

Life Mission Statement

I believe in the power of the arts to transform lives. I am an entrepreneur whose profit is made from the intangible life growth of others. I believe the arts can educate, entertain, empower, and enlighten individuals, families and communities. I believe in people and the strength of positive thought and hope! It is important to me that I use my skills and talents to help people, animals, and this planet.

Diversity Statement

I have long been committed to diversity, and recognize the barriers faced by women and other minorities in the arts and life.

I founded my first theatre company, 'All Children's Theatre Ensemble' (ACT) in 1987 in Providence, RI. From the beginning my mission was to create an environment for all youth regardless of their talent, economic, cultural, ethnic, gender, physical, or disabilities.

My Curriculum Vitae includes the many ways in which I included all youth in my productions, educational and outreach programs. Our playwriting program for ensemble members produced plays about 'youth with physical' disabilities, 'the AIDS epidemic' and more.

ACT was given a grant to work with youth in two housing projects of Providence for a year long program. I taught at one of the housing communities and Paul Buxton taught at the other. He wrote a play for the group, 'Two Chains', a play about the slavery of the African people and the slavery of drugs on youth. Youth were exposed to history, playwriting, acting, design and experienced their first professional exposure at Trinity Rep. The result of that program was one youth (Latino), age 12 (and now nearing 40) chose the path of theatre than that of his friends in his community. He was ACT's spokesperson at many fundraising events in which he said, 'I give ACT credit for the man I've grown to be. They came to me at a formative time in my life. I thought the only way out of the projects was drugs or basketball and then I discovered I had talents as an actor. They believed in me, and I learned to believe in myself'.

Michael Smith, a youth with down syndrome joined our theatre class at age seven. In the beginning, several parents withdrew their children because there was a 'mongoloid child' in the class. My mission included ALL youth regardless of their abilities and he remained a member till he was nineteen, performing in numerous productions and oftentimes performing the pre-show talk.

I cast a young man as Santa Claus one year. Surprised he said, 'Wrenn there aren't any black Santas. Why would you cast me?' I replied, 'because you are the best person to play the part and there are Santas of many colors.'

I produced and toured numerous productions about the life and times of Dr. Martin Luther King and one performance was for 5000 middle school students at the Providence Performing Arts Center. After the show, during the talkback with the audience the cast, 80% youth of color, were surprised to hear questions such as, 'why did they make the woman sit in the back of the bus and

why did they hose down those children'? Not only was it an educational experience for the audience but an empowering experience for the cast.

I have always encouraged the females in my company to 'find their voice and to use it'. In 1998, I commissioned a playwright from Trinity Rep to write a play about the 'Importance of Females in the Industrial Revolutions'. 'MILL GIRLS' was awarded the New England Theatre Conference Moss Hart' award for best new play and production in New England. (This included all community, higher education, and professional theatre in New England). It later toured schools in Rhode Island and Massachusetts and performed for 5000 middle school youth at the Providence Performing Arts Center.

For twelve years our season included a playwrighting competition for Rhode Island high school students. One year the play chosen was written by a girl who was deaf and performed by students from the RI School for the Deaf.

When I left my company to move to North Carolina, 23% of the youth participants in ACT had a disability ranging on the spectrum and 18% were youth of color.

I moved to North Carolina in 2009 and was accepted into the Educators Provider Directory of the Arts and Science Council in Charlotte. I provide programs such as 'Shakespeare: Outside the Box' and workshops on the Holocaust and Civil Rights. The most emotional experience I had was teaching two week long workshops for the Project Lift students in Charlotte.

<https://www.projectliftcharlotte.org/>. In 2013 I taught a five-day residency at Bruns Academy, Walter G. Byers School where I integrated theatre arts into a literacy program. The middle school students produced over 200 poems, narrative, and raps/songs. In 2014 I taught a five-day residency at Walter G. Byers School, Bruns Academy, Thomasboro Academy and Druid Academy. I integrated theatre arts into *Space: The Final Frontier*. Poems, raps and skits were written and performed by the middle school students.

Since a young girl, I have always questioned the inequities of those who are different from myself and I have advocated justice and inclusion through theatre and my art.