



# *Bringing Peace, Harmony, and Diversity*

*by Robin Joyce Miller*

I am a proud Board Member at Cotuit Center for the Arts. All members bring their special gifts and talents to the table. I believe that I was selected by Board President, Kathie Lynch Nutting, and Cotuit Executive Director, David Kuehn, to bring much needed and desired diversity to the Center.

Peace and Racial Harmony has been a theme throughout my life. When there was a racial crisis in a Brooklyn, NY store between a Korean grocer and Black customer, I created a “Peace and Racial Harmony” poetry poster. I presented this to David Dinkins, the first African American NYC mayor. My multicultural cartoon characters became little ambassadors for peace. This poster inspired the ad that I later created for Pepsi honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

During my 30+ years as an educator, I taught learning disabled students and later became the visual arts teacher in the NYC school system. I also spent the last 7 years as a facilitator for NYC’s Blueprint for the Arts. This position afforded me the opportunity to conduct teacher training workshops in museums across the city, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MOMA - the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum. It is important for teachers to develop an inclusive multicultural curriculum that speaks to the diversity of the NYC population. Receiving the NYC and NY State Region 8 Art Educator of the Year Awards was truly a great honor during my career.

When George Floyd was murdered in 2020, Cotuit Center

for the Arts became a true ally to the Black community. David Kuehn felt that it was time for white people to hear black stories and asked if I would create a BLM Series. I am privileged that my husband, James W. Miller (Jim), lends his voice and some of his poetry to the presentations. At this time, we have created 9 programs. All are available for free on YouTube. You can view them on Cotuit on Demand and [www.robinjoycemillerart.com](http://www.robinjoycemillerart.com) Their purpose is to educate.

Today, terms like Black Lives Matter, “Woke”, CRT - Critical Race Theory, and White Privilege are commonly seen as pejoratives. We did not create this series to be divisive. It reveals a history of the African Diaspora that is sorely lacking in our country. So many people do not know the truth – knowledge is power and can unite us all as we gain a new cultural perspective and respect for each other. I do this work because of the personal shame I experienced being a member of what felt like the lowest class of people in the world. Ignorance is not bliss. Each project in the Black Lives Matter series at CCftA revealed another reason to hold my head up and be proud.

Our young people need this. All people need to become aware of the ugly secrets that are kept hidden. I am currently in talks with one of Cape Cod’s High School principals to develop curricula around the Black Lives Matter Series. The next program in the series will be geared for young people from middle school to college. It will focus on Peace, Harmony, and History while challenging students to decide who they want to be in the future. The program will bring to light both heroes and villains of the African American struggle for independence, justice, and dignity.

On September 11, 2022, Cotuit Center for the Arts presented a reading of Judith Partelow’s play - *Neighbors*. The play covers racial relationships of people right here in this community. I am honored to be one of her collaborators. However, there were several Cape Cod residents that added their stories to this important work. The audience discussion after the reading, was equally as powerful as the play itself. People wanted to voice their feelings about hearing the truth and how they could become better allies.

Cotuit Center for the Arts is dedicated to bringing about diversity. It was part of our Strategic Planning for the future. And I intend to do my part.

We are hoping to see our Board of Directors represent the diversity that is on the Cape. We definitely are looking to welcome in the Wampanoags, who are the original people to this land.

It is really important that we present events that invite a diverse crowd. The Center has been doing a Piece by Piece Community Project for a few years. I suggested that they select an African American artist for 2022. Not only did they select a person of color, but also the first woman. Alma Thomas was the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art, and she exhibited her paintings at the White House three times. Her abstract works are dazzling.

I end as I began. I am proud of my deep connections to Cotuit Center for the Arts. Peace, Harmony, and Diversity are important to our cause. We are moving in the right direction as we DO IT AT COTUIT!