

<https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Northwestern-Cancels-ASSASSINS-Mid-Run-Amid-Backlash-Over-Racial-Slur-20250305>

Lovers & Madmen, a [Northwestern University](#) student theatre group, canceled the final two performances of Assassins following criticism over the use of a racial slur in the production. The decision came after a public discussion on campus and social media regarding the inclusion of the N-word in the show and its impact on the Black community, [reports The Daily Northwestern](#). An member of the performance group announced the cancellation to attendees outside Norris University Center McCormick Auditorium before the 2 p.m. Saturday performance. Audience members, including cast and crew, discussed the decision before leaving the venue with unredeemed tickets.

The controversy began after [Production Team](#) members posted a content warning on the Assassins Instagram account on Thursday, alerting audiences to potentially sensitive material, including the use of the N-word by the character [John Wilkes Booth](#). The L&M board shared the same message on its own Instagram page, [linking to a document](#) explaining the word's inclusion in the script. The document outlined three reasons for the slur's presence in the song "The Ballad of Booth," citing its role in breaking audience sympathy for the character, highlighting contradictions in Booth's worldview, and relieving tension in the scene.

Following the post, students reportedly criticized the decision to keep the slur in the show. Some called for its removal, while others demanded the cancellation of the remaining performances. Much of the conversation took place on Instagram, where students shared posts condemning the language, and on NU's Fizz, an anonymous social media platform for students.

Weinberg junior Aja Frazier, who served as the show's dramaturg, addressed the situation on social media, stating that she joined the production because of its "relevance to today's climate" and to create a "safe environment in a white-dominant theater space."

Frazier said that discussions about whether to include or exclude the N-word began before the audition process and continued up until opening night.

"I don't know, again, what decisions factored into what when it came to the use of the word," Frazier said. "Even when I was sitting down in the seat, I was still wondering if any last-minute changes were gonna happen."

Ultimately, the word remained in the Friday performances. L&M released an official statement on Instagram on Sunday, acknowledging that it "failed to engage in meaningful conversations with the Black community" about the use of the slur. The board apologized and committed to "preventing harm in the future."

"We are profoundly sorry for the harm we caused," the statement read. "Art should never come at the expense of the safety of Black and POC communities. Because of our actions and inactions, it did."

For Members Only and the Black Mentorship Program, two Black student groups at Northwestern, issued a joint statement condemning the decision to keep the slur in the production.

"The choice to include such language reflects a failure to consider the lived experiences of Black students and perpetuates a culture where our concerns are dismissed in favor of artistic justification," the statement read.