DEAR FRIENDS,

As someone who focuses way more on the tasks ahead then sitting and being present with the joys and successes, the process of looking back on a year that has felt anything but easy was incredibly… Refreshing!

In January, thanks to our partnership with the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, we were charging full steam ahead with our Writing to Right Wrongs Program. The program was simultaneously being taught in four different schools educating young people about gentrification, redlining, their fair housing rights, and the history of how our neighborhoods became a reflection of what they are today. Somewhere in this natural disaster of a year, we had shimmering moments of hope with rockstar youth who created anti-racist lemonade stands (who then proceeded to win a Young Philanthropist of the Year Award, congrats Cyd!) and who continues to inspire other young people to give back.

By February, we facilitated 2 of the 4 storytelling workshops in 2020 with organizations and institutions talking about how we can create equitable outcomes while shifting power with our resources. In March, we were speaking on The Google for Education Podcast and sharing our opinions on creating equity in education. When we were on the podcast with Google, we came to the realization that if the “now” lasts forever, the people who are going to suffer the most are going to be our educators and our students and that if we were going to continue to support the people we serve, we had to put all of our resources into finding ways to connect with people in a time where nothing feels personal. Believe it or not, our tiny staff that runs like The Little Engine that Could, created “Poetry Empowered: Mental Health Wellness” a 10 week downloadable program that hit ELA Standards spearheaded by our fearless Director of Education, Gleason.

Today, our free downloadable content is spreading, and as of now, we have 54 downloads in 17 cities in 4 states and existing in 19 schools connecting with over 1,600 students. Oh yeah, somewhere along that timeline, we obtained our very first office space which is now easily the flyest nonprofit office (for an organization our size) in the entire city. Our office was made possible with support from Custer, Crandall Office Furniture, and soft seating provided by Steelcase. Steelcase also helped us turn the lobby of the Garfield Park Neighborhoods Association Building (the main floor of our office) into a community space that we’re sure you’ll see more of in 2021.

Somewhere in this natural disaster of a year, we had shimmering moments of hope with rockstar youth who created anti-racist lemonade stands and who continues to inspire other young people to give back. We had fortunate collaborations with some of the coolest creatives in our city (extra special thanks Woosah) and with some of the best companies in the Grand Rapids (shout-out to New Holland Brewing Company and Steelcase) in response to the constant erasure of Black lives; this year we received more support from corporations than our organization has ever seen before. I hope that you are proud of the way we have been stewards of your dollars. I hope you find us worthy of contributing to either now or in the future. I also hope that you will find cool new and exciting ways to pour into us, and that you inspire those around you to do the same while we set our sights higher. I hope you are impressed with what a formally part-time administrative team of 2 has been able to do and are excited for what we will be able to accomplish with a soon to be rockstar team of 5 in 2021.

Below, you’ll see everything else that went into this whirlwind of a year.

MARCEL PRICE
Executive Director
JANUARY
- Ran workshops with Kent County out of school providers on organic connections with those they serve while also opening their eyes to the versatility of STEAM programs
- Grand Rapids Museum School Assembly

FEBRUARY
- Writing to Right Wrongs - Fair Housing Workshop | East Lee Campus High School
- Writing to Right Wrongs Workshop | Union High School
- University of Michigan DEI Workshop
- Writing to Right Wrongs Workshop | CA Frost High School
- Poetry Empowered Workshop | Glen Arbor High School
- 3 - Poetry Empowered Workshops | Forest Hills Northern High School
- Writing to Right Wrongs Workshop | Ottawa Hills High School

MARCH
- Secured our first office space!
- African American Male Achievement Conference
- Poetry Empowered Workshop | Northview Crossroads Middle School

APRIL
- Featured on Google for Education podcast
- In partnership with Garfield Park Neighborhoods Association (GPNA), our grant writer submitted multiple grants to provide direct assistance to Garfield Park neighbors resulting in nearly $20,000 in direct cash assistance/grocery support to individuals in The 49507

MAY
- Pivoted & began to create The Diatribe downloadable content
- Distributed masks to 341 homes in The 49507
- Continued to make our office home - hosted our first socially distanced meeting!

JUNE
- Trained tech teaching artists from Philly, Chicago, Oakland and New York about connecting with students in organic ways during distance learning
- Facilitated the "Creating Equity with our Power an Anti-Racism" workshop with Steelcase
- Executed our first virtual programming with 25 students
- Facilitated the "How to get active in local politics, boards, and more" workshop with EquityPac
JULY
- Metz Legacy Society event
- Began video recording for downloadable content

AUGUST
- Continuing to prep downloadable content for public use
- Facilitated training with teachers across the country on how to make programming organic during distance learning
- Workshop with Teachers against Racism

SEPTEMBER
- New Holland - Black is Beautiful Campaign
- Woosah x The Diatribe BLM collaboration
- Piloted first environmental justice program
- Started a mural in our office!

OCTOBER
- Podcasts in The Park | Start Garden x The Diatribe
- Drafted community workshop space in partnership with Steelcase and GPNA

NOVEMBER
- Teaching Artist EPK Investments & Headshots
- Our Executive Director, Fable, won a Grand Rapids Area Black Business Award
- Fundraising committee began to meet
- 6 (virtual) Poetry Empowered Workshops | Northview Crossroads Middle School
- 3 (virtual) Poetry Empowered Workshops | Forest Hills Northern High School
- Downloadable Content Launched Poetry Empowered Mental Health and Wellness
- Launched our first downloadable content, Poetry Empowered and Mental Health and Wellness

DECEMBER
- 3 (virtual) Poetry Empowered Workshops | Muskegon High School
- Diatribe Free Education Program - poetry show and community update - past, present, and future
- Downloads of our Poetry Empowered and Mental Health and Wellness content | 54 (17 cities, 4 states, 19 schools, 1600+ engaging in our program)