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Good Morning to the West Midlands Culture Response Unit.

It's an absolute honour to share space with you all this morning and I'm not going to take this opportunity lightly, I am a member of the young, Black, LGBTQ community in the region, and today we are all in mourning in light of the murder of George Floyd. His murder transcends beyond party lines and borders because his death represents a wider, systemic issue of that Black lives are less equal within the world.

Young Black people, Black Artists feel and Black Communities within the West Midlands are deeply affected by deep and systemic inequalities and are hurting. These people are members of staff, parents and also children who are looking to be seen and heard. I have spoken to young people and artists across the midlands and they are eager to know what our sector is doing to not only show our solidarity but to evidence our care. We have a lot of work to do and we must work together; from representation within leadership to deep diving within our organisations to representing work from Black Artists and to ensure that we are holding spaces for Black Artists within the West Midlands to heal, mourn and make if they wish to do so.

Right now they will be looking to you all to evidence what tangible action we are taking.

Therefore I have compiled their views, requests and thoughts and I am presenting them to you now, but before I begin, please begin thinking about how from today you can start implementing these requests within your organisation:

In the long term think about:

Programming:

- How are you supporting talent development programs?
- What artists have you commissioned in the last 3 years?
- What's the decision-making process when selecting artists to work with?
- How are connecting with communities that are deemed hard to reach, they are not hard to reach, your institution's outreach model may not be as effective, it time to question historic outreach models and reach out.
- Black artists from the West Midlands should be represented on the stages in the NPO's Why aren't they?

CPD:

- Has everyone in your organisation, especially customer-facing staff gone through unconscious bias training? If not, why not? This could transform the relationships between black audiences and your organisation
- If you are a leader, be accessible and ask what is needed to your Black member of staff for them to be able to have the right environment to truly thrive especially in this climate

Ethos:

- I am asking for a culture shift, this should be reflected in policy and integrated into our work
- Look beyond black history month, think about long term opportunities, it is tokenistic to have a guest speaker in once a year to discuss black related issues
- We need a Zero tolerance policy for racism and we need to understand the impacts of microaggressions
- Equitable opportunities - not everyone feels comfortable within your institution to voice what they need.

In our sector there is a huge lack of representation within from the Black community in:

- Senior leadership
- Board level
- Decision making - consultation should be paid.

It's time to talk about what we are doing to make a real change and evidencing how we are implementing these changes.

Young people are asking you to:

Redirect Resources:

- Let the movements and responses come from young people within your city if they don't engage with your platforms ask an organisation working with by and for them.
- Can producers support young people to organise their own safe space - How are you enabling your staff to support activism and change ?
- Provide staff time to show support to give workshops, in their fields i.e marketing support the DIY culture with experts who have experience within your team campaigns from graphic design
- Emotional wellbeing - What can you do to support the wellbeing of your staff, how are you holding space for artists and how are you supporting the people who need to have rest and recuperation time?
- Become an advocate, and show active allyship.
- Give experiences to young people in the future, can you give mentoring time tickets, how are you acknowledging the next generation of black british creatives?
- What are you going to do to make a consistent change - what does the future look like and how can you keep the momentum going?
- Now is the time to reevaluate who's on the board.
- Cultural organisations have the responsibility to tell stories and make statements - can you support black artists to document this moment?

A collective statement is not enough but it's a starting point.

We need a shift in culture. A pledge:

- **Combine resources on a shared platform and how can we create a shared pot of funding for art activists in the city to have access to.**
- Hold space for emotional wellbeing and check in with staff, empower them to show solidarity if they want to, some might be worried or concerned to voice their views.
- Support organisations like Unmuted and MAIA Creatives who are black-led, and Birmingham based who are a lifeline for artists within Birmingham and the West Midlands

- Become an advocate!
- Be honest; if you know your organisation could do more then let it be known and reach out and connect.
- The digital space is loud. What can we do offline?
- Participate in mass movements like a blackout, and champion movements that are happening in the city - protesting may not be the correct protocol. How can we support movements safely?
- Celebrate the Black artists from the West Midlands on your platforms?

Before you post about blackout here is some more information:

- Blackout Tuesday does not mean to stop posting on social media
- It means to stop promoting your organisation and promote resources that support black lives matter
- Use the silence to amplify voices, work and messages from the black community
- Share posts and work by the black community
- Share a link to organisations that you can donate to
- Share a video or book recommendations or artists from the black community
- Share some history!

All the best.