

# **Amanda Cardwell-Aiken**

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## **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement**

I express myself as a white, non-binary, queer woman that uses she/they pronouns. In the past this is something that I would not feel comfortable with announcing publicly because of the stigmas against LGBTQ+ communities. By embracing my identity, I embrace the civic responsibility, respect for diversity, and human dignity that comes with teaching the next generation of students. My goal in my classroom is to make sure that students feel as comfortable expressing themselves as possible and avoid outdated language and philosophies that propagate harm. When I'm teaching Stage Makeup I make sure to use gender inclusive language and allow students to create makeup maps that express their preferred gender identity/euphoria.

Establishing practices of equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racist behavior is important because they have been long ignored by those who benefit from the current power structure. As educators I think it is our duty to break down structures that allow these cycles to continue unchecked. Institutions need to be committed to increasing gender, racial and ethnic diversity across their staff. Doing this will foster a caring community that elevates the academic experience for all students and prepare them to become global citizens and leaders. I can contribute to breaking down structures by bringing body positivity and inclusivity to my costume designs, use gender inclusive/affirming language whenever possible, listen if someone takes issue with a design especially when dealing with cultures that are often appropriated like Romani and African American.

Classism is one of the major structures which maintains barriers between new ideas and multi-racial identity/society in contemporary theatre. Revivals and new productions of classical plays must be looked at with a contemporary lens to see how many people may potentially be excluded from the conversation. This does not just apply to who is seen onstage but who has influence offstage as well in other areas of production. Students can no longer afford to work internships that offer low or unpaid labor to garner the experience of a healthy working environment so I work to build an environment that teaches them how they should expect to be treated when entering the workforce.

I take pride in working with companies that focus on diversifying because it's important to tell stories that center around the experiences of BIPOC and women. I worked with the Kitchen Theatre Company, a 99-seat equity theatre in Ithaca, New York, that focuses on diversity in playwrights, actors and staff. Theatres on the local level, like the KTC, help influence which new plays become established as canon, as well as starting important conversations in the community. Theatre on all levels can inspire hope, change and give representation to those who need it most.