



Mother's Day Missive from Kevin Patterson

May 9, 2021

This letter is long, but please read all the way through. I hope that by the end, you will feel heard and will better understand the serious work Red Barn Productions is doing to address the concerns we have been hearing from many in the Dickens Fair community. Thank you.

First, I want to offer an apology. In the past, believing online communication to be fraught with misunderstanding, I have refrained from discussing Red Barn management issues in online forums. I realize now that my restraint actually caused a great deal of pain and frustration. That was never my intention.

Because I communicated poorly, I failed to make these 4 things clear:

1. Racism, like sexism, is a malignant cancer in our society. Red Barn will fight it by any means in our power.
2. We are committed to a policy of racially diverse casting. Going forward, portrait casting is NOT being adopted as Red Barn policy.
3. I have been considering the proposals of Londoners of the African Diaspora (LoAD) very carefully. LoAD did outstanding work. I agree with many of the proposals in their ARI, and truly believed we had communicated this in the six hours of zoom calls Cat Taylor, Robert Young, and I had with their representatives.
4. My team and I have spent hundreds of hours looking at all the ways we would implement many of the ideas contained in LoAD's ARI. Training of Red Barn's part-time staff in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice began months ago. I failed to let people know this as soon as I should have. This delay made good people with good ideas and very real concerns feel ignored.

So, here are our thoughts and decisions moving forward:

1. With the permission of LoAD, Red Barn will provide the LoAD anti-racism initiative (ARI) to its DEI consultants who will provide an independent recommendation as to which elements of the ARI should be incorporated into the working guideline for the Red Barn Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan. LoAD as a group will be given the credit and acknowledgement they deserve for their inspired efforts.
2. We understand that Red Barn has been perceived as being slow in addressing other problems, such as sexual harassment. For the past five years, Red Barn has put new policies and procedures in place, created training programs, and increased personnel to keep people safe. Every complaint we received was

- responded to with seriousness and concern. It is clear that many still feel they have been unheard, so we must and we will do better. See item #3.
3. Red Barn will create a dedicated Human Resources department. It will have two directors: a Health and Safety Director, and a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director. We will fill these roles with as much lead time as financially possible prior to our next live event. These positions will be equal to all other department managers in the company. This new department will be integral to every part of our operation.
 4. Red Barn is immediately seeking proposals from qualified, nationally recognized DEI consultancy firms. The selected firm will begin their independent assessment work by the end of June. This will result in a set of recommendations drawn from interviews and surveys with Fair participants, with the clear and unquestioning goal of creating a Dickens Christmas Fair that expresses our humanity, and fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of our organization.
 5. Red Barn will form a DEI Advisory Roundtable at which all the Dickens Fair affinity groups will have a seat. The co-chairs will be the H&S and DEI Directors, but the participants will have wide discretion to determine the process and goals. The ideas and findings of the DEI Advisory Roundtable will be reported directly to management. Responses to all issues raised will be shared in a fully transparent process.

The Great Dickens Christmas Fair will do far more than accommodate. We will work with our affinity groups to lead — with a clear message of equity, inclusion, diversity. NO role will be out of reach of the most talented person because of the color of their skin or the uniqueness of their abilities. NO moment of discomfort will be pushed aside as unworthy of compassion, safety, or notice. Our training, casting, performing, managing, marketing, every single aspect of our show will be held to this standard.

The Dickens Fair began in 1970. Our shared values of participation, authenticity, and creativity, used to be enough. The individual expressions of the art form of theatrical living history, the beauty and cleverness of the art, the environment, the costumes, the deep and lasting friendships, the wide-eyed wonder of the guests, these things used to be enough.

They are not enough any more, perhaps they never really were. We are not separate from the world, we are very much a part of it. The Fair must grow, commit, evolve, and change, becoming a place of safety and belonging where the dignity and worth of our shared humanity truly shines. We commit to this process.

To experience the Great Dickens Christmas Fair is to step inside a story, a story set in 19th century London, on a winter's night. The spirit of human kindness is everywhere. Workday concerns are banished. There's a dance party in an old warehouse, children play, and everyone is happy to see each other. The old miser is being redeemed, and we feel his transformation in our own hearts. The table is laid for a feast. At that table, we are all one.

That is our story. And we are going to tell it with new vision and clarity, as a story that is as true today as it ever was. Today is all we have. And it is where we can make a difference.

We are making this commitment publicly, to you our valued participants, and to our guests. Please visit Dickensfair.com to view our press release. I am also personally posting this on the Dickens Fair Cast and Crew Facebook Group, which is now unpaused.

THANK YOU for caring so deeply about the Great Dickens Christmas Fair.

With clear intention for health, harmony, creativity, and love, happy Mother's Day.

Most sincerely,

Kevin Patterson, Co-Producer

RED BARN PRODUCTIONS | redbarnproductions.com