When we set out to craft a year of celebration, of commemorating 25 years of impactful, intentional work elevating student voices, we never imagined a moment like this. COVID-19 has not only placed our community’s welfare at stake physically and emotionally but also changed the landscape of arts education and theater. And now, our young people are contending with new incidents of police brutality toward Black Americans, occurring in the midst of a pandemic that has disproportionately impacted Black people and people of color, sparking important rage about structural and interpersonal racism. In this moment of angst, frustration and uncertainty, we are ever inspired by the perseverance and the spirit of the youth in our community. Their tenacity has energized us to turn these challenges into opportunities.

This Annual Report is not like the ones before it. Rather, the pages ahead are a reflection of our work in the face of societal difficulty and change, and an affirmation that after 25 years of lifting the voices and stories of our young people, we intend on continuing for another 25 years and beyond. We are committed to finding new ways to reach young people, reimagining the platforms on which to share their voices, and creating safe, empowering spaces for artistry and activism.

WE ARE PROUD OF OUR WORK THIS YEAR.

Innovative Programming
Program Director Jared Shamberger and his team responded immediately and flexibly to the needs of our young people in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They shifted our In-School and After-School Playwriting Programs to a digital space to ensure we met our commitments to our partners. This spring, we taught live over video conferencing in virtual classrooms, developed an enrollment-based digital playwriting program, and launched The Playwrights’ Lab, a series of digital workshops for playwrights ages 18 and above. Our new partnership with Prince George’s Community College (which was featured on a WUSA9 local broadcast) expanded our definition of youth to include students up to age 24. Partnerships with The Welders, National Theatre, Urban Institute, and Kaiser Permanente deepened our students’ playwriting experiences and broadened our reach to more than 1,300 DC-area school professionals through Resiliency In School Environments: Understanding & Practice (RISE UP) workshops about creating trauma-sensitive environments for young people.

In total, we served more than 1,300 school professionals and 550 students across the year, including Elan and Leah, two students from our Fall 2020 In-School Playwriting Program partner teacher Audra Polk’s theater class at Eastern Senior High School. Elan told us about his experience as a YPT playwright, saying, “I never really thought I’d write a play that could impact someone else’s life.” Elan and Leah’s playwriting experiences with YPT are featured in a new short YPT film that debuted in April. (Check it out here!)

New Play Development
Like our programming, our new play development work expanded across the year. In the fall, Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris engaged in deep new play development work that included public readings at YPT’s Takoma DC headquarters, and in the Kennedy Center’s Page to Stage New Play Festival. In the spring, Farah announced the launch of Young Playwrights in Progress (YPiP), our first year-long opportunity for young and early-career DC-area playwrights to engage in a script development and workshop reading process of original, not-yet-produced plays. Stay tuned for the announcement of our first class of YPiP playwrights!
Our Production team dreamed big this anniversary year, celebrating 5 years of our cornerstone social justice performance series, *Silence is Violence*. Through the summer and fall, they poured over poems, monologues and scenes written by hundreds of young people over the last eight productions, and in the spring, completed two weeks of script development with the cast and creative team. Our 2020 production, a new devised work based on student writing across the history of *Silence is Violence*, was in its first week of rehearsal when the pandemic closed our doors. We have postponed this production to our 2021-2022 Season, but we are honored to say that our production, written by Farah, was selected for the 2020 Killroy’s List, a national list created to honor plays written by the women, trans, and non-binary writers of the American theater; this year’s list was devoted to holding space for new plays which were cancelled, postponed, or closed early due to COVID-19. We look forward to sharing this production with you next year.

**Professional Development**

Over the last three years, YPT has developed antiracist and anti-oppressive values and policies that center the needs of our young people and their communities and ensure that YPT does its best work. In support of our values, YPT implemented a paid family and medical leave policy that exceeds the DC mandate. With responsive flexibility, we navigated the changing direction of our season and the need to adapt programs for digital delivery. When the pandemic forced peer organizations to furlough and fire staff, we committed to investing in and retaining our full team. We are proud of our work and believe that it is important to share what we have learned with our community. In January 2020, YPT’s Director Team presented a workshop to a full house of theater professionals on our antiracism and anti-oppression values and practices at the DC Theatre Summit, for which Farah was the co-chair. And in May, YPT launched *Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace (AROW)*, our new initiative to support organizations who want to move from words to action in their own antiracism and anti-oppression journeys.

**Celebration and Remembrance**

Although our official Anniversary celebration was put on hold, we had many exciting opportunities to connect with our young people, artists, alumni, and other community members from throughout our 25-year history. We held a season kickoff event at the Eaton DC and had a chance to reconnect with friends and stories from YPT history. We saw new and returning faces at our new play development readings at the Kennedy Center and in our very own studio space. You helped us raise over $34,000 as we celebrated and elevated the voices of young playwrights in our first-ever, virtually-streamed event, *Tell It Forward - The Power of Stories to Shape Our Future*. And, we honored the legacy of late YPT alumnus Pete Hall, giving the memorial *Pete Hall Promising Playwright Award* to YPT alumna Jasmina Tang, who exemplifies Pete’s qualities of hard work, commitment to craft, and impact of youth voice.

In the spring, we braced ourselves for a challenge to continue our work under new circumstances, and as we conclude our anniversary fiscal year, we are proud to say that we have accomplished that and more. Young Playwrights’ Theater is ever-enduring, ever-innovative, and ever-responsive to the needs of our young people. No matter where they are, YPT will meet them, support them, and uplift them. YPT’s work inspires students to realize the power of their voices does not stop in the face of adversity.

We hope you join us in our excitement for the things to come in Fiscal Year 2021. Thank you for your continued support of our work. As our touchstone states, we know that young people are inherently brilliant, and we will continue to exist to share that brilliance with the world.
Young Playwrights’ Theater (YPT) is an award-winning arts education organization and theater company in Washington, DC. Founded by acclaimed Latin American playwright Karen Zacarias in 1995, YPT inspires young people to realize the power of their own voices through high-quality arts education programming and productions. YPT creates spaces in which our students feel brave and supported in telling powerful, personal stories that positively transform them and their communities. We are the only theater in Washington, DC dedicated entirely to arts education, generating and producing the artistic work of young people. Each year across Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia, we serve more than 1,000 young people through our playwriting programs, more than 1,000 school professionals and community members through our professional development and anti-racism/anti-oppression initiatives, and 1,000 audience members through vibrant, student-centered programs and productions. Since Karen’s first playwriting workshop 25 years ago, YPT has provided more than 25,000 young people with dynamic and affirming arts education programs and reached 100,000 DC-area residents overall through our playwriting programs and professional productions of plays written by our young people.

OUR TOUCHSTONE

Young Playwrights’ Theater believes that creative expression and theater are valuable tools for the education, enrichment and self-actualization of young people. Through our programs and productions, we fulfill their creative vision by hiring professional artists to guide and perform original, youth-generated work for their peers and for the public.

YPT believes that it is important that youth, especially those whose voices are often minimized, have access to high-quality arts education that centers their experience and is culturally competent and affirming for all young people involved. In order to do this work, YPT acknowledges oppression and reduces its harm through our internal and external structures and practices.

YPT believes that young people are inherently brilliant, and we exist to share that brilliance with the world.

OUR TEAM IN FY20

**ADMINISTRATION**
Brigitte Winter, Executive Director

**PROGRAMS**
Jared Shamberger, Program Director
Claudia Rosales Waters, Program Associate
Aeneas Hemphill, Program Assistant

**PRODUCTIONS**
Farah Lawal Harris, Artistic Director
Keta Newborn, Production Assistant

**EXTERNAL RELATIONS**
Jessica Wisser, Development Director
Teshonne Powell, Communications Manager
Emma Wesslund, Development Manager

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN FY20

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Deven L. Comen, Vice Chair
Paul Feeko, Treasurer
Anne Eigeman, Secretary

**MEMBERS**
Ben-James Brown
Walter Derengowski, Finance Committee Chair
Katy Dunn

Kaiser Permanente RISE Workshop at Jefferson Elementary School, 2020
At YPT, we understand that people, art, and our work are dynamic and constantly changing. With this in mind, we operate with responsive flexibility and adapt to the needs of young people while staying true to our touchstone and mission. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and with the intention to keep our community safe, YPT is transitioning to virtual spaces for all of our programs and productions in the upcoming year.

WRITE AT PLAY - OUR VIRTUAL IN-SCHOOL PLAYWRITING PROGRAM

To support the needs and the safety of our young people, we are launching Writers at Play, our virtual In-School Playwriting Program. This summer, our Programs team is developing a series of instructional videos that will integrate our playwriting curricula into any educator’s virtual classroom from 3rd Grade to college. Featuring our Programs staff leading students through our award-winning curricula, Writers at Play also includes a teacher implementation guide and digital classroom materials for students, and can be supplemented with live YPT instruction delivered through video conferencing. Our virtual curricula will be available by mid-September.

If you are interested in learning more about integrating Writers at Play into your virtual classroom or sharing information about our program with your child’s educator, please contact programs@yptdc.org.

DIGITAL PLAYWRITING PROGRAM

Our After-School Playwriting Program is also expanding into the digital space in the upcoming year. Our Digital Playwriting Program will offer after-school playwriting workshops to virtual groups of 3rd-5th, 6th-8th, and 9th-12th grade students. Our Digital Playwriting Program students will not only work on their own plays, but also learn more about giving constructive peer feedback throughout the course. Enrollment is open to all young people, regardless of location; our spring pilot of this program brought together students from across the country to collaborate creatively!

To enroll in our Digital Playwriting Program or for more information, visit our Distance Learning at YPT webpage or email programs@yptdc.org.

NEW CHALLENGES SPARK NEW OPPORTUNITIES

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SUBSCRIBE TO OUR EMAIL LIST

Visit our website or click here to receive YPT news!
THE PLAYWRITERS’ LAB

“Adults can be ‘young’ in playwriting, too!”
- Jared Shamberger

This summer, YPT launched The Playwrights’ Lab: Introduction to Playwriting for adult writers. YPT Program Director Jared Shamberger derived this introductory playwriting workshop curriculum from the playwriting workshops he facilitated at Prince George’s Community College in Fall 2019. YPT facilitated The Playwrights’ Lab in partnership with The Welders, a playwrights’ collective and theater organization in Washington, DC, and featured six weeks of classes that discussed basic playwriting concepts and made space for writing, offering feedback and asking students to apply what they learned in a final 10-page play. This program will expand in the fall with two course offerings. More information will be available soon!

For all the latest information about The Playwrights’ Lab, visit our Distance Learning at YPT webpage.

YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS IN PROGRESS

“As playwrights, it’s difficult to get our work developed and get your foot in the door. [YPT] is using our resources to teach you what we know about playwriting to enhance your script.”
- Farah Lawal Harris

YPT Artistic Director Farah Lawal Harris launched Young Playwrights in Progress (YPiP), a new play development program at YPT. Through an open call for scripts and applications this summer, two playwrights will be chosen to engage in a long-term script development process with YPT. Over the course of Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, the program will include virtual script advising sessions with Farah and workshop readings of playwrights’ work with professional actors for a live virtual audience. YPT is excited to offer the opportunity for focused, supportive script development for aspiring and early-career playwrights and we look forward to sharing this work with you in 2021!

For all the latest information about Young Playwrights in Progress, visit our Young Playwrights in Progress webpage.

SILENCE IS VIOLENCE

Our 25th Anniversary Silence is Violence production exploring the issues addressed over five years of our performance series has been rescheduled for our 2021-22 performance season. While this production is on hold, our creative work continues - script revisions are underway and the creative team will gather again in the fall to keep the work on this production moving forward. We can’t wait to share this work with you when it is safe to gather in person again.

In the meantime, this fall we’ll begin the process for devising our first virtual performance of Silence is Violence during
For the latest information about our *Silence is Violence* series, please visit our [Silence is Violence webpage](#) and follow us on social media (@yptdc on all platforms).

**TAKING ACTION: ABOLISHING RACISM AND OPPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE (AROW)**

*Abolishing Racism and Oppression in the Workplace (AROW)* is a learning series derived from YPT’s lived experience taking actionable steps to investigate, address, and dismantle the ways in which White supremacy has shown up in our organization. Through AROW, we share the tools that we used to establish systems and policies that empower people from systematically and historically oppressed communities (i.e. Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, disabled, etc.) both in our workplace and in the communities we serve.

To learn more about AROW and how YPT can support your anti-racism and anti-oppression journey, please contact Jared Shamberger, YPT Program Director, at jshamberger@yptdc.org.

**CONNECT WITH YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS’ THEATER**

Young Playwrights’ Theater is always looking to grow our community of supporters, volunteers, artists, partners, and young playwrights. If you are interested in learning more about our work in arts education and theater, and would like to get involved, connect with us!

**General Inquiries**

info@yptdc.org

**Programs/Partnerships**

Jared Shamberger, jshamberger@yptdc.org

**Productions/Artistic Collaborations**

Farah Lawal Harris, fharris@yptdc.org

**Support/Giving**

Jessica Wisser, jwisser@yptdc.org

Spring 2021. *Silence is Violence: The Future of the Field* will investigate the future of American theater from the perspective of youth artists. Each of our *Silence is Violence* performances starts with writing workshops for youth in partnership with DC-area youth-serving organizations and schools. This year, going virtual will give us the opportunity to introduce audiences all over the world to the spirit of our series: the centering of youth voices and the issues that matter to them. More information will be coming soon and look out for the announcement of our digital performance dates!
Thanks to you!

YPY is deeply grateful for all of the amazing donors who support our programming and performances. This year presented a unique set of challenges, and it means so much that our donors have continued to support our work through the COVID-19 pandemic. This spring, we set a goal to raise $10,000 to help sustain our operations during this time. Our community helped us surpass that goal, and we were able to raise over $12,000 in six weeks. Thank you!

Without you, there would be no YPT.

Anonymous
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Did you know that some of our most loyal donors give through the Combined Federal Campaign or the DC One Fund? To donate through these workplace giving programs, please use our codes (CFC: 64148 / DC One Fund: 8499), or contact Jessica Wisser at jwisser@yptdc.org. Thank you to our FY20 CFC and One Fund Donors:

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Donna Murphy
Julie Paller
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*This list is current as of June 30, 2020. If you see any inaccuracies, please contact Jessica Wisser at jwisser@yptdc.org.*