



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Samantha D. Montgomery
is named Artistic Inclusion and
Community Engagement Director at First Stage

-New role will help expand First Stage's Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Justice efforts-

Milwaukee, WI – July 13, 2021 – First Stage is pleased to announce that **Samantha D. Montgomery** has been promoted to the newly created position of Artistic Inclusion and Community Engagement Director. Montgomery has held a long tenure with First Stage, working in many capacities including resident teaching artist, director and actor. She assumed her new role as of July 1, 2021.

In her new capacity, Samantha will work collaboratively with Artistic Director Jeff Frank and Director of Programming Julia Magnasco. She will lead First Stage's cross-departmental Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ) team while acting as a resource, guide and strategic planner. She will also help First Stage continue its journey to become a fully inclusive, equitable and just community, one that values a diversity of perspectives, traditions, ideas and contributions.

Artistic Director **Jeff Frank** shared his thoughts about Samantha's new role at First Stage: "Over the past year Samantha has been leading our EDIJ committee and started to work alongside me in our efforts to connect with the community, as well as in looking at our audition processes and all things artistic. It became clear that she was serving a new, vital role for the company – to help us to engage more deeply with our community, to continue to lead the organization on our collective EDIJ journey and to play a significant role in ensuring that our programs and processes continue forward with a stronger focus/lens on EDIJ – and we are thrilled to formalize that role with this promotion. We are excited for Samantha and the growth that she will foster for our company and with our community."

Samantha is also directing the world premiere short play HOW TO ACTUALLY GRADUATE IN A VIRTUAL WORLD by Nikkole Salter. The production will be presented as part of the Milwaukee Black Theater Festival – Youth Arts Night on August 18 at St. Ann’s Indaba Bandshell. To learn more go to: <https://www.milwaukeechambertheatre.org/2021-milwaukee-black-theater-festival>. It will also be available in the fall on video on demand as part of First Stage’s second Amplify – BIPOC Virtual Short Play Series. Please watch the First Stage season announcement release in August for more details.

Samantha D. Montgomery biography

Samantha D. Montgomery is a performance artist who is committed to the process of learning. She has worked in both traditional and non-traditional educational settings. Teaching is her passion, connectivity is her goal and working collaboratively in unity to nurture trust, acceptance, inclusion and community is her commitment. She has enjoyed working at First Stage as a Teaching Artist and is grateful for the opportunity to work as the Artistic Inclusion and Community Engagement Director. Samantha is a member of Actors’ Equity Association. She holds a B.A. from Alverno College in Professional Communication, a M.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in Administrative Leadership and Supervision in Adult Education and a M.A. from Alverno College in Education.

Link to headshot and a production photo of Samantha can be found here:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17aqmL8EFgGv2ITf9Iem6mIr605Gpy_DT?usp=sharing

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First Stage’s Inclusion Statement

Inclusion is a core value at First Stage:

We believe that all voices must be heard and everyone must have access to the same opportunities.

We believe that collaboration of diverse voices in our organizational discussions creates more successful, meaningful work and that diverse voices across First Stage’s community should carry equal weight in all levels of decision-making: Institutional, Programmatic, Artistic, Governance and Fiscal.

We believe in maintaining a sustainable environment where everyone’s talents, skills and perspectives are recognized, utilized and appreciated and where the needs of every individual are supported and that the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve their full potential.

We believe that continually investing in an authentic, healthy and lasting relationship with Milwaukee’s diverse community will spark collaborative action towards creating a socially just society in Milwaukee and beyond.

About First Stage

First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families. First Stage touches hearts, engages minds and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten and entertain. Its Theater Academy, the nation's largest high-impact theater training program for young people, fosters life skills through stage skills and serves nearly 2,000 students each year. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education programs promote literacy, character building and experiential learning throughout the curriculum, serving over 20,000 students each year. First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2012) and was the recipient of the *Milwaukee Business Journal's* Eureka Award, recognizing creativity and innovation in business, education and the arts for its Next Steps program for students on the autism spectrum (2013, 2015). First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). www.firststage.org.