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## **The Blacksmiths, APAP, NAPAMA, NIVA and partners debut Racial Equity Pledge & Toolkit**

(Washington, DC - December 10, 2020) On December 16, 2020, The Blacksmiths, a newly formed multidisciplinary coalition of artists, cultural curators, presenters, producers, and art service organization leaders from across the United States, will debut a [Racial Equity Pledge and Toolkit](#) developed in service of Black artists and arts administrators and available at [www.wearetheblacksmiths.com](http://www.wearetheblacksmiths.com). The Blacksmiths are supported by professional independent art and culture workers as well as the Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP), North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA), and National Independent Venue Association (NIVA). The Blacksmiths' Racial Equity Pledge & Toolkit is available now, and will be discussed in a series of webinars and online

convenings beginning with a [NAPAMA Weekly Wednesday Webinar on Racial Equity on December 16, 2020](#) and continuing with an APAP field-wide conversation, [“Calling for Radical Change” on January 12, 2021](#) as part of its annual conference [APAP|NYC+](#) (January 8-12, 2021). Future webinars and panels will be announced on The Blacksmiths’ website.

“Collectively, this country has long been plagued by issues of equal rights and representation, harmful bias, state-sanctioned violence, microaggressions against Black Americans in and outside of the workplace. The events of this year have made these issues visible and tangible in a way they have not yet been. The pledge and toolkit is an acknowledgement that this cannot continue. The project is designed for individuals and organizations interested in developing knowledge and processes aimed toward justice, equity and accountability to create opportunities for Black professionals in the visual and performing arts,” explained Blacksmiths Steering Committee member Niama Safia Sandy, independent curator, producer, multidisciplinary artist and educator.

The Blacksmiths’ racial equity resources consist of individual and institutional pledges, resources for social justice readings and training, a guide for implementing and developing anti-racism action plans, and more. The pledge and toolkit committees convened throughout Summer and Fall of 2020 to develop the resources.

“This resource is especially timely for our members who have come to rely on APAP for the tools to move the pin on the key issues for the future of our field. It’s also closely aligned with APAP’s own REDI (Racial Equity Diversity and Inclusion) goals. As we partner with allied organizations committed to anti-racism work, our collaboration with The Blacksmiths supports and complements our commitment to ensure that our members are prepared to live up to this important call to action,” said Lisa Richards Toney, President and CEO, Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP).

Blacksmiths Steering Committee Member and President of the North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents Gail Boyd said, “I am keenly aware that NAPAMA has adopted as one of its core values the practice of equity, diversity and inclusion. It is important for us to be part of the conversation regarding racial equity as it relates to agents, managers, self represented artists, and presenters. I am pleased that I was able to work with individual artists, arts organizations, as well as APAP to structure what we think is the beginning, not the end, of the conversation in achieving racial equity in the arts.”

Tobi Parks, NIVA DEI Committee Chair and National Independent Venue Foundation Vice President said, "As a new organization bringing together over 3000 independent venues, promoters and festivals from across the country, NIVA has a unique opportunity to help shape the future of the live music industry by placing diversity, equity, and inclusion at its core. We are committed to exemplifying these values to our members and encouraging the deep and important dialogue that must be had in the pursuit of a more just and equitable industry. The Blacksmiths's Pledge and Toolkit is a great resource for our members to engage in this important work within their own businesses and communities."

## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

### **About The Blacksmiths**

**The Blacksmiths** is a new coalition of artists, curators, culture producers, and organizers committed to using the arts to support direct action and civic engagement in the service of Black liberation and equity in the world at large and at cultural institutions, and in the street. We call for cultural institutions and venues to responsibly and ethically present such work, and eliminate barriers to Black stewardship and leadership. Members include representatives from Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP), National Independent Venues Association (NIVA), North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA) and individual arts professionals. Beginning in Summer 2020, The Blacksmiths' signature second-line style marching band, led by bassist Russell Hall, brought joy and energy to rallies, marches and protests in New York City and beyond. Members of the Blacksmiths Production Committee also regularly produce events that uplift Black liberation including INTERdependence Day on July 4th in Washington Square Park, an Eric Garner Day at Barclays Center, a citywide event celebrating Wide Awakes Day, and more.

### **About Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP)**

**[The Association of Performing Arts Professionals \(APAP\)](#)**, based in Washington, D.C., is the national service, advocacy and membership organization dedicated to developing and supporting a robust performing arts presenting field and the professionals who work within it. Our more than 1,700 national and international members represent leading performing arts centers, municipal and university performance facilities, nonprofit performing arts centers, culturally specific organizations, foreign governments, as well as artist agencies, managers, touring companies, and national consulting practices that serve the field, and a growing roster of self-presenting artists. As a leader in

the field, APAP works to effect change through advocacy, professional development, resource sharing and civic engagement. APAP is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization governed by a volunteer board of directors. In addition to presenting the annual APAP|NYC conference—the world's leading forum and marketplace for the performing arts (Jan. 8-12, 2021)—APAP continues to be the industry's leading resource, knowledge and networking destination for the advancement of performing arts presenting, booking and touring.

The APAP board of directors and staff incorporate Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) as one of APAP's top priorities, woven into all its organizational activities and strategic directions. We commit to the work of REDI with openness and deep institutional commitment, realizing that REDI is a sustained practice that rejects tokenism and instead embeds equity across the performing arts field. Recognizing that all peoples, cultures, genders and their performing arts contribute meaning to and understanding of our humanity, we promote the collective power of multiple voices. We are dedicated to supporting REDI work that has purpose for APAP membership and leads to meaningful, sustainable action in advancing access, equity and inclusion in every part of our field. Through REDI efforts with our members, allies, and partners, we strive together to create a more just performing arts community.

### **About North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA)**

[NAPAMA](#), the North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents, promotes the best interests of professionals engaged in the touring of the performing arts through building and sharing knowledge, advocacy, leadership, and innovation. Committed to the core values of equity, diversity and inclusion, NAPAMA provides members with a platform for networking, communication, information exchange, resource identification, trends in the field, research, and best practices. NAPAMA is deeply dedicated to returning value to its members, respecting the voices of all constituencies in the performing arts. NAPAMA membership includes agents, managers, booking agencies, producers, self-represented artists, associations, presenters, and consultants across North America engaged in the touring of professional performing artists.

### **About National Independent Venue Association (NIVA)**

Formed at the onset of the COVID-19 shutdown, [National Independent Venue Association \(NIVA\)](#), now represents more than 3,000 members in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. These independent venues and promoters were the first to close and will be the last to fully reopen. NIVA's mission is to preserve and nurture the ecosystem of independent live venues, promoters and festivals throughout the United States. To learn more about NIVA's quest

to gain federal funding for independent venues, visit <https://www.nivassoc.org/take-action>. The [National Independent Venue Foundation](#) has been created to focus on separate, supplemental initiatives, such as the Emergency Relief Fund.

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