



The People of Cabaret's public statement to Howard Duggan and [Scenstr](#)

Before we begin this statement, we acknowledge the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the land on which this letter has been written. We extend that acknowledgement to their elders both past and present, and to all Aboriginal people across the land. Sovereignty was never ceded. It always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

The People of Cabaret is an organisation dedicated to amplify, uplift, empower, nurture, support and platform artists who are Indigenous and/or Bla(c)k, and/or a person of colour (IBPOC) who work in cabaret and associated art-forms. We were formed by, and for, people who are IBPOC and we believe in equal opportunities, building and maintaining a performing arts landscape which allows us all to thrive. We stand in solidarity with one another, with our allies amplifying our voices to ensure a safer environment for everybody.

In recent events, two of our members have been the victim of racism in a review which was published by Scenstr. We don't need to amplify what was written, but the artist referred to in this review was singled out by the colour of their skin. This review was raised as harmful, and the writer quickly substituted different wording. As the publisher, Scenstr was also requested to issue a public apology - which they have refused.

The Publication, after being criticised by the co-creator of the show on social media, then published an article singling her out - the only woman of colour in this conversation - using language which our communities have been branded with for centuries, reinforcing the misogynistic, racist and sexist undertones which are all too prevalent in our world.

These last few weeks have been traumatic, not only for the two artists who have directly been harmed by this publication, but for all of our communities. As people who are Aboriginal, Indigenous, or First Nations, or people who are Blak, Black, Brown or of colour, we know only too well the lasting effects of racist language, however insidious or covert it may be. When we speak out about it we are branded as "fiery" or "angry" or "bullies". This is called gaslighting - a manipulative tactic that works by twisting the truth, undermining the victim's rationality, leading the victim to question their own reality or motivations. This destabilisation is then used to gain power in conflict. It is a convenient tactic used to derail accusations of racism and shift the scrutiny away from the racism itself. This behaviour is used by narcissistic abusers, and is a common trait in language around colonisation.

As bla(c)k and brown people, we are experts in our own experiences, which should be listened to, heard and accepted as the truth. Our experiences are not there for debate. When you hit someone (accidentally or otherwise) and they tell you it hurts, you accept this to be true - or at least one would hope that's what would happen. We decide when language is violent and harmful, as we are the ones directly impacted by these words and actions. It is not the role of white people to determine what is, and what is not, racist.

Our community is in pain. It has been for centuries, and in the recent resurgence of the global protests of Black Live Matter, these conversations are not going away. We are empowered to speak up, especially

with more allies who are recognising their part in this, and are taking action to work with us to dismantle these violent systems which harm our whole community.

We have actively avoided using any names (apart from Howard Duggan at Scenstr) to highlight that this attack is no longer personal to a few individuals, but to our whole communities. Scenstr has not only harmed two incredibly vital artists within our live performing arts industry, but has affected so many artists of colour across the festival, as well as those allies who are standing strong with us. Scenstr isn't the only publication to be perpetrating actions like this, but has decided to be a defiant example of our oppressors' preference to stay indignant and entitled, and would rather to save face then to play a role in dismantling racism in our industry.

At The People of Cabaret we have collectively decided not to share trauma on our social media. As IBPOC people we are already aware of the trauma we endure as we are living it on a daily basis, through our governments, through the healthcare system, through the prison system and through our education system. We don't get to escape from these experiences, because we live in a world which has deliberately prevented our communities from thriving. The People of Cabaret is first and foremost here to uplift our own community, and in doing that we will raise the standard for everyone. We are a forward-thinking and solution-focused organisation and would like to present some ideas of reparations that Scenstr can take to ensure the safety of our IBPOC communities.

First off, we need a public apology.

To acknowledge the harm that you have caused is important when making the steps into healing. If you don't understand why you need to apologise, apologise anyway as we will at least see that you are acknowledging that we are in pain. This will create a better space for us to be able to have a conversation about your actions.

Reach out to us.

You have told us that it is our job to come to you and ask for an apology or a conversation - we have already done so, but you keep adding other conditions on to this. We have done nothing wrong, yet you are expecting us to bend over backwards for you to show some humility. It's your responsibility to meet us and understand how you play a part in the marginalisation of our community, and to learn how you can stop harming other communities.

Donate to our community.

In order to help others learn about how to be great allies, acknowledge that it takes a lot of resources either financially or emotionally. We accept donations via our GoFundMe Campaign, or you can donate to other fantastic organizations [here](#).

Hire us as consultants.

The Consult is a service designed to start and continue conversations about how organisations and individuals uphold and address racism within their practices. We outreach to other communities to provide you with as much opportunity to engage with diverse people in a safe and ethical way to understand how you can be a better ally to our communities and prevent future harm.

Surround yourself with diverse people.

Not only will you learn first hand what valuable contributors to society we are, you will be creating an environment which allows other voices to be heard. Champion our community by providing space and opportunity for us to share our stories and you will quickly understand that we are not "fiery" but passionate. You will know that we aren't "self-serving" but community focused. You will see that we care deeply about one another, and that it serves the best interests of society at large to amplify the voices of those who are often silenced.