources and locations was definitely challenging, but so rewarding to collaborate with the ensemble in this new way. We quickly found that although the cast is used to performing these pieces to huge full auditoriums, there was something uniquely vulnerable about performing them to a camera in an empty room. Not to mention that they were also now bringing the audience into their own home—often their own bedroom—all of which ultimately led to really personal performances.





# YOUTH TASK FORCE





# YOUTH TASK FORCE

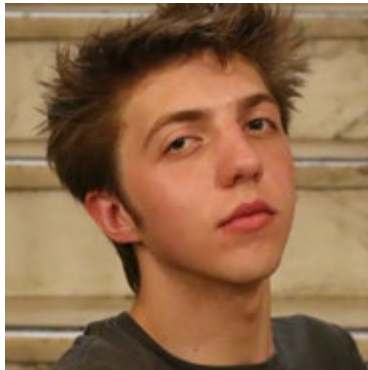
## WHAT IS THE ABOUT FACE YOUTH TASK FORCE?

About Face's Youth Task Force (YTF) is made up of a team of returning ensemble members who have trained with AFYT and are ready to take on additional responsibilities as leaders. YTF members assist in facilitating workshop activities, organizing social excursions, and curating a special event each year.

This year, YTF members held leadership roles within the cast and production team of the AFYT showcase *A Glow Up*, curated and produced three in-person and one virtual *KINSHIP* variety shows, and served on About Face's Board of Directors.



**ANGELICA GRACE**  
(she/her/hers)



**MICAH MANTERNACH**  
(he/they)



**SHARON PASIA**  
(she/they)



# KINSHIP

*KINSHIP* is a performance series from About Face Theatre created and curated by the About Face Youth Task Force. It is an artistic platform for young queer performers (prioritizing those of color) to showcase new and original work. This all-ages queer variety show creates brave spaces for storytelling, drag, spoken word-poetry, monologues, music, and connection for people across the city of Chicago. *KINSHIP* is a home to uplift, empower, and celebrate queer art.

Every show has a new lineup of singers, dancers, poets, drag artists, and more. Some months have a theme, some don't! The event has a suggested donation of \$5 at the door, with proceeds going directly back to the performers.

*KINSHIP* launched in December 2018 with performances at The Martin and has since expanded to Reunion Chicago, Steppenwolf Theatre, and online. There have been eight *KINSHIP*s so far and we have served over 50 queer performers ages 14-24 and have reached over 700 audience members.

## MILESTONE

In the 2018-2019 Season, *KINSHIP* packed the house at Steppenwolf's new 1700 theatre space, making it the most well-attended Look-OUT series performance Steppenwolf had ever hosted. This season, Steppenwolf approached the Youth Task Force about bringing *KINSHIP* back to their Look-OUT series for a second time. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the final *KINSHIP* event of the season from taking place in person.





## Reflection

# YOUTH TASK FORCE

## SHARON PASIA (SHE/THEY)



“ I had been a member of AFYT for two years when I was invited to be a part of the Youth Task Force. Angelica [Grace] and I met up in a coffee shop that first year trying to figure out what our YTF project was going to be. We weren't 21 yet and we were frustrated that most of the queer events in the city were in bars, so we couldn't go. We wanted to create something new.

We saw the youth-led *Salonathon* and then we saw posters around the AFT office for a queer dance party and we thought: why don't we mix the two and create a space where queer youth are allowed to be out and safe and share their art and then dance? We wanted our event to be all of that. We decided it should feel like a gathering of friends and we looked up synonyms for that idea and that's how the title *KINSHIP* came to be.

I remember the first *KINSHIP* event at The Martin in Logan Square last year. We were very nervous because we didn't know who would show up. Then we opened the doors and our first night was a full house! It was hot and crowded and so incredible watching some of our old friends, some people I knew from high school that I didn't even know were queer, up there sharing their art.

People our age are so used to auditioning for a good school with a good name. It was important to not have that tension for *KINSHIP*. We removed that unneeded wondering, "am I good enough?" For me, watching the performers, seeing their faces light up, everyone around them snapping, clapping, seeing these young people grow as artists, gave me such a feeling of confidence and bliss.





# KINSHIP



## AN ALL AGES QUEER VARIETY SHOW

Created & cruated by the **ABOUT FACE YOUTH TASK FORCE:**  
**ANGELICA GRACE, MICAH MANTERNACH, and SHARON PASIA**



The *KINSHIP: An All Ages Queer Variety Show* series creates brave space for storytelling, drag, spoken word-poetry, monologues, music, and connection for people across the city of Chicago. Prioritizing young artists of color, most performers are youth under 25 years of age, and many are previously unaffiliated with About Face Theatre. It is a performance series aimed at curating a safe, supportive, and creative space for queer artists to experiment with their performance crafts and share in a dance party.

## LIVE PERFORMANCES

**Sunday, Nov 24, 2019 @ The Martin**

*Theme: "What are you desiring right now?"*

**Saturday, Dev 21, 2019 @ The Martin**

*Theme: "What are you celebrating?"*

**Saturday, February 22, 2020 @ Reunion**

*Theme: "KINSHIP's birthday"*

## VIRTUAL PERFORMANCES

**Saturday, May 2, 2020 online streaming**

*Theme: "Coming together while social distancing"*

**180**

IN-PERSON  
ATTENDANCE

**292**

ONLINE VIEWS  
through Sept 1, 2020

**3**

LIVE IN-PERSON  
PERFORMANCES

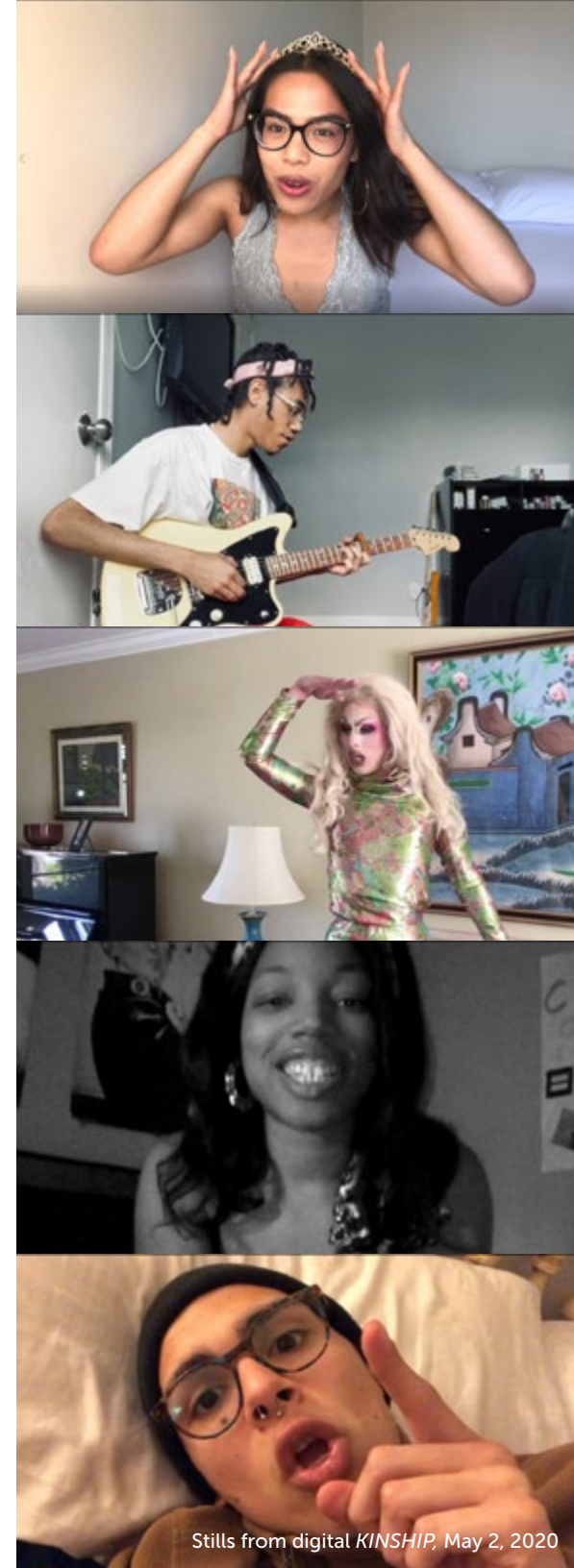
**1**

VIRTUAL  
STREAMING  
PERFORMANCE

# DIGITAL KINSHIP

When the COVID-19 pandemic first hit in the spring, preventing gatherings and performances from happening safely, the Youth Task Force immediately looked for ways to take its April *KINSHIP* event online. Task Force members expanded the reach of *KINSHIP* by bringing in performers from outside of Chicago for the first time to contribute a range of styles and content to the show.

As one of the first original variety shows produced online during this time, the May 2020 *KINSHIP* presented considerable learning curves for everyone involved, from virtual collaboration to video editing to premiering a virtual watch party via social media. The final video program drew almost 300 viewers, more than tripling the program's regular in-person attendance.



Stills from digital *KINSHIP*, May 2, 2020

## Reflection

# DONOR

## JULIA FABRIS MCBRIDE (SHE/HER)



“ I am a co-founder of About Face Youth Theatre, a bisexual woman, mother of a beautiful non-binary 13-year-old, former Chicagoan, and 15-year resident of rural Kansas. I’m vice president at the Kansas Leadership Center, and I have a secret: Most of what I learned about leadership I learned at About Face Youth Theatre.

Back in 1999, Eric Rosen and Kyle Hall stood in front of a sold-out crowd in the old theatre at Broadway and Belmont. They shared their intention to create a youth theatre. I felt the energy of their commitment to break down barriers between generations in our community, to use the medium of theatre to support LGBTQ+ young people in finding their voices and speaking their truths. I knew that, amplified by the artistry and institutional support of adults at About Face, our

youth would change the world. I wanted to be a part of that. Twenty-one years later, I felt a similar rush when I heard from Megan about plans to take the youth theatre online. I knew in 2020, as I had in 1999, that this bold move by About Face would change the world.

About Face Youth Theatre is a beacon and an inspiration. Living in rural Kansas, my kid needs you. Our LGBTQ+ kids need you. While there is more support than many may imagine, our rural kids’ voices are not as confident as their urban counterparts. Your average LGBTQ+ youth may need an About Face performer to speak up first, to lead the way, to reflect their truth before they can say it out loud. We who are far outside big city limits can’t always get to the theatre. Thank you for making your voices loud enough for everyone to hear. ”





**THANK YOU!**  
Your ongoing support  
makes our critical work possible.



ABOUT  
**FACE**  
THEATRE

5252 N Broadway Ave, Fl 2, Chicago, IL 60640  
(773) 784-8565 • [AboutFaceTheatre.com](http://AboutFaceTheatre.com)



[/AboutFaceTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/AboutFaceTheatre)



[@aboutfacechi](https://www.instagram.com/aboutfacechi)



[@aboutfacechi](https://twitter.com/aboutfacechi)



[/aboutfacetheatrechicago](https://www.youtube.com/aboutfacetheatrechicago)

Photo credits: Michael Brosilow, Nathanael Filber, Tom McGrath, and Amy Sheahan