

Proposed Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion The Eugene O'Neill Society

Updated 2022

The Eugene O'Neill Society recognizes that it has not fully embodied the promise of diversity—in all its forms—within its organization. Eugene O'Neill's views were those of a man born at the end of the nineteenth century, and he penned his dramas during a time when writers attempted to document the behaviors, dialects, and social/political values of an increasingly diverse American society. For the contemporary playgoer or reader, his works invite evaluation and reinterpretation, evidenced in recent criticism of O'Neill for his representation of women and ethnic minorities.

O'Neill's plays nonetheless have stood the test of time, setting the framework to champion the voices of historically and systemically marginalized groups, including some of the most influential Black artists in American theatre and cinema. O'Neill's dramas have not only broken color lines around the world with innovative productions; they have been the launching pads for transforming the direction of American drama. With an eye toward our current cultural moment, we invite critical study of O'Neill through a twenty-first-century lens.

In order better to build upon O'Neill's contributions, we assert our commitment to diversifying the Eugene O'Neill Society and to intensifying our support of diverse scholarly and theatrical examinations of O'Neill's work. We commit to implementing and periodically revisiting the Action Plan that appears below. We will pursue a larger program of inclusivity that responds to the ongoing cultural reckoning in the United States. We will do this by recognizing and supporting scholars and theatre artists with diverse: ethnic, racial, and gender identities; diverse methods and practices; and diverse philosophical and intellectual perspectives.

We acknowledge our obligations to scholars and theatre artists who continue to confront intolerance and systemic marginalization.

ACTION PLAN

- Diversify the Board to include members from the four categories listed in the Bylaws (US Scholars, International Scholars, Theatre Artists, Theatre Organizations). Diversify in terms of gender, race, sexuality, nationality, ability, and age to include a range of scholarly and artistic approaches.
- Ensure our outward facing presence (including website and social media) reflects the diversity of work being done about O'Neill. For instance, include photos of contemporary actors/tresses performing O'Neill such as James Earl Jones, Denzel Washington, John Douglas Thompson, and Ruby Dee as well as including recent British, Irish Republic and Japanese productions, etc.
- Pursue, encourage, and highlight institutions, publishers, and theater companies to promote O'Neill studies and productions outside English-speaking countries, such as the recent collaboration in China between Rob Dowling and Shiyun Xu.

- Encourage the study of O’Neill in high schools and the production of his plays in regional theatres. This can be done by offering class plans and study guides for O’Neill plays to high school teachers or online dramaturgical services to regional theaters.
- Develop curricula for including O’Neill in undergraduate courses on political theatre in American drama, courses that focus on theatre as an instrument for social change.
- Continue to make connections with other societies (ASTR, ATDS, ATHE, the Susan Glaspell Society, the August Wilson Society, the David Henry Hwang Society, the Black Theatre Network, and the National Asian American Theatre Company, for example.)
- Continue to develop diversity in the *EOR*.
- Invite diverse speakers to our conferences, and where necessary provide them with travel funds and stipends.
- Organize and present sessions on O’Neill at conferences sponsored by organizations committed to diversity in theatre and the humanities, such as the Black Theatre Network conference.
- Create calls for papers and panels that attract more diverse scholars and theatre artists.
- Sponsor more presentation and publication opportunities to solicit graduate students and younger theatre artists
- Add to the by-laws a criterion for evaluation of the editor of the *EOR*, a process which occurs every three years. Criteria for review should be established for: the president of the Society, the person responsible for the Society website and Facebook page, and the board member responsible for organizing conference sessions on O’Neill especially if their terms extend beyond a three-year period.
- Create a bibliography listing of all articles and books pertaining to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity that members of the Eugene O’Neill Society have published in the *Eugene O’Neill Review*, the Eugene O’Neill Newsletter or with other presses.
- Request the Eugene O’Neill Board of the Directors to implement a yearly accountability review regarding the implementation of the above action items.
- Consider using Land Grant statements at conferences

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee:

Sheila Hickey Garvey (Chair). Susan Brown, Thierry Dubost, Herman Farrell, Katie Johnson, Alex Pettit, Chris Westgate.