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SPEAKERS

Kim Sykes, Omkari Williams



Omkari Williams 00:20

Hello and welcome to Stepping Into Truth, the podcast where we take on the issues of race, gender and social justice. I'm your host Omkari Williams and I'm very glad you're here with me today. I love doing this podcast. I'm privileged to speak with people who are out in the world making a difference with their programs, their art and their activism. If you would like to support me in doing this work, you can do so for as little as \$3 a month by becoming a member of my Patreon community. You can go to [patreon.com slash Omkari Williams](https://patreon.com/omkariwilliams) and sign up and there's also a link on my website [OmkariWilliams.com](https://omkariwilliams.com).



Omkari Williams 00:59

As we continue to grapple with how to live during this time of pandemic, it's really important to pay attention to where we are seeing cracks in the system, who's filling those cracks and how they're doing it. And one of the big challenges that we're navigating right now is the hit our education systems and programs that support children and young adults are taking.



Omkari Williams 01:22

My guest today as someone who works with an organization that I think should be in every community in this country and beyond. Kim Sykes is a writer, actress and artistic

director of Girl Be Heard, a nonprofit organization that builds leaders, change makers, and activists who write and perform their own stories about social justice issues. Kim has written three full length plays, published several short stories for Akashic Books Noir series, and is an actress who has been seen on Homeland, Sneaky Pete, and The Affair. Her short story Arrivederci Aldo was selected for the best African American Fiction of 2010 by Nikki Giovanni. I am so happy to welcome Kim to the podcast. Hey, Kim. Hi, how are you?



Kim Sykes 02:10

I'm good, thanks.



Omkari Williams 02:12

Good. I want to start, I'm just going to jump in because that's what I do all the time. But I want to start with having you tell us about Girl Be Heard, and what the overall mission of that organization is.



Kim Sykes 02:26

Girl Be Heard builds leaders and changemakers and activists and we do this by developing and amplifying and celebrating the voices of girls and young women through socially conscious theater making storytelling and performance. That's pretty much our mission.



Omkari Williams 02:42

And how did this all even come about?



Kim Sykes 02:45

It was founded by two really terrific ladies, Ashley Marinaccio and Jessica Greer Morris, and they began with an organization called Project Girl about 10 years ago. They started out with young women from Pace University and various Backstage ads looking for young women who wanted to talk about social justice. They did that for about five years. And then sometime after that they created or applied for a 501c3, and created Girl Be Heard, which is open to girls all over New York in all five boroughs and actually even the state of New York, and we work with girls 12 to 21 years old. We have after school programs 10 of them currently, 11 pardon me, in all the boroughs. And we have Sunday workshops, which are open to girls all over New York State. And that's meeting every Sunday for three hours.

We call that feminist church.



Omkari Williams 03:50

I love that.



Kim Sykes 03:51

And we also have our active performers, our company members who are performers who do their work. They've perfected and worked on around social justice issues ranging from spoken word poetry, to short plays, to monologues to even and all that stuff, including dance and music. We do that for various organizations like the United Nations and other NGOs, Planned Parenthood, leadership organizations, and all the organizations that belong to the downtown Brooklyn arts Association. And so we are constantly on the go, we've performed at the White House, the Obama White House, let me be clear on that.



Omkari Williams 04:37

Yeah,



Kim Sykes 04:38

The United Nations at women's marches. So we're always out there changing the world through art and through the voices of young women and girls.



Omkari Williams 04:50

That just sounds so amazing. And it literally gave me chills because I just think, how cool would it have been to have that around when I was 12 to 21, and



Kim Sykes 05:04

Girl don't you know?



Omkari Williams 05:05

I mean, right? Just like so... Just be able to teach young women to stand in their power from such a young age is just amazing. I'm so happy that you're doing this work.



Kim Sykes 05:19

Thank you, I mean, you know, I'm so glad you said that because I think we grew up in a time where we were told that all girls really are and they still today being told, you know, not to speak up and to keep quiet be in their place. And people don't necessarily listen to young women and girls, they assume they don't know or don't think about these things. But one of the most fascinating things that I think I've even discovered, even though I was one of those girls when I was younger, is that they think seriously about these issues. They see what's going on in the world. And they're not yet in that place where they have anything to lose to say what it is that they feel need. To change and point out the things that are wrong, a girl will tell you that in a second.



Omkari Williams 06:08

I think that's such an important way of thinking about it is that that is a time in our lives when we really don't have anything to lose. We're creating our adult identities, we're finding our own voice. And everything seems possible in ways that as you get older, and things are on the line, you start weighing the pros and cons. When you're in that age range there are no cons that you can imagine, you know, feels like no, everything's cool. I'm just gonna say what I think.



Kim Sykes 06:42

I mean imagine, so you have no rent to pay. No credit card bills, you only have to wake up and go to school and come home. I mean, truly, I'm sure it's far more complicated than that. But you I think we're saying the same thing. And so, you're able to then see the world in a way that all of us old people can't see it. Because we we see it all. And we think, oh, why can't do that because I, whatever, and I want to do that, but I have to do something else. And kids are just like no, change this now.



Omkari Williams 07:15

Exactly. I think that that's a really important framing and a really important thing to remember because maybe it will inspire us old people to let go of some of that caution that life tends to beat into us and just take healthier risks than we might otherwise be taking. So in that same vein, something that I really appreciate about the work that Girl Be Heard does is that it works with story and I believe that story is foundational to activism. I think that our stories are actually what lead us to activism. And you all have a very strong focus on storytelling and I'd love to hear you speak about why storytelling is such a critical part. of the work that you do with the young people you're working with.



Kim Sykes 08:04

Well, you know, since the beginning of time stories that has taken us from the cave into civilization, you know, art, I always say it will change the world. And it has, I mean, we are where we are because of art. You know, I often say to my girls imagine in the very beginning, they're all sitting around the campfire, they've eaten the dinosaur, they're stuffed and they're bored and out of their minds. Some kid gets up and starts drawing on the wall, another kid starts to dance, and another kid starts saying gibberish and theater is born.



Kim Sykes 08:35

And so I like to think that today it's the same thing only we've come a little farther. And now you know, we are so used to having art done for us, either by corporations or industry who decide you know, the the parameters of art, how far I can go, what we should wear what we look like, and to me that's ruined a lot of artistic expression. And then you have artists out there who are saying, No, those boundaries don't work for me, I'm going to now stretch that and go back to what art needs to be, which is an expression of who you are, how you see the world, finding beauty in the world and showing it. And when we do that, we discover the most amazing thing. And we discover that we're all the same. That we all like a lot of the same things that we find beauty in simple things, and in the world and in each other. So yeah, that's how we approach art and storytelling and girl be heard. It's your story. And it's everyone's story. It's a global story. We're not different. We're all global citizens, and we all have this thing to share. And we have to respect each other's stories and find out about each other's stories. Because it's, it's it's what's going to help us survive.



Omkari Williams 10:02

It's interesting that you say all of that, because I remember from a very young age thinking that there were probably, I just arbitrarily picked the number, seven stories in the world. And that all we were doing was putting our particular spin on each of those overarching stories and that those things were just part of our human experience. And then we had our variations and how we experienced a specific thing. And I still fundamentally believe that that there are just these human experiences that we all have that we all live through, and it's when we sit down and start talking about how one thing or another has impacted us that we connect to someone else because their life is in some ways, not going to be that different.



Kim Sykes 10:53

Right. So it's why I love Hamilton so much, you know, the wonderful song that he has in there, that I particularly like about telling our story. I tell you the brilliance of it is that he writes about Hamilton, but he's really writing about young people. And, and, and the importance of telling your story and taking your shot. And, you know, all those wonderful songs that tell that story of the story. Mm hmm. That is to all of us. And so, yeah, I think that that absolutely speaks to the times and the importance of art for young folks.



Omkari Williams 11:35

Yeah, I think that's very true. And I'm so glad that you all are doing that. And, you know, in that same vein, one of the things that I think story and sharing stories starts to develop in us is a faculty that I think there's not enough emphasis on in our educational system and that is critical thinking.



Kim Sykes 11:59

My God. God, so needed.



Omkari Williams 12:04

And I really appreciate that that's actually something that your curriculum, spotlights. It's teaching these young women and girls to become critical thinkers.



Kim Sykes 12:17

Absolutely.



Omkari Williams 12:19

And, I'm curious, I know why I would put so much energy on that. But I'm curious as to why Girl Be Heard put so much energy and attention on that skill.



Kim Sykes 12:29

On critical thinking?



Omkari Williams 12:30

Yes.



Kim Sykes 12:30

Oh my gosh. Because it's, it's how you should think, you know, I mean, it's how you should approach life. You have to critically look at things and decide, Is it right for you? I think we have a world we've come out of decades of people being told or boxes that we're being fit into. And that's not the way, to me. to be a creative soul. A person who actually can care about the world and try to fix it.



Kim Sykes 13:05

You know, you have to think critically about everything. For instance, our theme this year is going to be justice, right? And so I kept thinking, as always, every year when we pick a theme, how do you make that interesting to a young person? Justice, you know. And how do you make it so it's not like they're going to school? Because they go to school. We're an after school program, or a program where girls come to do something different. You know, fun, artistic, and yet still touch on those things that are important to them and to the world. So I found the Statue of Justice and we've all seen it in front of courthouses and everywhere, she's got the scales. She's standing there with the one foot on a book and the other foots solid and but then we start to dissect it.



Kim Sykes 13:55

We look at who she is, how old she is. What is she holding in her hand? What, you know the scale. What does it mean then? What does it mean now? I'm, what's so fascinating to me is that she's stepping on the neck of a snake, which represents truth and lies. And so now the question becomes, because one of them said, well, who's telling the truth? And who's telling the lies? Is it the government or the police, or the the person whose neck's being stepped? Well let's ask George Floyd. Let's ask, you know, so we go through these things where we critically dissect these images that are representative of what the world should be, when in fact, we know what the world is. And so that's, you know, if you're going to go through the world, especially in America, where we have such ideals, right? The Constitution and the songs and who we are, the greatest country in the world. Well, hmm, let's look at that.



Omkari Williams 14:58

Right.



Kim Sykes 15:00

You're going to want to change it. Or you can just believe the lies and sit back and you know.



Omkari Williams 15:06

But you know, the thing is Kim, in school, kids are not actually encouraged to think critically, they're encouraged to learn the curriculum, spit it back on a test, and then go on, you know, just like keep moving, keep moving.



Kim Sykes 15:26

If you're a business that depended on that would you really want critical thinkers in your workplace? You know, that's the thing, critical thinkers make unions. Critical thinkers tell your boss that there are better ways to do something and let me show you how. It's not a bad thing to think critically, but it's gotten a bad rep and we need to change that.



Omkari Williams 15:50

I completely agree. I just always find myself at this point of, I confess I get a little bit into a desperate state around that because I feel like you can't send kids to school for so many years with so little emphasis on really important skills and actually expect them to come out and shift things. Which is why Girl Be Heard is so important, it is a counterbalance to just basically going along to get along. So...



Kim Sykes 16:23

Come on, don't you remember, I mean, I'm just remembering and this is how old we are. I'll speak for myself. I am. So in elementary school, you studied music, you got an instrument, right? Whether you could afford it or not. What do you want to play violin, piano? I can't remember the other one. Maybe it was guitar, but I know the flute. It was flute. So you got to choose one of those, you know, and if you didn't want one of those, you can go into voice. So that's what you got in elementary school. And why is music important to education because music is mathematics. It's, it all works together. It's for the soul. It makes you open to the world in so many different ways.



Kim Sykes 17:06

Then you go to high school. And then in high school, they always had a drama class. And

you know, they had a dance class in gym not just running around the track. And for me half the day, I could choose to go, I could audition and choose to go to a high school of Performing Arts, which was open to kids from all over the state, poor kids, rich kids, white kids, black kids, every kind of kid. And so that disappeared sometime in 70s. Yeah. And it became all about tests and passing the tests. And wow, and the tests were problematic because the tests were all geared to these kids who, I mean, well, there's 10 kids who could pass that test. The rest of them were struggling with tutors and people that helped them. I mean, it's insanity.



Omkari Williams 17:56

It is.



Kim Sykes 17:57

Whoever designed that, you know, and I keep going back to the Reagan administration when they when they made ketchup vegetable in high schools. That infuriated me. I still think about that today. Like, Oh, no, you know what, you people are nuts.



Omkari Williams 18:15

Plus, it's just wrong because tomatoes are actually a fruit. But there's that



Kim Sykes 18:21

There's that which says a lot doesn't it about the intelligence of the people who came up with it?



Omkari Williams 18:27

Yeah, yeah. Something I remember from when I was in that 12 to 21 age range is how much pressure there was to conform. And you know, that pressure was largely in school. And so and then you'd leave school and then if you were lucky, you had friends who actually were at least conforming in a different way. So you got some variety in your conforming. But I'm curious about whether this program because it's on the one hand, definitely building community But it feels like it actually really encourages the girls in the program to not only maintain, but to develop their individual creative and social identities.



Kim Sykes 19:11

Absolutely. I'll give an example of one of our participants, I won't name her but she came in and she is an actress, young woman, very talented. And a big part of our program is that, you know, you go through these factions and we look at what we want to talk about, and then you write something about it, and then you perform it. Well she kept saying, "I am not a writer. I'm a singer, and I'm an actor, and so someone else can write and then I'll just do whatever they want me to do".



Kim Sykes 19:39

So after about two years of the program, she's one of my most prolific writers. She has on her own on her own has gone to and created Black Lives Matter events in her hometown. She has written so many pieces, including songs around social justice issues, which are beautiful songs. I mean, you know, think about the civil rights and all those great songs back then they're gorgeous. She's created a song that will probably end up being, you know, one of the great civil rights songs of the, you know, early 2000s. But it's that kind of thing. You know, they, first of all find out that someone wants to know what they think, which is huge. I've seen it values firms, you think what you really want to know what I think about climate change, and then they get to express it in an artistic way. And then they get to perform it in an artistic way, in the way in which they choose to perform it. And so, yeah, it's a powerful, powerful thing. What was your question now, I forgot?



Omkari Williams 20:41

No, no, what I was asking was about how you're building community, but at the same time, they're encouraged to maintain their individual identity and, and really develop that.



Kim Sykes 20:54

Well, yeah, I was gonna say they, they are encouraged. Yes, but that's not a big part of our time, because frankly, well once they start talking about what they care about, we don't have to do anything there. They're the ones that say, you know what I'm going to write to my congressman. I'm going to call the senator who can I work with? What can I do?



Kim Sykes 21:10

And so just knowing about it and knowing these things are out there they jump on them. Now we definitely send out things that say look, there's a Woman's March you want to do that you want to perform it that and you want to go and we have takers definitely. But

you know, we can't forget ever that we are mostly an after school program, secondary to school. And so these days kids have so much on their plates you know, they have the school they have the clubs and other after school programs. They are busy these kids are busy. Oh my God.



Omkari Williams 21:44

Yeah, I actually often think they're too busy but...



Kim Sykes 21:48

I do too I think they need to just go outside and play sometimes.



Omkari Williams 21:50

Yeah, it's just go be you know, just go sit on a park bench with your friends and talk for three hours.



Kim Sykes 21:57

They can't do that now unfortunately.



Omkari Williams 21:59

No.



Kim Sykes 22:00

For young girls zoom is not bad. Because you know, when you're young girls you like to get together and laugh and giggle and whatever. And that's kind of working out a little bit. But...



Omkari Williams 22:11

Yeah, yeah. It'll be nice one of these days to get back to being able to actually hang out with people face to face.



Kim Sykes 22:19

So when that happens, we're all going to like walk out on the street, start hugging strangers,



Omkari Williams 22:25

Completely



Kim Sykes 22:26

It's going to be the best thing in the world.



Omkari Williams 22:27

Oh, absolutely, completely true. And no one's going to be thinking that that's weird. Everyone's going to be like, woohoo, this is fabulous. You know? Okay, so you've taken this program to other countries. And I'm curious as what it's like when you take your programs. And these people these young, these young women and girls from New York, to countries that they probably would never, ever, ever get to go to Otherwise, what's that experience like?



Kim Sykes 23:03

Well, I actually don't have that experience. I've been at Girl Be Heard now four years and when I came, the international stuff had sort of come to a standstill because of funding and the organization was moving into a different direction at that point.



Omkari Williams 23:19

Okay.



Kim Sykes 23:20

We haven't done a lot. We haven't done any international travels since I've been there. Prior to me though, they've gone to Geneva, to France to various places of which I can't remember all of them now few and performed so I don't know, and Trinidad.



Kim Sykes 23:37

But right now we do national performances. And so we've been to Washington DC, we've been to actually Toronto we went to So that's some international travel, and states, our sister states, Connecticut and New Jersey. So we've done that. I will say this, so many of our girls are from various parts of the world. We have a young girl from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Trinidad. Europe, in Europe, we have a girl from London. I mean, we have all over so and they're all immigrants in the Bronx and Queens and Brooklyn. So that experience is quite interesting. And that's when you realize, again, that we all have the same concerns. Of course, there's cultural differences, but pretty much is basically the same.



Omkari Williams 24:25

I hadn't even thought about that, honestly, that, of course, you would have girls from different countries because people do emigrate here. And that must be so interesting, because of those cultural differences and assumptions that people have in different societies about how things work and the role of girls in particular. And I'm guessing that some of those girls grew up in societies where their roles were even more prescribed than they are here and that just being here and having an opportunity to kind of break out must be really amazing to see.



Kim Sykes 25:05

Well, you know, there's, there's I love that you use the word breakout because that's exactly what happens. You know, they get into the room and these are all girls who are first and second generation, you know. So you'll have, you'll have the parent who's still very much entrenched in those cultural issues that they've come from and still trying to bring those cultural things into America where the kid is in school and breaking out, as you say.



Kim Sykes 25:31

And so what's interesting is that when they get into the room, and you see this happening, they get into the room and they just look at each other and they form these cabals and they become the best friends. Suddenly, all the other stuff falls away, and they become very loyal to each other. They talk to each other. They don't care about differences in the way we do, the older folks do, or their parents do. And so, I've seen it create problems at home, where a girl will go home and you know, talk about what she's doing at Girl Be Heard and a parent will be, you know, asking them if this is what you really want, you should be a doctor. So a lot of people are forced to be doctors. We've changed some girls

from wanting to be doctors to wanting to be something else. And that's problematic at home. But like everybody who has some issues at home, my mother wanted me to work at the post office, so



Omkari Williams 26:30

Oh, well. (laughter)



Kim Sykes 26:32

God. It's the same issues. It's the same things. They just look different. And so everyone looks different from the next person. And if we can just get past that, damn it,



Omkari Williams 26:45

The eternal struggle. I mean, that's it's really the challenge. And right now I feel like that's actually really highlighted because if you look at it, just what we're experiencing in this country right now is so much a function of assuming differences in people rather than assuming shared humanity. And moving past that is, that's the work not only of our lifetimes, but unfortunately probably of the lifetimes of a couple more generations on from us. And, you know, I recommend Isabel Wilkins Wilkerson's new book Caste.



Omkari Williams 27:27

I just got it, literally came in my mail yesterday.



Kim Sykes 27:31

Yes. And so I'm, I'm way into it, and it's quite brilliant. And it's exactly on this subject about us just getting over that just trying. But she was so great is that she really goes into the historical aspects of it. How it began and, and it's just heartbreaking that we're still struggling with that even today.



Omkari Williams 27:50

Yeah, yeah, we are. And as I said, I don't think we're going to move past it anytime soon, but I feel like this generation right now, I feel like they have the potential to make a seismic shift. Because for one thing, they have tools that we didn't have, they have the

internet, they can connect to people all over the world, they can create movements of massive numbers of people very easily. And that I think is going to be a game changer, ultimately.



Kim Sykes 28:26

Right? I mean, we had such hopes for television when it first came out that it would be used mostly for good, right, bringing us all together and things like that. And so I think the internet started that way as well. And of course, we see what happened to the internet in regards to the bots and the pornography and the crazies out there. But I think you're right i think this generation is kind of trying to corral the goodness of the internet and bring it to more people because you can always have the creeps but hopefully Yeah,



Omkari Williams 28:56

Yeah, unfortunately, the creeps aren't going anywhere. But I think that this generation also has a vested interest in shifting things because they see the threat to their own survival in terms of climate change. And that that really sort of ripples out into other social justice issues that once you've sort of figured out how to advocate on behalf of one issue, then to move into another thing where you see wrong becomes much easier. So that's my hope, and I'm clinging to it. So don't take that away from me.



Kim Sykes 29:33

I won't.



Omkari Williams 29:34

Thank you.



Kim Sykes 29:35

Hope is good. You hear it already because that's that's what I try to preach. Hope you can't give up.



Omkari Williams 29:41

Nope. I will not give up and sort of going off on that, one of the other things that I've

noticed that Girl Be Heard does is it sort of to go back to that old slogan, "think globally, act locally". It seems like your organization is very, very focused on not only taking programs outside of the state and outside of the community, but also really acting in very specific targeted ways, right in their own backyard. And I'm curious as to how they actually function in their locality and how they actually are active, very close to home in ways that make us make a shift.



Kim Sykes 30:27

I think it's important, we just finished a show called Citizen Be Heard about civic engagement. And, you know, I'll tell you how we start our shows, we start out those with a fact sheet, we talk about the issues at hand. And we also talk about solutions. But we also talk about it in a global way so that if something's happening in your backyard, you need to know that it's also happening in the backyard of a girl in Burkina Faso or girl in London.



Kim Sykes 30:56

And it's different in those different places and how is it different, let's connect it and look at it and compare it to what's happening and find the similarities about what's happening in your place. So we try to have those conversations, and those conversations are really interesting. And they're wonderful. So then how do they take that to a local level? You know, everyone finds a point in which they're interested in. So for instance, the young girl who took her work in Citizen Be Heard and eventually created her own Black Lives Matter in her neighborhood and a performance out of it and invited other groups and did this. And by the way, followed it up with a meeting with the local police department.



Omkari Williams 31:37

Good on her,



Kim Sykes 31:38

Right. But then you have other girls who did artwork around the show and created the stuff on the internet, on a program, did photos of everyone and now her photos are appearing in a magazine, and the other two are writing about the issues that are important to them like school shootings is one and the other one is high debt of student loans. Our activism goes both ways. It goes where a girl can be so fired up that she actually gets up off her desk and moves to do something physically. And then there are girls who do this and it's what we're doing a lot of now is creating artwork so that we can

then share it to our localities. And for instance, we're doing a lot of performances that libraries and schools, pre recorded performances, where then we go into the school and have talkbacks like we just did one at a school in Yonkers, where it was around consent and sexual violence. And we had girls there talking to the other girls from the school, and it was so great for all of them because they finally got someone to hear their issues around what was happening in their school. So activism takes different ways of happening I guess.

K

Kim Sykes 32:57

It can be the physical get up, go to a march and change the world. It could be a girl writing something for a magazine. It could be I'm just trying to think of the examples that we have a girl going to college and changing her major to now something that she feels she can actually change the world in political science. So they all find different ways. And most find their way through. Well, not most but art, medicine, music, theater, and accountant one, but they take with them, they take with them the knowledge of social justice, and that whatever they decide to do in life, they have that that thing inside them that says, I know what these issues are, I know how to change them. I'm going to change them in whatever I decide to do. So that's what we'd create. When we say change makers, leaders and activists. It's in whatever you choose to be.



Omkari Williams 33:54

I love that. And my last question, because well my next to last question because we're almost out of time is, in the program, does everyone sort of try every different art form? So does everyone try storytelling and spoken word or ensemble based theatre and writing or do they get to pick?

K

Kim Sykes 34:14

In our program we're basically doing writing and spoken word and group pieces which incorporate music, movement and short plays or monologues since Hamilton, I have to say because Lin Manuel and his family are supporters of ours, they've been wonderful to Girl Be Heard.

K

Kim Sykes 34:35

The girls and participants have been so into spoken word. So we did a lot of that the last three years since Hamilton. And of course now since covid we can't really do a lot of

ensemble work, though we have been able to do some of that on on zoom. So but once this is over, we're going back to creating group pieces and plays and monologues around these issues. And again, remember, it all depends on the girl that comes in. Girls come in, and they'll, they may not want to do that they may want to do it in a different way. Some might want to sing a song and some might want to do some dance. So we try to take whatever we get to that comes in and cobble it together into some kind of a performance. And it can be different.



Omkari Williams 35:22

I love that. I love that. This is so amazing. I'm really looking forward to pandemic time being over so that I have an opportunity to experience Girl Be Heard in person at some point. So but before we go, I like to leave the listeners with three actions that they can take to advance the cause of what ever we've been talking about or just three actions that would help make the world a little bit better. So what three things would you suggest?



Kim Sykes 35:58

Well, I would definitely say first off, tell everyone to get some young person to register to vote old people too. But the youth, we got to get them out. And so find a young person, find five or 10 young people if you can do that, and register them to vote, encourage them to vote, bring them with you when you vote. We all remember, I know I do, my first time voting was at the fire station, with my mom, and even if they're not old enough, you should bring them with you to vote because it's it's important that they see first of all how easy it is. And 2 that an adult is doing it. So I would say bring a kid to vote with you and also encourage kids 18 and older to vote.



Omkari Williams 36:44

Yes. Amen. Amen. What else?



Kim Sykes 36:49

Well, you can always donate to Girl Be Heard. You know, we are working tirelessly with young women and girls in the state of New York to create changemakers. And leaders, girls, we need more women in Congress we need more women in the House and the Senate and locally we need more female representation. And I think Girl Be Heard is helping to create those changemakers and leaders and so you can donate to Girl Be Heard at girlbeheard.org/donate



Omkari Williams 37:21

And I will put that in the episode notes so that people can see that for themselves. And last thing.



Kim Sykes 37:29

So we have some work that's coming up. We're doing an awful lot of pre recorded work. And we're doing the pre record with live talkback questions from our girls. We're doing them at libraries and schools and other venues we're working on we have a pre recorded show from our mainstage show called citizen be heard. And we're currently working on a group piece around Kaia Kirkland who is a six year old girl who was arrested in Texas for having a tantrum. Our girls saw that video and were moved to create this amazing music, video, I guess, music video spoken word piece that we're going to premiere in a couple of weeks. So stay tuned for that. And we're also doing a performance open house with the downtown Brooklyn Association sometime at the end of August, where you'll get to come to our website and see organizations all over Brooklyn and New York who are offering pre recorded and live performances. While this covid is going on.



Omkari Williams 38:34

That's wonderful. So we also get to enjoy some wonderful art and theater. So Perfect. Thank you. This, this has been amazing. I'm so happy that we got to talk. I'm thrilled that you are doing this work and that you were able to take some time to share it with us. So thank you so much, Kim.



Kim Sykes 38:55

Thank you, Omkari. I'm so thrilled to be here and it's so good to see you.



Omkari Williams 38:59

I know, it's been a while. You take care.



Kim Sykes 39:05

Thanks again.



Omkari Williams 39:06

Thank you so much for listening. Be sure to check out the Girl Be Heard website and, if you can, donate to support their work. COVID has taken a lot from us in these past several months. Among the things I believe we've gained is a new appreciation for community and a new or deeper appreciation for the power of story. I will be back with another episode of Stepping Into Truth very soon. And I'm going to sign off by reminding you that change starts with story. So keep sharing yours.