

## Mary Marie Hill

### *Statement on Contributions to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*

I firmly believe that educators hold the transformative power to inspire students, enabling them to reach for aspirations they may have once considered unattainable. My personal journey as an educator is deeply rooted in the recognition that education is not merely an option but a boundless source of inspiration and opportunity.

Growing up in El Monte, California, a city known for its vibrant street art and rich Latin culture, I was also confronted with the challenges of gang violence and gentrification. My family was one of the few Black/African American families in our neighborhood. Being the "minority amongst minorities" presented significant challenges, not only in daily life but also within the educational sphere. I distinctly remember entering each new classroom, hoping to find someone who resembled me, seeking that sense of belonging. School often served as a reminder of my "difference," requiring extra effort merely to navigate. Even as I embarked on my journey in the Arts, I encountered new challenges, such as being labeled as "the person of color cast in the role because the show needed diversity." Throughout my experiences as both an actor and teacher, I reflected on the mentors who had inspired me—those who had taken the time to make me feel like I truly belonged. These experiences motivated me to create inclusive and welcoming classroom environments for my own students.

My commitment is unwavering: no student should ever feel like an outsider in my classroom. I have dedicated myself to researching and implementing inclusive practices in every course I teach. I passionately believe that every student's voice, regardless of their background, nationality, sexual orientation, race, or color, should not only be heard but also celebrated. It is my firm belief that every individual deserves to feel a sense of belonging, particularly within the educational sphere. As an educator deeply committed to infusing diverse stories and voices into the curriculum, I recognize the paramount importance of providing students with an inclusive environment in which they can not only succeed but thrive.

In my role as an educator and as a woman of color, I pledge to:

Embrace Diverse Perspectives: I will actively invite and incorporate different perspectives into the classroom, fostering an environment that values and celebrates diversity.

Collaborate for Equity: I will collaborate with my department partners to ensure that historically marginalized students receive the support and equal opportunities they deserve.

Foster Artistic Growth: I will establish classrooms that prioritize artistic exploration and growth, recognizing that diversity enhances creativity.

Create a Safe Learning Environment: I am committed to maintaining a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and conducive to growth and learning.

Prioritize Student Success: Above all, I prioritize the success of each student. I believe that their success in the educational setting can serve as a springboard for future artistic discoveries.

In conclusion, I am resolute in my dedication to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming educational environment. My goal is to ensure that every student feels valued, celebrated, and empowered to explore their full potential.

Sincerely,

Mary M. Hill