



Dear Friends of the August Wilson Cultural Center,

We have learned that there is concern about the newly branded name for the performing arts venue, August Wilson Cultural Center; the term "African American" was a part of the original name for the Center.

We understand the importance of names and naming among people of African descent, particularly as it pertains to our enslaved African ancestors and their history on the mainland of North America. While the name change was not done in isolation, but rather as part of the broader strategic planning process that resulted in the new Mission and Vision Statements for the institution, we understand that no level of engagement can eclipse the vast and abiding ideological narrative that has historically elicited deep concern and cultural implications. We want to affirm that we are listening.

We, at the August Wilson Cultural Center, have no intention of diminishing a focus on African-American culture. In fact, the name change reflects a deeper embrace of the broader cultural richness of the entire African diaspora and commitment to August Wilson's legacy. Our new mission states:

The mission of the August Wilson Cultural Center is to own and operate a home for the arts, storytelling, learning and exchange around the African American experience and the rich culture of the African diaspora. We are guided by the enduring truths and essential values evident in the work of August Wilson.

We will continue to examine these and other critical questions of race and identity through the artistic and cultural programming at the August Wilson Cultural Center. We invite everyone to join us in this work. It is our hope that our "call" to fully embrace the national and international stature of our namesake favorite son, August Wilson, and moreover our "call" to broadly embrace arts, culture, experience and expression of the entire African diaspora opens up even more possibilities for how they are honored, showcased and celebrated at the August Wilson Cultural Center. It is necessary that our collective "call," to elevate the unique experience of African-Americans and those of the African diaspora take center stage. Our ancestors never allowed what they were called - or what people thought they should be called - to overshadow their actual calling. We plan to honor that legacy. We will keep you posted on our progress. If you have comments or feedback, feel free to reach out via email at info@aacc-awc.org. Visit our website at aacc-awc.org to learn about the very important work taking place at the August Wilson Cultural Center.

Janis Burley Wilson

President & CEO