BLACK THEATER ASSOCIATION (BTA)
CALL FOR PAPERS/SESSION PROPOSALS

“A play is a blueprint of an event: a way of creating and rewriting history through the medium of literature. Since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to ‘make’ history—that is, because so much of African-American history has been unrecorded, dismembered, washed out, one of my tasks as a playwright is to—through literature and the special strange relationship between theatre and real-life—locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, find bones, hear the bones sing, write it down.”

– Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play and Other Works*

**Black Theatre Association (BTA)** Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) invites single papers and panel/session proposals for the August 5-8, 2021 ATHE hybrid conference with fully in-person sessions at the JW Marriott Austin (Austin, TX) as well as fully virtual sessions. The Executive Board of BTA seeks thought-provoking investigations of Black cultural production that span all areas of theater history, performance studies, criticism, training, practice, pedagogy, activism, leadership, and politics.

The theme for the 2021 conference is “**RE: ATHE.**” a theme that “begins with a recognition and calls for a reckoning.” As the conference committee notes, “**Re-** the prefix complicates our reckoning. Its meanings include “back from a point reached” and “back to the original place or position.” It risks nostalgia, a rootedness in what was, even as we seek to redesign something new. But nostalgia from whose perspective? . . . This moment finds us amid a global pandemic, growing climate concerns, fascist political actions in the U.S., immigrant holding camps at its border, and theatre closures around the world. As the Black Lives Matter movement challenges not just police brutality but systemic racism more broadly, this moment demands us to reconsider theatre and ATHE, to disrupt our previous practices, and reassemble new futures.” See the complete conference theme description [here](#).

BTA leadership played a central role in redirecting last year’s conference by planning a Black Lives Matter opening plenary to reframe the conference. That opening plenary, "Dear ATHE: It's not a moment... it's a movement,” called the organization to be accountable and renew its commitment to centering equity and anti-racist work. We are excited that the 2021 conference theme builds upon last year’s charge to center anti-racist efforts, amplify BIPOC scholars and artists, and build sustainable change. We appreciate the dedication of BTA members to realize our collective goals. We are indebted to past and present BTA leaders who continue to revitalize the field from within and outside of ATHE.

The purpose of BTA is to promote, actively support, and advance the field of Black Theatre Studies through scholarly research, panels, workshops, performances, and criticism during the ATHE yearly conferences. Our unified interest in the critical study of Black theatre from a global perspective informs our collective desire to promote the experiences of Black people as expressed in various forms of theatre and performance broadly conceived. We recognize Black Theatre as a field that centers on but is not limited to research and critical analysis of theatre and performance created by and about people of African descent. In this spirit, BTA supports and advocates for Black scholars and artists in all discipline areas of ATHE. BTA initiates scholarly and performance-based programs, academic and administrative outreach, and support programs. BTA dedicates its efforts to the scholarship, creative production, and analysis of research, performance, administration, and pedagogy that concerns scholars and artists of Black Theatre in the United States, Africa, and the African Diaspora.

In keeping with the mission of BTA, we invite you to consider the many ways in which your scholarship, teaching, administrative leadership, activism, and creative work engage with the 2012 conference theme. We look forward to your robust submissions since we believe that Black theatre artists and Black Theatre Studies have been at the forefront of many RE movements—to REWRITE
histories, to REENVISION training, to RESIST oppressive systems, to RECONCEPTUALIZE performance, to REVITALIZE communities, to RECAST canonical works, to REFRAME structures, to RECLAIM joy amid anti-Black violence, to REPRESENT people of the global majority, to REIMAGINE the field, and to REJOICE in the RESILIENCE of the artists we RESEARCH, RECOVER, and RESTORE to their rightful places in theatre history, performance theory, and practice of theatre.

**Submitting a single paper presentation:** The BTA board will consider single submissions this year in an effort to facilitate panel formations. If you would like to present a paper or if you have an innovative session idea but do not have a complete panel, submit your single papers/presentation proposal using [this form](#). The deadline for single submissions is November 1, 2020.

**Submitting a fully formed panel:** Please send a brief preliminary proposal description (50-100 words) with prospective panel participants to BTA Vice-President & Conference planner, Eunice S. Ferreira by November 22, 2020 using [this form](#). If you are submitting a multidisciplinary session sponsored by more than one focus group, please be sure to contact the Conference Planners of the respective focus groups for their sponsorship. The session chair of BTA-endorsed panels must then submit a complete proposal via ATHE’s online system by December 1, 2020.

**Process for selection:** ATHE will forward all panels submission to BTA for ranking for conference acceptance by BTA leadership. Please note that each focus group is given a limited number of panels due to conference scheduling. We encourage you to consider creative session formats that will engage audiences in person or on digital platforms. This CFP is open to scholars and theater practitioners across all ranks and experiences including independent scholars, graduate students, contingent faculty, and retirees. Current and yet-to-be members of BTA and ATHE are welcome to submit a proposal. The following criteria will be considered in ranking sessions: (1) a clear abstract that demonstrates a strong theoretical and methodological point of departure that ties all of the panelists together (2) innovative approaches to interrogating Black performance scholarship and performance (3) description of the session format – traditional panel, roundtable, performance, workshop, and interactive formats (4) an investigation of the major themes of the conference (5) sponsorship of BTA, achieved by emailing the BTA Conference planner (6) consideration of co-sponsorship for multidisciplinary panels (7) diversity of offerings from BTA in content and form. Please do not submit papers to more than two panels since ATHE requests that someone not participate in more than two panels within the conference.

**20th Annual BTA Graduate Debut Panel:** Information on the annual BTA and ATDS sponsored session will be announced at a later date. The anticipated deadline for paper submissions is mid-March, 2021.

**Note about the hybrid conference:** ATHE’s plans for the hybrid conference continue to evolve as the organization considers various factors. BTA recommends that as you collaborate on creating panels, all participants should indicate the flexibility of their plans to attend the conference in-person or as a virtual participant. (The conference cannot support panels that mix on-site and virtual participants.)

Membership in BTA is open to scholars and practitioners who are committed to the study, creation, and promotion of Black Theatre inclusive of the theatres of Africa and the African diaspora. BTA members must be current members of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and select membership in BTA in their ATHE online account. BTA Members promote the creative and scholarly production of its members and attend the Business Meeting at ATHE’s conference. If you have any questions, please contact BTA Vice-President & Conference planner, Eunice S. Ferreira at eferreir@skidmore.edu. For general questions about BTA, please contact Veronda Carey, BTA President and Focus Group Representative at btacareycp18@gmail.com.