

Dear Capital Investment Committee
Chair Rep. Fue Lee and
The Minnesota House of Representatives,

Greetings, my name is Atlese Robinson and I am the Founding Artistic Director of Ambiance Theatre Company. Like Funny Asian Women Kollektive, Ambiance Theatre Company is an organization dedicated to cultural curation and the preservation of authentic cultural narratives. We believe in creating for, by, and near Black people and cross-cultural connections that allow all BIPOC individuals space for healing and subversion of white supremacy. I've had the pleasure of collaborating with Saymoukda Vongsay earlier this year for a panel discussion highlighting the prevalence of white supremacy even in our beloved careers as artists. I've also had the pleasure of witnessing the brilliance and necessity of the work of FAWK while I was a student at Augsburg University. Colonization and systemic racism attacks us in emotional, cultural, and spiritual ways as much as economically and politically, this is why the work of artist collectives like FAWK are imperative to the dismantling of white supremacy.

The East Side of Saint Paul is a myriad of cultures, races, languages, food, ethnicities, faiths, and identities that reflect the world at large, and yet we have few cultural centers for authentic and free creative expression. The Asian American Center for Media and the Arts will benefit more than Asian American residents of the East Side. Small theatre companies like my own will also be able to expand our community programming to effectively engage our communities through storytelling, educational programming, performance, and community celebrations of our lesser known, but vital holidays. As a cultural steward, I am aware of how urgent it is that we nurture the souls of our neighbors. Following the murder of George Floyd and the surge of violence against Asian Americans throughout this pandemic, it is clear that our communities must lean on each other again to defeat the beast of racism that seeks to devour us. Our people need this.

I am grateful for your time reading this letter and hope that you understand the sincerity of my words and the importance of this work. Thank you.

Gratefully,
Atlese Robinson
Founding Artistic Director of Ambiance Theatre Company
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