

8 ways to engage audiences of color

4 MIN READ



Like the famed creator of Hamilton, Lin-Manuel Miranda, I am a Puerto Rican from New York City who grew up loving hip-hop and Stephen Sondheim. Almost my entire life has been spent in theatre and one of my greatest passions is getting audiences of color to fall in love with [performing arts](#) as much as I have. I've also completed years of research in this area and I'm excited to share my knowledge.

It's obvious that demographics are changing across the United States, but did you know that [2019 is the first time that Millennials will outnumber Baby Boomers](#)?

As of this year, there are 73-million Millennials in the United States versus 72-million Baby Boomers. And by 2030, there will be 6-million fewer Baby Boomers.

Delving further into the sought-after Millennial demographic, [45% of all Millennials](#) in the U.S. identify as people of color.

Here are some other interesting U.S. statistics that are important for performing arts organizations to know:

? **Millennial Facts (as of 2019):**

- ? 23 to 38 years old
- ? Largest living adult generation
- ? 55% white

? **Generation Z Facts (as of 2019):**

- ? 7 to 22 years old
- ? 48% are people of color (majority is Latinx with about 25% of Generation Z identifying as such)
- ? Majority of U.S. population by 2040, followed by Millennials

? **Projected 2030 U.S. Population Stats**

- ? 55% white
- ? 45% people of color (majority is Latinx)

These stats show that almost half of the U.S. population will identify as people of color in upcoming decades. Arts and culture organizations need to start cultivating these attendees now in order to ensure that we have strong audiences in the future.

Here are eight ways that your organization can engage audiences of color:

1. Research demographics

The first thing you should do is learn the demographics for your community and region. By doing this, you'll know who is living in your area. This information should influence your marketing strategy, the events/productions you present on your stages and how you plan your programming.

2. Conduct demographic surveys

Collecting demographic information from current attendees will help determine whether your audience matches your community's demographics. If they are not reasonably comparable, you can use the ideas in this article to further engage audiences of color.

3. Consistent community outreach

The process of engaging audiences of color is a marathon, not a sprint. If your organization has traditionally not engaged with people in these demographics, it will take time to build relationships. You can do this by consistently reaching out through educational and artistic programming, social gatherings, sponsorship of local events and businesses, attending major events within the community, etc. Also, invite audiences of color to all of your events, not just the events that you think they would enjoy.

4. Present works by, about and with people of color on your stages

Once you take the time to invest in consistent community outreach, you should have greater success attracting people of color to attend your events. Although these audiences love all types of programming, they want to see their stories on your stages. This will help engage them over the long term.

It is also important to involve people of color when you are deciding what types of events to showcase. You can learn a lot about what people in your community are interested in seeing through focus groups and community surveys. It's also helpful to research people of color-based industry organizations, such as the [Latinx Theatre Commons](#), to see what new works are out there. [August Wilson](#)'s works are very important, but there are some really exciting new works being created by living writers of color.

5. Host open houses

Open houses are free events where curious people can come to your venue to learn more about who you are and what your organization does. This is a great way to get new consumers through your doors. Make these events amazing by including music, food and maybe even some sneak preview performances of your artistic programming.

6. Consider translating your website

Based on your demographic research, you should know what languages are spoken in your community. Consider translating your website content to the language(s) that your community members speak.

7. Hire people of color

Having people of color on your staff and executive leadership team as well as your Board of Directors will greatly increase your success in engaging these audiences. Not only will these team members add different perspectives to your organization, audiences of color will notice and feel like your organization is a welcome place for them too.

8. EDI training

If your organization has not done so yet, it's important to conduct equity, diversity and inclusion training for all staff and board members. This will teach everyone how to create a safe and inclusive working environment within your organization and provide additional best practices to consistently engage audiences of color.

Cultivating these relationships will be hard work at first, but it is essential for the success of our industry. Not only will your organization benefit from this work, but so will your community.

If you would like to learn more about engaging audiences of color, [book a consultation](#) with an AudienceView expert or drop us an [email](#).