



“Diversity Is A Corporate Strategy”

Changing the System and Creating True Equity in Museum Hiring Practices

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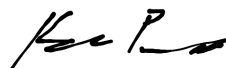
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*“Diversity without structural transformation simply brings those who were previously excluded into a system as racist, misogynist, as it was before...I have a hard time accepting diversity as a synonym for justice. **Diversity is a corporate strategy.**”*
—Dr. Angela Davis, Civil Rights Activist

ABSTRACT

If the summer of 2020 has taught us anything, it is that people, specifically BIPOC, are more than ready to continue the fight for racial and social justice across the world. No business or field is exempt from this fight, museums included. Anyone involved in the museum field must now start taking steps to make our institutions more equitable and fair, both internally and externally. One way to begin fixing museums internally is to look at the hiring practices that many of these institutions have and see what needs to change in order to create a more equitable hiring process. This creates a short term solution, however, another part of changing the system internally is looking at how to sustain this equitable change for years to come. By looking at the resources slowly becoming more available for museums, such as hiring tool kits and equity driven projects, an argument can be made for museum professionals to stop talking about doing this type of work and actually start putting in the action.

DEDICATION

This thesis, like so many of the open letters, discussions, and stories over the past eight months, is a call to action. We can't keep talking about and waiting for inclusive and equitable practices in museums, that time has come and gone. The time for action has come and it is going to take all of us to change the museum field into being a more inclusive space for all. I love this field and I believe in the work that so many of us are doing right now to make our field better. This thesis is a reminder of all of the hard work that has already been done so that we may move forward; together.

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

Growing up, I always thought that museums were both intimidating and welcoming at the same time. They always had beautiful works of art, or interesting historical objects, fun programs, and of course, fond memories of school field trips spent roaming the institutions all day, but there were times where I felt like I did not belong because I didn't know enough about art or because a lot of the people I saw never really looked like me. As I grew older, I realized that museums had so much potential to become places that brought people from all walks of life together and could do so much for the communities that surrounded them, and I was excited to learn that I wasn't the only one who thought like that, this was something that the museum field had been working on for years now. It became clear, however, that while museums were pushing for a more inclusive audience, those that ran the museums and worked there were more often than not, not reflecting the communities they wished to engage.

I believe that museums need to be run by people who reflect the communities and people that they are trying to attract as visitors. From the multiple posts, webinars, and letters of solidarity and call-outs to museum officials over the summer of 2020, it is clear that the museum field has a long way to go before becoming places of true equity, but I believe that there are enough of us who want real change and will fight to make it happen.

INTRODUCTION

Museums have become one of the most trusted sources of information in modern day America,¹ which means that there is a heavy weight that museums and other cultural institutions must carry going forward. The American Alliance of Museums has been pushing these types of ideals since the 1970s, including making museum spaces to have more inclusive and diverse staff. Museums and other organizations use words like “diversity” and “inclusion” but they seem more like buzzwords than actionable items. Words used to let the rest of the world know that museums value diversity and inclusion, but they really do not have a firm grasp on the definition of these words, or if they should be used when describing programs, staff hiring, or even the mission of the museum.

What does the word “diversity” even mean? What exactly do people mean when they discuss it? For a lot of people, the word “diversity” simply refers to race or ethnicity, with gender usually coming in at a close second. The word “diversity” should be intersectional, in that it includes people from all different backgrounds, not just racial, ethnic, or gender. It should mean people from different economic and social backgrounds, different age ranges, different sexual orientations, and so many more aspects that make us all different to one another, it should be flexible. By having the word “diversity” only define a certain group of people, it excludes so many different backgrounds that it really doesn’t even mean “diverse” anymore. “Diverse” also means having a variety of different viewpoints and perspectives, something that creates a stronger workforce.

¹ Dilenschneider, Colleen. “People Trust Museums More Than Newspapers. Here Is Why That Matters Right Now (DATA).” Know Your Own Bone, January 25, 2019.
<https://www.colleendilen.com/2017/04/26/people-trust-museums-more-than-newspapers-here-is-why-that-matters-right-now-data/>.

Civil Rights Activist Dr. Angela Davis said it best in one of her definitions of diversity in that, “diversity without structural transformation simply brings those who were previously excluded into a system as racist, misogynist, as it was before.”² Dr. Davis makes a fair point, how are institutions such as museums supposed to create and maintain an equitable institution if they are still operating on the same systems that have kept a number of people from coming through their doors for years? It is important to remember that equitable hiring practices and an inclusive environment in museums cannot happen if the institutions culture and system built on systemic racism change as well. If museums and other cultural institutions want to continue to be welcoming spaces for different communities and be considered institutions of inclusion, they need to adapt and continue to grow to ensure that all of this hard work continues to grow, with the space to adapt as communities change over the years.

This work is incredibly important in building a better future for museums, as Radhika Jones, the first woman of color Editor in Chief at Vanity Fair, stated when she took the mantle a few months ago, “We are not bound to continue the cultural hierarchies we inherit.”³ I believe that this statement can easily be made for museums as well. In other words: *Museums in today’s world have made statements and claims of wanting to be more diverse, inclusive, and equitable, not only in terms of the types of visitors they serve, but in who they employ. Actions, however, speak louder than words, and those running the museums seem to be more concerned with the public perception of the institution rather than taking action. In order for museums to actually become truly equitable, they need to begin practicing what they preach in articles, discussion*

² Clarke, Samantha. “Who Is Angela Davis?” Medium. The Blight., January 20, 2020. <https://medium.com/the-blight/who-is-angela-davis-87b664ffadfe>.

³ Jones, Radhika. “Radhika Jones on Icons, Fame, and Evolution.” Vanity Fair, July 14, 2020. <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2020/07/radhika-jones-on-icons-fame-and-evolution>.

panels, and posts made to garner support from the public. Museums need to start putting in the work and making equitable hiring decisions.

KEYWORDS: Diverse, Inclusive, Equitable, Cultural, Accessible, Intersectionality, Systemic Racism, White Supremacy

ABBREVIATIONS: **DEAI**-Diverse, Inclusive, Accessible, Equitable; **BIPOC**-Black, Indigenous, Person of Color

DEFINITIONS

Diverse: Showing a great deal of variety

Inclusive: Covering various elements as part of a whole

Equitable: Fair and impartial

Cultural: Elements relating to the ideas, customs, and social behavior of different societies

Accessible: Able to be reached or entered

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group.

Systemic Racism: A form of oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another, often embedded as normal practice within society or an organization

White Supremacy: The belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society

Pay Transparency: Being open with how much, or little, a business pays their workers

RATIONALE

Museums are creating more programs and events that cater to a wider “diverse” audience, which can refer to people from different economic, social, racial, ethnic, and accessible backgrounds. The staff members creating these programs, however, are in most cases, not a reflection of the audience they are trying to attract. This not only creates a disconnect between the audience and the museum, but also from future marginalized museum professionals and the museum field. The museum field may have begun discussions on “diversity” and “inclusion” nearly fifty years ago, but real change and action has only begun to take place in museums and other cultural institutions in the past ten to twenty years.⁴

The world is changing; the 21st century is bringing more and more ideals of inclusion and diversity and owning one's identities, and how this needs to translate into the workforce in every single field in the world right now. Museums are slow in this race, as there still seems to be more talk about how to fix this problem, rather than taking action. This has never been as evident as it is now, the summer of 2020 has shed light on the issues that still plague the museum field, resulting in the beginnings of hypocrisy from museum professionals to the perpetrators still creating spaces of:

- Racism
- Sexism
- White supremacy

In museums such as:

⁴ Skiba, Bob. Interview by Shelby Bergstresser. Phone Call Interview. Pennsylvania, May 5, 2020.

- The Met
- MOMA
- The Walters
- The Guggenheim
- The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

All of whom posted letters and various messages of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, which led to former or current employees exposing these institutions for their horrible treatment of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) staff and visitors, and maintaining spaces still dominant with white supremacy and systemic racism, through microaggressions and blatant remarks and actions.

One of the ways that museums need to begin to dismantle the decades of systemic racism and white supremacy within the institution is by re-designing the hiring practices that are currently being used in museums today. That includes the types of questions that are asked on job applications, the places where job openings are posted, the requirements listed for the job, pay transparency, legacy hiring, and various other factors that make equitable hiring decisions in museums today harder than it should be. While 2020 has been filled with more twists and turns than one could ever expect in a lifetime, it has also shown us that people want change and are willing to fight for it without backing down until their goals are accomplished. For the museum field, that change is coming for it as well.

LITERATURE REVIEW

White Supremacy and Museums

If we are going to be discussing equity in museum hiring practices and overall DEAI work in museums, we need to start by addressing the history of museums and the foundation of white supremacy that they were built on to start off the conversation. Museums as we know them began in Europe around the Renaissance period, as private collections that were used to show a higher social status among the nobility class.⁵ These collections would later be known as “Cabinet of Curiosities” by the 17th century, still being used as a symbol of social standing and only open to the elite.⁶ The cabinets were only made available to the upper class of European, and later American, society and where those who looked after the collections were wealthy volunteers, individuals who had plenty of time and money to spend looking after these collections without having to worry about being paid for their work.

Over time, museums slowly transformed into what we know them as today, some primarily collections based, others program based and so on, and most of them open to the general public. Since the modern museum was heavily formed and influenced between the Renaissance and Colonial periods, “the values and narratives of [these periods] have structured what museums are and how they work,” in the world today (pg.12).⁷ The values and narratives of those time periods were also rooted in white supremacy and white dominant culture, which means that they have their roots in the foundations of museums and are still present today.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture defines white dominant culture as, “how white people and their practices, beliefs, and culture have been normalized over

⁵ Lewis, Geoffrey D. “Museum.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., February 7, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/museum-cultural-institution>.

⁶ See footnote 6

⁷ Multiple Contributors. “MASS Action Toolkit.” Minneapolis: MASS Action, 2017.

time and are now considered standard in the United States.”⁸ This is evident in museum practices, from the way that we display and interpret collections, to the programming, and how the institutions run internally. Of course, there are people in the museum field today who are working tirelessly to break these practices, but they are navigating centuries of systemic racism in the museum field, it’s not something you can achieve overnight. As Joanne Jones-Rizzi, Vice President of Science, Equity, and Education at the Science Museum of Minnesota, and MASS Action Project Advisor, says about white supremacy culture:

“...represents the prevailing way of thinking and it is normalized in our everyday interactions and museum culture. White supremacy culture is dominant in thinking, speaking, dressing, behaving, meeting styles, language, and communication.”⁹

White supremacy culture is the same as white dominant culture and both can be seen in museums today, especially when it comes to hiring practices. From the language that is used in job postings, to the number of requirements needed for each position, and the actual workplace culture.

The Minnesota Historical Society broke down the characteristics of white supremacy culture into twelve different areas, which are: *Perfectionism, Sense of Urgency, Defensiveness, Quantity Over Quality, Worship of the Written Word, Paternalism, Either/Or Thinking, Power Hoarding, Individualism, Progress is Bigger, Objectivity, and the Right to Comfort*.¹⁰ The characteristics highlight markers such as lack of appreciation for each other’s work, short

⁸ “Whiteness.” National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Smithsonian Institute, July 20, 2020. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>.

⁹ Heller, Hannah, Nikhil Trivedi, and Joanne Jones-Rizzi. “Uncovering White Supremacy Culture in Museum Work .” Web log. *The Inclusion* (blog), March 4, 2020. <https://inclusion.com/2020/03/04/white-supremacy-culture-museum/>.

¹⁰ Lunsford, Lindsey, Kenneth Jones, and Tema Okun. “Dismantling Racism: White Supremacy Culture - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” Diversity Equity and Inclusion, 2001. <https://dei.extension.org/extension-resource/white-supremacy-culture/>.

timelines, becoming defensive with new ideas outside of the normal, having a “more is better” along with “bigger is better” mindset, having those in power make all of the decisions, and the ever popular, “if it’s not in a memo, it doesn’t exist.” These twelve areas layout a number of characteristics that have become so ingrained into the museum work culture that they have become normalized, and it turns out that this standard is built on white supremacy culture, which excludes and harms various other cultures and the people who are part of them. This also means that these practices are part of the hiring process, with standards of finding the “perfect” candidate so desirable, that it excludes a vast majority of potential employees from ever being considered.

“Worship of the Written Word” is one of the areas that can be found most often in job postings, as it is easy for museum staff to focus on, “those with strong documentation and writing skills,”¹¹ such as the number of degrees that a potential candidate may have, instead of focusing on their experiences, which may make them better suited for the job than those with higher degrees, or dedicating the time to train new hires for the tasks that they might not know right away. The perfect candidate doesn’t exist for any role or in any field, it is a concept that has been built into our minds from white supremacy as it excludes so many other people who would be great in various positions but are not given a chance because they don’t have a certain degree or the employers aren’t willing to invest time and training into an individual.

Creating equitable hiring practices in museums is much needed in this field, especially in this day and age, however that can only go so far in creating an equitable institution overall if the foundations of white dominant culture, white supremacy, and even systemic racism are still

¹¹ See footnote 10

present in our institutions. We need to work to create new foundations for sustainable equitable change in museums, ones that are built from the mindset of intersectionality and compassion, not from a colonialism viewpoint. This work is also not the responsibility of just one person or one specific group of people in the field, if we want to see real change then it is on all of us to be accountable when it comes to this work.

Overall Equality and Museums

One of the only studies that deals with the general topic of equality and museums is Chris Taylor's paper that focuses on the fact that the American Alliance of Museums started the conversation on making museums more inclusive internally, in the 1970s and how that conversation has mainly been just that, a conversation. There has been very little action from museums on creating a more diverse staff, instead conversations on how there should be more diversity and how it is an outrage that the field still has not done much in fixing this issue. He argues that the change in visitor inclusion that museums are trying to achieve will work if they first work on making their staff more inclusive across the board, and says that while there is the challenge, "to see individuals, while also recognizing, valuing, and understanding their group identities" (pg. 157).¹² Taylor uses the Minnesota Historical Society's "DICE" department, of which he was the department lead and the Chief Inclusion officer, as a case study for this argument.

One of the sources found when conducting a media review for this thesis was an article on the website, Artsy, which mentioned the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation report that was cited in the original literature review of this project. The article uses snippets of an interview with

¹² Taylor, Chris. "From Systemic Exclusion to Systemic Inclusion: A Critical Look at Museums." *Journal of Museum Education* 42, no. 2 (June 2017): 155–62. doi:10.1080/10598650.2017.1305864.

Madeleine Grynsztejn, the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the current president of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD). It discusses the steps that museums have taken so far to becoming more diverse in both programming and hiring, but that there is still a long way to go for any real change. As Grynsztejn states, “You can no longer have this be a cosmetic and discrete marketing arm of your museum; that was multiculturalism in the 1990s, and it got us here, so in a way, we’re talking about the evolution of multiculturalism into diversity, equity, and access.”¹³

Grynsztejn also says that the initiatives needed to make the changes in equitable hiring practices and “diversity” that museum leaders are stating that they desperately want are going to need to be aggressive, and a true commitment is needed for this cause. As she says, “It needs to be a very aggressive and proactive sensitization to unconscious bias in how you post your job descriptions, where you post your job descriptions, and to commit yourself to mentoring and cultivating brilliant people who might not have the absolute standard resume at that moment.”¹⁴ Part of creating an equitable hiring practice, is dismantling the systematic biases and prejudices that are still part of the museum field today.

Race & Ethnicity and Museums

One of the largest topics that gets the most attention when talking about diversity and inclusion in any type of space is that of race and ethnicity. These tend to be the first factors that come to people's minds when talking about diversity, which is not necessarily a bad initial thought nor is it incorrect. There needs to be conversations about race and ethnicity and the lack

¹³ Sutton, Benjamin. “Museums Are Becoming More Diverse, But There's Still Work To Do.” Artsy, February 8, 2019. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-museums-diverse-work>.

¹⁴ See footnote 14

of this type of representation in a lot of spaces, and unfortunately museums still need to have this conversation and consider ways in which to create more opportunities for people of color. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation conducted a demographic survey in 2018 that focused on demographics of staff in U.S. art museums. Through the survey they found that, “While the US population is growing increasingly diverse, the positions that are most directly responsible for presenting, interpreting, and caring for art objects from all the world’s cultures over time are not yet reflecting that diversity.”¹⁵

This is not to say that the study found no growth in museums whatsoever, through a comparison of a similar survey they conducted back in 2015, the Mellon Foundation found that “museum staff have become more racially and ethnically diverse over the last four years,” (pg.6).¹⁶ They also found that while education and curatorial departments have grown more diverse, conservation and overall museum leadership has not. This study is also limited to art museums, which tends to be the common thread with these studies, which isn’t bad, but it does beg the question as to why these types of studies aren’t being conducted in other types of museums.

These research and data finding happens to fall in line with what Tharron Bloomfield, an indigenous museum conservator from New Zealand, found in his study on the lack of indigenous staff members in museums, particularly in the conservation department. When talking about indigenous people, Bloomfield means “American Indian and Native Hawaiian people in the United States, First Nations people in Canada, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from

¹⁵ “Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey 2018.” The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, January 28, 2019. <https://mellon.org/news-blog/articles/art-museum-staff-demographic-survey-2018/>.

¹⁶ See footnote 2.

Australia, Maori of New Zealand, and other cultural groups (pg.139).”¹⁷ Bloomfield points out that all of these cultural groups are hardly seen in the museum profession, especially in conservation, where his focus lies.

Bloomfield is not the only one discussing indigenous peoples and their connections to museums. While Kylie Message does not specifically discuss the lack of indigenous staff in museums like Bloomfield, she does discuss “the potential role museums may play as agents of and activists for social inclusion,”¹⁸ which follows the thought of this thesis. Most of Message’s paper delves into the community engagement and public social aspect of museums, but there is a way that an argument can be made with this source about how even if the community engagement between a museum and a certain community is very strong, there is still a disconnect because there are not people from that specific community working in the museum with being advocates for these people.

Maurice Davies and Lucy Shaw discuss a program in the United Kingdom that ran from 1998 to 2011 that focused on hiring not just minorities within museums, but people with disabilities and who had low economic status. They discuss how the program, focused on people from a BAME (Black, Asian, Minority-Ethnic) background, worked over the course of the thirteen years that it was active to help work out solutions to create long-term employment opportunities for people of different racial, economic, and able-bodied backgrounds work in museums.¹⁹

¹⁷ Tharron Bloomfield (2013) Engaging indigenous participation: toward a more diverse profession, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28:2, 138-152, DOI: 10.1080/09647775.2013.776798

¹⁸ Message, Kylie. “Museums and the Utility of Culture: The Politics of Liberal Democracy and Cultural Well-Being.” *Social Identities* 13, no. 2 (March 2007): 235–56. doi:10.1080/13504630701235846.

¹⁹ Davies, Maurice, and Lucy Shaw. “Diversifying the Museum Workforce: The Diversify Scheme and Its Impact on Participants’ Careers.” *Museum Management & Curatorship* 28, no. 2 (May 2013): 172–92. doi:10.1080/09647775.2013.776799.

Adding onto the number of papers regarding race and the museum, Daryl Fischer, Swarupa Anila, and Porchia Moore broke down a conference panel that took place in Chicago back in 2016, where twenty-five museum professionals from a multitude of different ethnic and racial backgrounds came together to discuss systematic racism in museums today. The panel took place over 3 days and what came out of it was a call to action for museums and communities to come together to start addressing these issues and work towards dismantling systemic racism within this field. One of the first things that they addressed in the panel was that, “progress in the museum field as a whole has been characterized by outputs—diversity statements, task forces, “strategic hiring” of people of color— with few long-term outcomes” (pg.25).²⁰ A very powerful and true statement that this project hopes to address as well and work to change.

Gender and Museums

The discussion of gender inequality tends to be focused on cis-gender women, but it also includes transgender women, creating an intersection that can be seen in many communities because there is not one person in the world who belongs to a single community, therefore overlap between these areas is extremely common. The Association of Art Museum Directors released a report in 2017 titled “The Ongoing Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorship.” The data from the report found that, “The prevalence of female directors is tied to museum type, which is also tied to average budget size,” and that museums with an operating budget of under

²⁰ FISCHER, DARYL, SWARUPA ANILA, and PORCHIA MOORE. “Coming Together to Address Systemic Racism in Museums.” *Curator* 60, no. 1 (January 2017): 23–31. doi:10.1111/cura.12191.

\$15 million annually were more likely to have female directors rather than museums with budgets over \$15 million (pg.2).²¹

Women of Color in Non-Profits

The Building Movement Project is an organization that was established over ten years ago with the goal to advance the nonprofit sector by giving them the tools they need to advance in social change. They have a recent report of women of color in the nonprofit field that discusses the findings of the lack of women of color and how there is a perception that they must have struggled and overcome obstacles to earn their place in the nonprofit field. There is this quote from the beginning that stood out to me however,

“that to increase the number of leaders of color in nonprofits, the sector should challenge the assumption that people of color must overcome personal deficits. Instead, a new approach is needed that places the emphasis not on changing people of color, but on addressing deeply embedded biases and systematic barriers that make it harder for people of color to advance into leadership positions, despite being just as qualified as their white peers.”(pg.3)²²

The mentality that there needs to be various struggles for people of color, women especially, to overcome in order to “deserve” their positions is toxic and discriminatory on so many levels. Especially when you consider the fact that their white, male, and normally cisgendered and abled counterparts are not held to the same standards and aren’t given nearly as many struggles and obstacles to overcome.

²¹ Trevino, Veronica, Zannie Giraud Voss, Christine Anagnos, and Alison D. Wade. “The Ongoing Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships.” Association of Art Museum Directors, 2017. https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/AAMD_NCAR_Gender_Gap_2017.pdf.

²² Biu, Ofonama. “Race to Lead: Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector.” Building Movement Project, 2019. file:///Users/shelbybergstresser/Downloads/WOC_Race-to-Lead.pdf.

LGBTQA+ and Museums

The LGBTQA+ Alliance Steering Committee is part of AAM and held a panel at the annual AAM meeting in 2013 to discuss guidelines and best practices when it came to creating safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ visitors, community members, and museum staff. This panel was a call to action for the museum field to begin changing how they interacted with the LGBTQA+ community. The belief of the committee is that, “Museums can and should make inclusion a strategic priority, designing policies and practices that facilitate diverse recruitment and hiring” (pg.141).²³ The guidelines that the committee presented were, “envisioned as a checklist or self-assessment that can be applied by individual LGBTQA+ museum professionals and allies as a resource to effect change at their institutions.”(pg.145).²⁴

The Department of Cultural Affairs, based in New York City, released a report in July of 2019 about the workforce demographics in cultural organizations in NYC. Because this study was based in NYC it naturally doesn’t apply to all museums in the country, but it does give us a good starting point as NYC has many museums and other cultural organizations. This report found that out of the 6,928 participants in the study, only 15% identified as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual in the workforce. They then broke it down further into four categories of cultural workers such as volunteers, regular staff, executive leadership, and board members. While executive leadership had the most LGBTQA+ representation with 26%, overall, the majority of all staff in cultural organizations identified as heterosexual.²⁵

²³ Leitch, Christopher, Renae Youngs, Annette Gavigan, Michael Lesperance, William James Burns, Barbara Cohen-Stratynier, Paul Hammond, and Jaden Hansen. “LGBTQ Welcoming Guidelines for Museums: Developing a Resource for the Museum Field.” *Museums & Social Issues* 11, no. 2 (October 2016): 138–46. doi:10.1080/15596893.2016.1217460.

²⁴ See footnote 11

²⁵ Rep. *New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study Results. National Center for Arts Research*, July 2019.
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dcla/downloads/pdf/NYC%20DCLA%20Full%202018%20WfD%20Report%207-24-19.pdf>.

Of course, not everyone presents themselves as queer or even talks about being queer, which is their choice. No matter what their choices are, people should still be able to work in an environment where they feel safe and included, not as a token for diversity. There are case studies that will be presented in this paper that show that this is not the case in many museums currently. The welcoming guidelines are an important step in making sure that everyone feels welcomed by their institution and the data from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs provide the data to back up the need for this inclusion work.

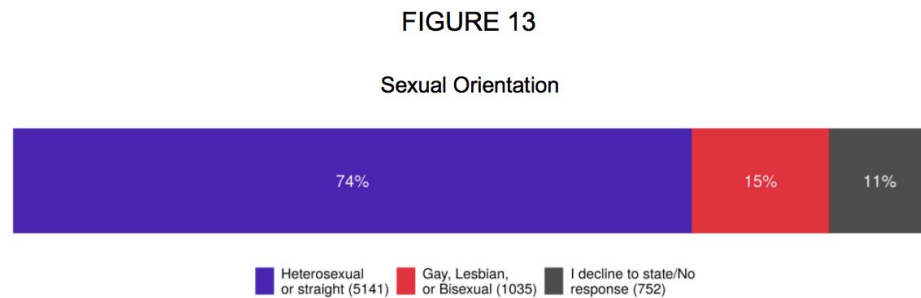


Figure 1: Figure 13 from the NYC DCLA study published in July 2019. This figure shows the percentage of LGBT+ workers in the cultural sector in NYC.

FIGURE 14

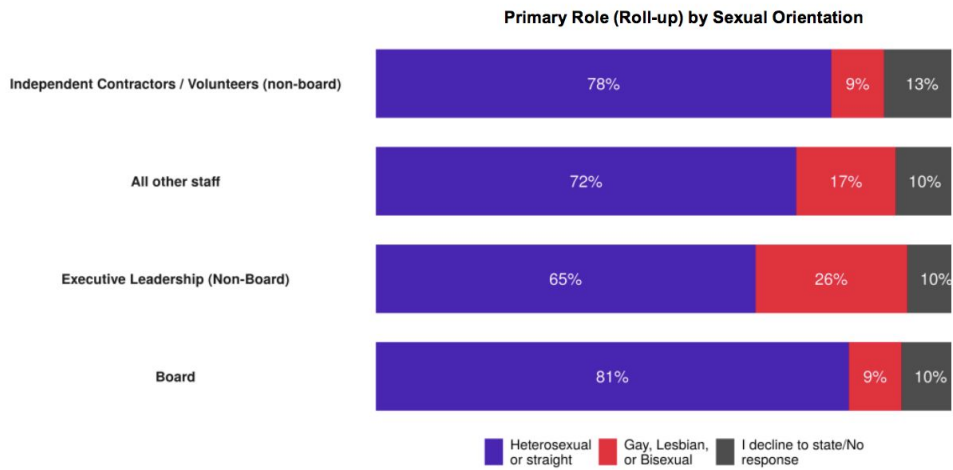


Figure 2: Figure 14 from the NYC DCLA study published in July 2019. The figure breaks down the LGB+ representation in four different areas of the workforce.

Disability and Museums

When it comes to discussing diversity and inclusion in any form, the top two areas that tend to get the most focus are BIPOC and gender. Then we have the LGTBQA+ community, and people from lower socioeconomic classes, and so on, but the one group that tends to be left out of the conversation are people with disabilities. People with disabilities are often overlooked when it comes to DEAI because people tend to think that accommodating an individual with a disability will be difficult. As Meredith Peruzzi, Director of the National Deaf Life Museum at Gallaudet University states, “sometimes organizations will add “accessibility” into their initiatives and use the acronym DEAI...but this does not always result in inclusion of disabled staff or visitors.”²⁶

²⁶ Peruzzi, Meredith. “Mind the Accessibility Gap.” American Alliance of Museums, September 1, 2020. <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/09/04/mind-the-accessibility-gap/>.

Peruzzi continues to lay out what museums could have been doing for their staff members with disabilities all along, mainly with the online communication as this is now the reality of the field right now. Accommodations such as closed captioning on online events for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or using content that is not screen reading software compatible for those who are blind or have low vision to use are now more in use than they were before Covid. Accommodations such as these and other considerations such as interpreters at live events or open spaces for wheelchair users tend to be only thought about for visitors, not staff, which makes it harder to create an inclusive space for people with both physical and mental disabilities. As Peruzzi points out, one way to really connect with the disability community is by having people from that community in your staff, “if we are to move into the future as a society, as DEAI efforts urge us to, museums must include disabled people in their hiring practices.”²⁷ This is a statement that can be applied to all other marginalized groups in museums right now, if we want to move towards a progress and inclusive future, then museums need to put in the work and hire people from all different communities.

The same report from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs focused on workers with disabilities as well, citing a disability as,

“Person with an emotional or behavioral disability. Person with a learning disability. Person with a physical disability or mobility impairment. Person who is deaf or hard of hearing. Person who is blind or visually impaired. Person with an intellectual, cognitive, or developmental disability. Person with a communication disorder, who is unable to speak, or who uses a device to speak.”²⁸

²⁷ See footnote 24

²⁸ See footnote 25

The report found that out of the 11% of people with disabilities in NYC, only 8% were cultural workers. When they broke the numbers down into the four categories mentioned earlier, the numbers were incredibly low, finding that over 80% of cultural workers in each category were people without a disability.²⁹

²⁹ Please note that these numbers are only based on workers in New York City. Conduct studies for demographics on your own institution as well as the demographics of your surrounding community and compare them. See where you can improve. Remember, tokenization does not equal diversity or inclusion.

FIGURE 16
Disability Status

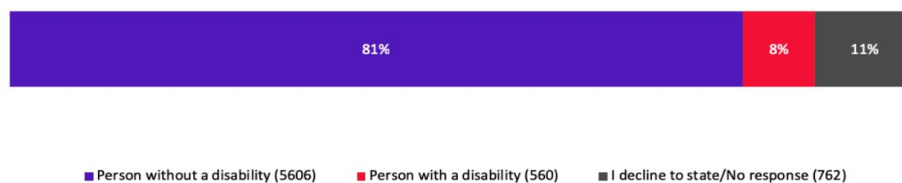


Figure 3: Figure 16 from the NYC DCLA study published in July 2019. This figure shows the percentage of workers with disabilities in the cultural sector in NYC.

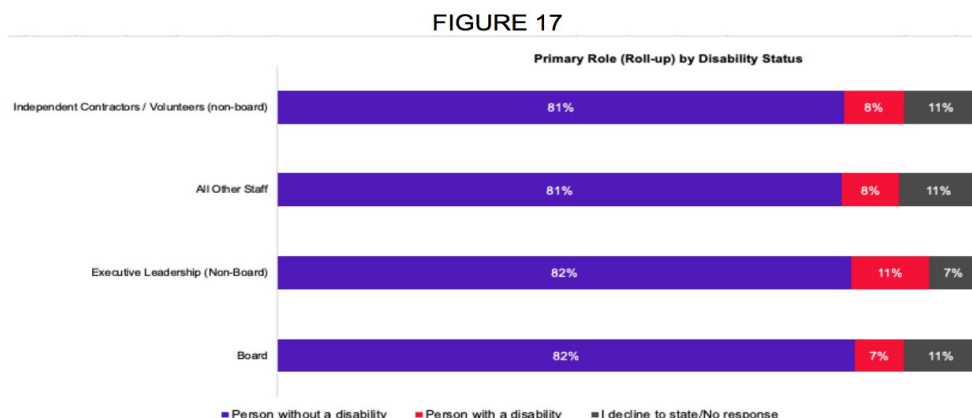


Figure 4: Figure 17 from the NYC DCLA study published in July 2019. This figure breaks down the workers with disabilities into four different areas of the workforce.

CURRENT STATE

Interviews

The first round of interviews began the week of May 3rd, 2020. The interviewees included Bob Skiba, Curator of the John J. Wilcox, Jr. Archives at the William Way Community Center and Ellen Owens, Merle-Smith Director of Learning and Public Engagement at the Penn

Museum. A second round of interviews began at the end of September of 2020 with Linda Cairnes, Assistant Director of Experimental Engagement at the Center of Aquatic Sciences at Adventure Aquarium.

Interviews continued into October 2020 with Kim Bountress, Senior Director of Human Resources at the Baltimore Museum of Art, and Rachel Sanchez, Assistant Director of Employee Engagement, Internships & Volunteer Programs at the Baltimore Museum of Art, and Monica O. Montgomery, a cultural consultant and DEI practitioner based in New York City. A final interview took place in early November with Sarahi Zamores, the Human Resources Coordinator at Longwood Gardens.

The Power of Social Media in Summer 2020

The events of Summer 2020 have led people to expose museums across the country in their treatment of BIPOC staff and community members. Museums that penned letters of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement were called out for their institutions' history and operations, which were never in support of BIPOC or other marginalized communities. This began a movement that led to multiple open letters to various institutions, webinars on topics of concerns in the museum field at this moment, and a wave of social media accounts created as a way to expose the truths about a number of cultural institutions. For the first time, professionals in the museum field had a chance to have their voices heard, to tell their stories and experiences in an honest and raw platform. I want to take a deeper dive at the events of the summer of 2020 and how museum workers are calling out museums for being places that do not support equity and diversity.

Social media has made it extremely easy to spread information to the general public at a rapid pace. Information is now readily available at the tips of your fingers, which has its pros and its cons; there are always two sides to the same coin. Having easy access to social media platforms allowed museums to create and post messages of solidarity for the BLM movement, however, this gave people the chance to expose these institutions on their performative allyship and share their stories in regards to those institutions treatment of BIPOC staff and visitors, along with the institution's sordid histories. Three organizations in particular are using social media to raise awareness on the treatment of BIPOC workers and visitors in the museum field, as well as help facilitate discussions on what changes need to be made in this field in order for it to become an equitable and fair representation of the world today. *Death to Museums*, *Change the Museum*, and *For the Culture* are three of the most vocal organizations right now that are speaking up against the treatment that museums have given to marginalized workers and visitors for years.

Death to Museums

Death to Museums is among the newer organizations, only forming this summer as a grassroots organization created by June Ahn, Rose Cannon, and Emma Turner, recent graduates from Chicago in the museum field that came into the workforce during this global and social justice pandemic. They describe this organization as, "...an unconference..." that, "...can become a platform to share ideas and concerns while brainstorming ways to push the field forward."³⁰ The first of these two day "unconferences" was held on August 1st, where Dr. Porchia A. Moore, a museum critical race theorist as well as co-creator of The Visitors of Color Project, and

³⁰ June Ahn, Rose Cannon, and Emma Turner-Trujillo, "Death to Museums," *Death to Museums*, 2020, <https://deathtomuseums.com/>.

prominent figure in the museum field, presented the first panel titled, “Today Is A Good Day For Museums To Die,” which set the stage for what this unconference series is all about; that those of us in this field love museums, but we see that they need to change and they need to change now.

This unconference series has three sessions under its belt already, and a possibility of more in the future. Each session includes a space for the presentations to clearly be seen, along with closed captioning for the whole session. The sessions are live streamed and then saved on YouTube, a virtual platform that is easily accessible and doesn’t require creating an account or logging in if you don’t want to. No session took place in November, and there is currently no word on a December session, which may mean that traction on this unconference series may be losing steam. Keeping in mind that this is a newly formed grassroots organization primarily run by three recent graduates, there are considerations that can be taken as a result of this factor. As stated throughout this paper, this work is a commitment, it is not something that can be done for a short time and be called a success; it takes work. I am hoping that the incredible work that *Death to Museums* has started continues this long fight in the coming months.

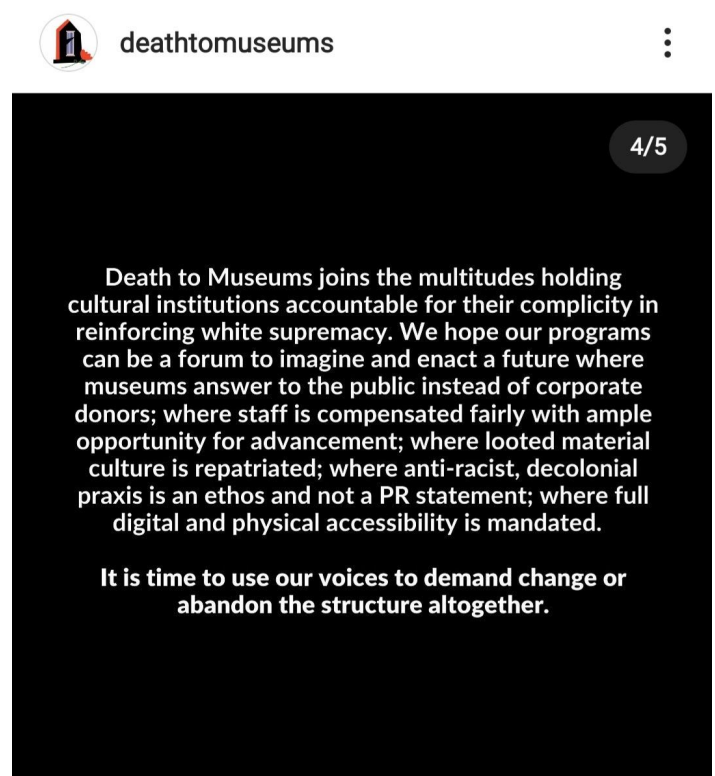
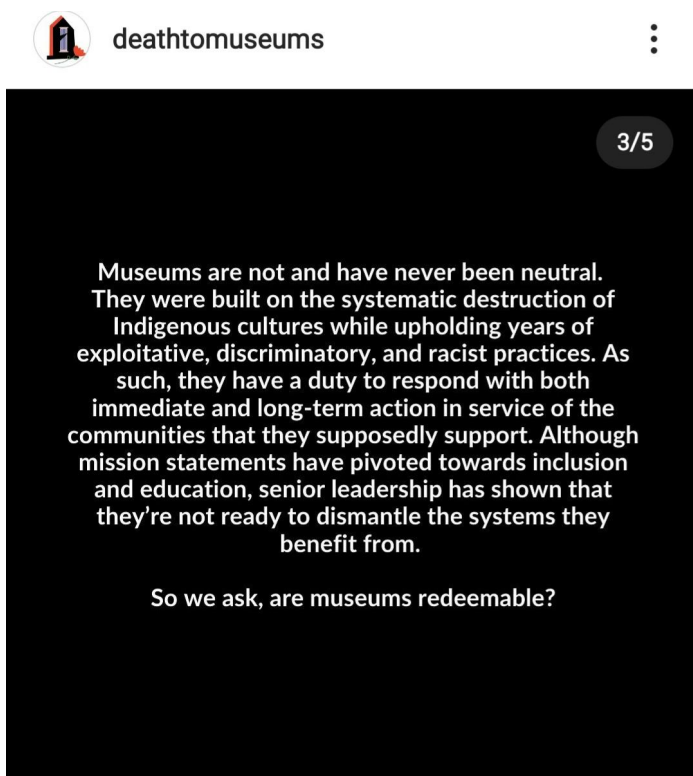
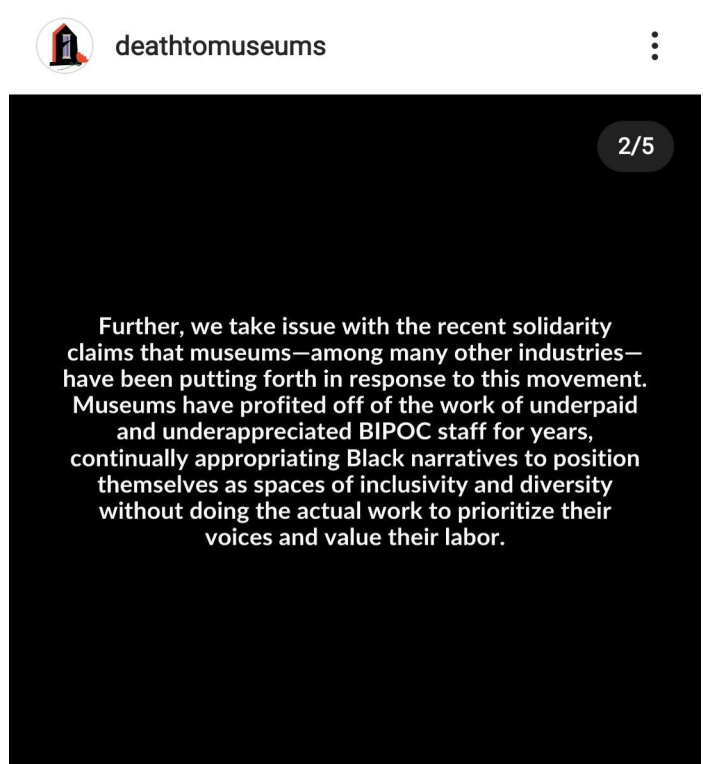
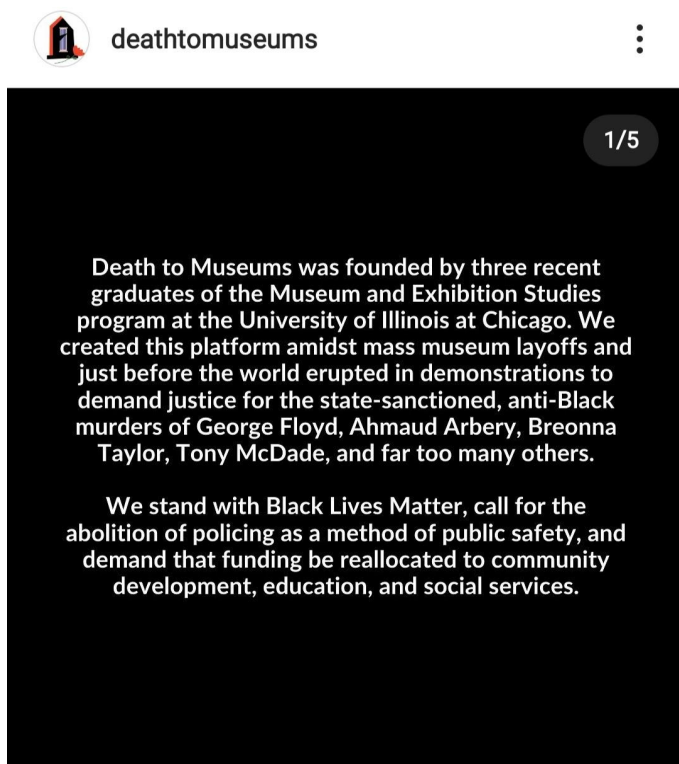


Figure 5: deathtomuseums: Four slides from a post made by Death to Museums on June 10, 2020. The slides explain what the organization is about and why it was formed. The organization calls for museums to reform and others an online program for museum professionals to gather to discuss key issues within museums and discuss if museums can change or if more extreme action is needed.

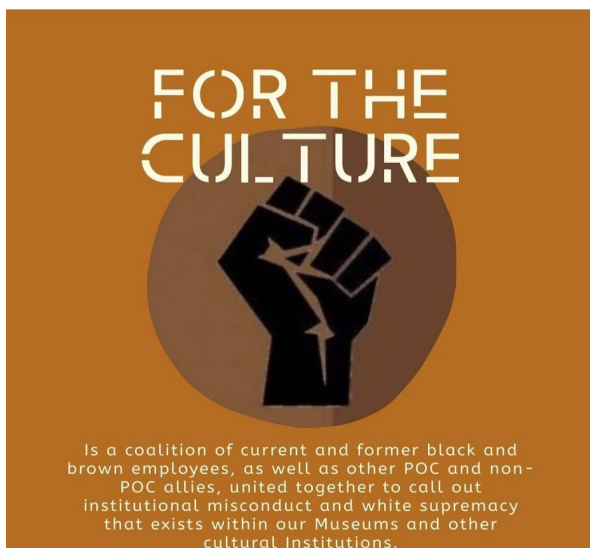
For the Culture

For the Culture and *Change the Museum* are also organizations that were created at the start of the summer in response to the museum fields responses towards Black Lives Matter and the murder of George Floyd. *For the Culture*, “Is a coalition of current and former black and brown employees, as well as other POC and non-POC allies, united together to call out institutional misconduct and white supremacy that exists within our Museums and other cultural institutions.”³¹ One of their first posts on Instagram was a call to action for those in the museum field, those in the arts, or those who supported museums and the arts, asking them to sign an open letter of solidarity and battling systemic racism prominent in museums. From there, they began posting anonymous stories that museum workers submitted, explaining their experiences with systemic racism in prominent museums in New York City such at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and The Guggenheim to name a few. They also started to highlight the board members of these institutions, pointing out how most of these boards members are made of up white and cis-gendered people, which is a museum norm that many are calling for to change as well. Boards are the governing bodies of museums and having most of them made up of a homogenous group doesn’t reflect the rest of the museum nor does it mean that they’ll work for diversifying their institution since they aren’t coming from different backgrounds and perspectives.

As you may have guessed by the museums that they have decided to focus on, *For the Culture* is an organization that primarily focuses on museums based in New York City. While this is limiting as New York museums are not the only ones with issues and ties to systemic

³¹ _fortheculture2020. *Instagram*, June 15, 2020. Accessed October, 2020.

racism, it is an interesting organization to look at and use as a model for chapters of *For the Culture* in different major cities, each one focusing on the museums and possibly other cultural institutions in their respective areas. Having chapters in major cities with plenty of museums and other cultural institutions would allow the various communities in these cities to create content that voices the particular concerns and problematic practices that they are seeing in the museums in their areas and how it is affecting them.



94 likes

[_fortheculture2020](#) We are asking you to join us in our fight against systemic racism in our Mu... more

[View all 11 comments](#)

[_fortheculture2020](#) [@aeljee](#) thank you

[_fortheculture2020](#) [@guggenheim](#)
[@metmuseum](#) [@themuseumofmodernart](#)
[@whitneymuseum](#) [@gettymuseum](#)
[@newmuseum](#) [@brooklynmuseum](#) [@thewcs](#)
[@amnh](#)

June 15

Figure 6: [_fortheculture2020](#): The first post made by this organization on June 15, 2020 explaining why this coalition was formed and what they stand for.



Liked by [changethemuseum](#) and 104 others

[_fortheculture2020](#) Current models of leadership aren't working and are unsustainable. [image with fist and white text]

Our current models of leadership create environments where we all struggle to find joy, balance and purpose. The models of leadership use fear and extrinsic rewards as motivation. In addition, these models are models that thrive on scarcity and win/lose competition. This is why the mindset of our leaders are deeply flawed. Environments under these models, as we see everywhere, create a culture of cynicism, distrust, burnout, lack and short term results in productivity with long term negative consequences.

There is absolutely no way to create environments that are vibrant, creative, intrinsic, profitable and productive under these models. When we do away with these oppressive and toxic forms of leadership and embrace leadership that is conscious; we create a new and meaningful paradigm that enhances and enriched everyone who embrace it!

[#dismantlecurrentleadershipmodels](#)
[#fortheculture](#)
[#pullupforchange](#)
[#blacklivesmatter](#)
[#blackinthearts](#)
[#fortheculture2020](#)

Figure 7: [_fortheculture2020](#): An early post made by the coalition with the image of a fist with the text, "Current models of leadership aren't working and are unsustainable." Followed by a description on why and how they are unsustainable.

Change the Museum

While *For the Culture* makes an interesting case for a chapter based organization, *Change the Museum* is proving that just one organization can expose museums on a national level with just one social media account. On June 16th, *Change the Museum* made its first post, in which an anonymous sender gave a short statement about an incident at MoMA, marking another collective of museum professionals, artists, and museum lovers coming together to expose museums' treatment of BIPOC and other minorities in museum staff. Or as they describe their page, “Pressuring US museums to move beyond lip service proclamations by amplifying tales of unchecked racism,”³² and with over 500 submitted anonymous stories that range from cringe-worthy to downright horrifying, it is clear that people in the museum field are ready to speak up against the racist practices and higher ups in museums across the US.

These stories give museum employees, past and present, the chance to expose racist micro or macro aggressions towards them directly or said to them in regards to a BIPOC individual or group. While there is something to be said about these stories being shared anonymously, with the name of the institution sometimes not even being named, it is overall a smart idea. Sharing stories anonymously allows individuals a safety net in where they won't be targeted by their institutions to either issue an apology for their story or even being terminated for speaking out. Right now, being anonymous while working for change is a first step, but if the reason that these individuals are staying anonymous is out of fear of what these museums could do to them and their careers, that's more telling on the type of workplace culture that museums and other cultural institutions have created. It shows that fear plays a part in museum workplace

³² changethemuseum. *Instagram*, June 16, 2020. Accessed November, 2020.

culture where people, BIPOC and other minorities especially, don't feel safe voicing their concerns.

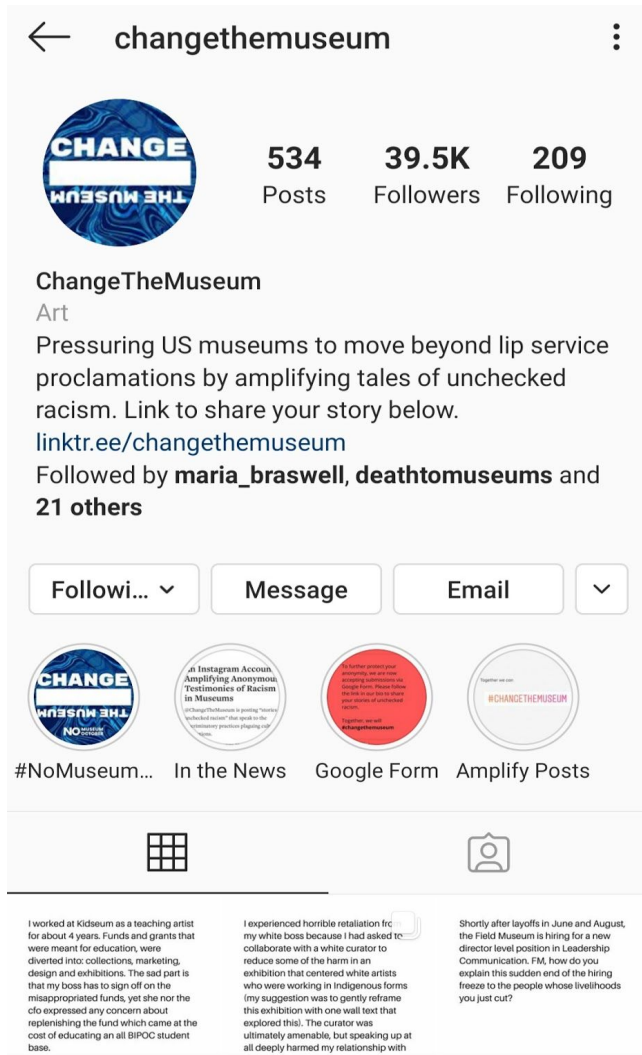


Figure 8: ChangeTheMuseum: The instagram page of the organization Change The Museum, with a description of the organization at the top, along with a link for people to submit their stories.

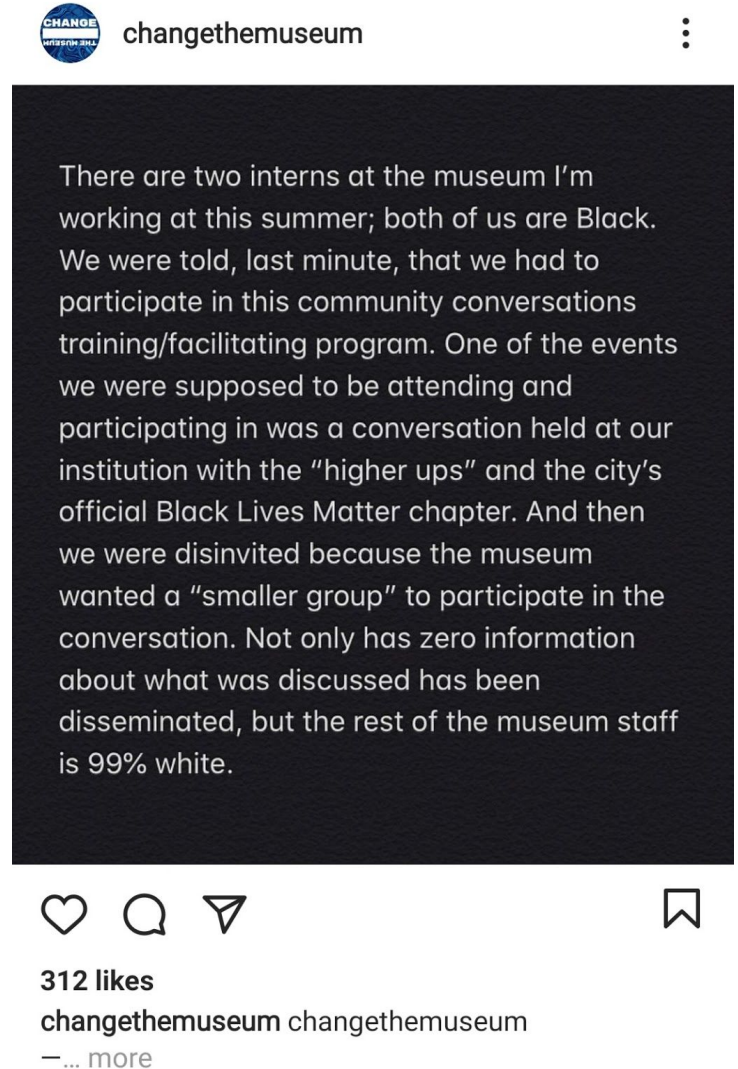


Figure 9: ChangeTheMuseum: A story submitted to the organization about a recent event that took place in an undisclosed museum. The story describes racial bias taking place in that institution.

Empty Statements and Exposing Letters

Of course, there are individuals who are willing to take that leap of faith and pen their names on their claims and stories, or even come close as to stating their position at a certain institution, which makes them easier to single out, even without a name. Examples of these individuals come from the open letters to museums that also began appearing in the early summer of 2020, when museums and other cultural institutions were coming out with letters and statements of solidarity for George Floyd and the BLM Movement as a whole. Monica O. Montgomery, Founder of Museum Hue, thinks that these letters were, “hella performative,” and, “in-authentic,” and showed that the museums were trying to be politically correct on a surface level, and she clearly isn’t the only one who thinks so.³³

It seemed as though that every organization in every field across the US was rushing to get out a statement or letter in support of racial and social justice earlier this summer. Museums of all sizes and types made statements, which all held the similar messages along the lines of, “we are committed to being better,” or, “we are actively working on diversity and inclusion training.” But as we soon learned, staff and visitors of these museums were quick to call out the pageantry of these statements, some of them even going as far as to pen open letters of their own to the museums in ways that they have fallen short on DEAI and ways that they could improve. One of the most notable of these letters was the open letter the Curatorial staff at the Guggenheim in NYC wrote, which was released to the public on June 22, 2020.

The Guggenheim

³³ Montgomery, Monica. Interview by Shelby Bergstresser. Phone Call Interview. Pennsylvania, October 26, 2020.

For context, the Guggenheim released a statement of solidarity in early June, saying that, “The Guggenheim was founded on a belief in the transformative power of art. For our community, staff, members, and visitors, we want you to know we are listening, we are grieving with you, and we support collective action in calling for social justice.”³⁴ The public was quick to voice their disappointment towards the museum on their empty statement and the hypocrisy of the statement, citing the institution’s treatment of Chaédria LaBouvier, who was the museum’s first black woman curator in 2019, speaking out on the museum’s horrible treatment of her during her time there. They weren’t the only ones who took issue with the institution’s treatment of LaBouvier and other BIPOC staff; on June 22nd, the curatorial staff at the Guggenheim penned a ten page open letter to the director and various other leaders at the Guggenheim, discussing the ways that the Guggenheim needs to take responsibility for their actions and the ways that they’ve seen systemic oppression and white supremacy at the institution, specifically in the curatorial department.

The tool of anonymity is used in this letter as those in the curatorial department only signed the letter as “The Curatorial Department,” which seems a bit counterproductive at first since they are stating that it is the whole department, but it also makes it harder for the institution to single out any one individual for the letter, since no names are signed on the letter. This is something the individuals who wrote this letter thought about because they state in their opening paragraph that, “We did this anonymously to share and address these issues without fear of retaliation or intimidation.”³⁵ The fact that they had to say right at the beginning is telling of the

³⁴ Greenberger, Alex. “Read Statements from Major U.S. Museums About the George Floyd Protests.” ARTnews.com. ARTnews.com, June 4, 2020. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/museums-statements-george-floyd-protests-1202689578/>.

³⁵ The Curatorial Department. Letter to Richard Armstrong, Director; Sarah Austrian, Deputy Director and General Counsel; Elizabeth Duggal, Chief Operating Officer; and Nancy Spector, Artistic Director and Chief Curator: “Guggenheim.” New York, New York: The Guggenheim, June 22, 2020.

type of culture that the Guggenheim curates in their institution...no pun intended. Even at the end of the letter, when the department lists the notes taken in the DEI meeting, point 58 starts off with the sentence, “The public face the museum presents through its programming--diverse, inclusive, progressive--masks an internal culture of division, tokenization, and fear.”³⁶

Continuing to lay out the issues within the Guggenheim, the curatorial department shares what they believe are problems with the current state of the institution in that:

“The museum’s present inability to take full responsibility for its history or respond adequately—whether through statements or programming—to the global protests triggered by the murder of George Floyd, has put into glaring relief the need for the self-examination and growth required to move forward as an anti-racist institution. A robust culture of open communication and exchange is necessary to do this work.”³⁷

If your employees, especially those that make up an entire department, are telling you that they have not seen any work go into making your institution an anti-racist space and it takes an open letter sent to you during a time of racial and social unrest, then you are clearly running your institution wrong. And if your institution still holds onto the beliefs and practices of systemic racism and white privilege, then chances are that other marginalized groups that happen to be on your staff, in any department, don’t feel comfortable or that they belong there either. This open letter is a call to action from the employees of the Guggenheim, one that needs to be taken seriously by the institution if they want to have a promising future.

Children’s Museum in Pittsburgh

³⁶ See footnote 32

³⁷ See footnote 32

While the focus of the types of institutions throughout this paper so far seem to be around art museums, it really is meant for every single type of museum out there in the US, which includes children's museums. Children's museums are arguably one of the most influential types of museums, that exist in the entire field. Not only do they help bring new levels of education to children, but they are also one of the easiest museums to bring kids to that might spark their interest in museums. As Ellen Owens, Merle-Smith Director of Learning and Public Engagement at the Penn Museum, pointed out, "they're studies that show that if you've gone to museums as a kid and have museum experiences you will be more likely to want to work in a museum,"³⁸ which is something that can easily be accomplished by children's museums. If a children's museum continues to support and implement harmful actions such as micro and macro racism in their programming and marketing, then that is going to influence the children and their families, especially BIPOC and other marginalized groups, and their perceptions of museums. That means those children may or may not become interested in museums because of this.

This issue is what the staff, current and past, at the Children's Museum in Pittsburgh had in mind, as well as their own issues, when they penned their open letter to the museum over the summer. Unlike the previous two letters, a lot of the staff at this institution signed their names, positions, and even the years that they worked at the museum on the letter, some decided to stay anonymous especially if they were still employed at the institution, but having this mix of names and dates shows just how many people are willing to expose the museum in order to see change. The letter is short, but to the point. It lists out their concerns into four different points: *An indifference to the children the Museum serves, particularly the Black children we serve, An*

³⁸ Owens, Ellen. Interview by Shelby Bergstresser. Zoom Interview. Pennsylvania, May 14, 2020.

unempathetic and opportunistic attitude toward our staff, partners, and artists, An unwillingness to articulate and protect basic values, and Unfair and discriminatory actions against staff.

The first point goes back to what Ellen Owens was talking about, how museums have the chance to influence children and potentially inspire them to work in the field one day. The staff at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh are quick to point out how harmful the museum has been acting towards children, particularly towards black children, over the years, “The Museum regularly used and manipulated Black communities to receive funding and continued foundation support, without investing time or interest in our programs there.”³⁹ This type of behavior is incredibly harmful to black children, their families, their communities, and other communities of color as well. Being used like that has lasting effects on communities who experienced it, and while the children may not understand what is going on now, their parents do and they will be the ones who influence their children’s perceptions of the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, and possibly other museums, tainting a possible future generation of people working in the museum field.

It seems that the current BIPOC staff are being manipulated in their own way, being treated unfairly for years, and now having the chance to speak out.

“The majority of the Museum’s Black, Indigenous, and POC staff hold cleaning or service positions— jobs the Museum’s leadership views as less valuable to the Museum community...In addition, the Museum often holds white employees to lower standards,

³⁹ Tolliver, William. “An Open Letter to the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh.” Medium, July 31, 2020. <https://medium.com/@willtolliverjr/an-open-letter-to-the-childrens-museum-of-pittsburgh-d46f56df2243>.

and compensates its all-white leadership team up to five times more than other employees.”⁴⁰

The blatant disrespect and racist behavior that the staff at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh have exposed is unfortunately something that more museum staff across the country are dealing with as well. The disrespect extends beyond the BIPOC staff at the museum, as the letter further goes on to say that, “Other basic human resources practices were broken: employees with mental illness were told they ‘weren’t sick’”⁴¹ It is clear from this letter that any staff member who does not fit the “conventional” norms of being a white, straight, male, and mentally or physically abled person has received some type of abuse or marginalization from the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh. While this letter exposes the terrible actions of the museum, it is meant to be a letter of love and hope, as the employees call for the museum leadership to do better and to be better for the communities that they serve and towards the staff that are working hard to dismantle these racist and destructive actions.

THESIS PROJECT

Through interviews and research conducted over the past several months, I have found tools and other useful initiatives and methods that can help museums begin to build an equitable hiring practice and sustain it as well. These solutions are broken down into two categories: short-term solutions and long-term solutions. Short-term solutions include the MASS Action and Arvana toolkits, and the DEI Culture Scorecard from Experiential Insight, as well solutions to

⁴⁰ See footnote 36

⁴¹ See footnote 36

change job postings. These are solutions that help begin getting a more inclusive workforce into the museum, but they are only the first steps, which is where the long-term solutions come in.

Long-term solutions include a theoretical funding model for sustainable DEAI equity in the workplace as well as training examples to help combat internal bias in the hiring process. These solutions are in no way perfect and not the end-all-be-all solutions that I believe many museum professionals are looking for right now, but I believe that they are a step in the right direction. This kind of work takes time and effort, it requires dedication and patience, something that we all need to be committed to for DEAI work to sustain itself in the years to come.

Short-Term Solutions

Toolkits

In 2016, individuals from 50 different museums came together, with funding and space provided by MIA (Minneapolis Institute of Art), to brainstorm and ultimately create a possible solution for changing museum practices and culture. As they say on their website, “MASS Action...is creating a platform for public dialogues on a variety of topics and issues affecting our communities locally and globally, leading to actionable practices for greater equity and inclusion in our institutions.”⁴² This solution became known as the MASS (Museum As Site for Social) Action toolkit, a 232 page document broken down into three sections: Theory, Practice, and Additional Material. Toolkits are meant to be a compilation of resources, case studies, practices, and next steps to help with a certain problem or area, which is exactly what MASS Action created.

⁴² MASS Action. “About.” MASS Action, 2018. <https://www.museumaction.org/about>.

This toolkit begins with eight chapters that include case studies, interviews, data, and personal narratives on different areas of inclusivity work from why this work is needed in our field to making exhibitions more inclusive. In fact, four out of the eight chapters delve into how to create a more inclusive museum internally, including a whole chapter on how to create and build up inclusive leadership, written by Chris Taylor. In his section Taylor says that, “The leadership paradigm in museums must move away from the dominant perspective that focuses on a unidirectional relationship between leaders and followers to one that is relationship-based with a focus on the relationship between leaders and followers (pg.74),”⁴³ something that definitely needs to be worked on in many institutions, if the open letters and personal stories that have been coming out these past few months are anything to go by.

The MASS Action toolkit covers everything from the funding issues regarding equity and how exhibitions can be more equitable in their design and process. If we’re looking for something more focused on the hiring process and breaking down how to make everything from job applications to interviews more inclusive, then the Avarna toolkit might be something that could do the trick. The Avarna Group is an independent organization that focuses on providing a variety of resources, from mentorship and coaching to assessments, on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) to the leaders and staff in the outdoor and environmental fields. This group could easily be seen as more relevant to zoos, national parks, and aquariums, however, their hiring toolkit is something that can easily be applied to any other field out there in the world, museums included, because it is so broad in nature.

The beginning of this 13 page document states,

⁴³ Multiple Contributors. “MASS Action Toolkit.” Minneapolis: MASS Action, 2017.

“This toolkit is designed to help organizations and individuals mitigate gender, racial, and other hidden biases in your institutional recruiting and hiring processes. It provides tips on structural pieces you can implement to recruit, retain, and promote a broader range of talented people. This is an organic document that continues to grow as we become aware of new research and ideas, so please keep checking in for future (more improved) versions.”⁴⁴

Notice how they clearly state that this document is a work in progress, that these practices aren’t set in stone and new ideas and practices are always going to be developed, meaning that this document will be developing alongside them. Change isn’t something that happens overnight; it takes time and dedication, it is something that is constantly evolving and growing. This toolkit looks at everything from the language being used in postings to the big picture of hiring and some of the best practices to consider when you are about to start putting out job postings.

Worksheets, Checklists and Scorecards...Oh My!

Checklists are not going to solve all of your DEAI problems, but it doesn’t hurt to use them as a rough guide when creating a more equitable future in your institution, and these checklists below include sections on hiring practices, so you can really make sure that you’re heading in the right direction when it comes to creating a more inclusive staff! Even MASS Action made readiness assessments for museum leadership to use to determine how equitable and inclusive their work environment is. This assessment is broken up into two parts, a scorecard and a questionnaire. The scorecard is broken down into six parts: *Strategic Leadership, Culture & Climate, Policies & Practices, Programs & Services, Engagement & Advocacy, and*

⁴⁴ Avarna Group. “A TOOLKIT TO MITIGATE BIAS IN RECRUITMENT AND HIRING.” The Avarna Group, March 15, 2018.

Evaluation & Accountability. These parts focus on different areas of work in a museum, as well as ways for everyone to hold their institution and each other accountable for inclusion work.

Each part comes with its own set of questions that need to be ranked on a scale from 0-5, 0 being no actions taken and 5 being fully integrated. There is even a box for comments with each question.

The second part of the assessment has seven reflection questions for you and your team to answer based on what you learned during the scorecard process. This is a very in-depth process that could help the staff at your institution if the leadership, culture, and practices in the museum be as inclusive and equitable as possible. Another in-depth tool that could be helpful for your internal culture is the DEI Culture Scorecard created by Experiential Insight Group. Again, a scorecard is not going to magically fix all of your DEAI issues overnight, or even in the long-term, but it can be an excellent wake-up call to your institution and a first step in the right direction.

This scorecard has six areas that institutions should be looking to implement DEAI work into: *Hiring Matrix*, which focuses on making sure your institution's pool of candidates are diverse at every level of the organization. *Pay Equity*, has you look at your institution's pay system to remove pay bias and work on decreasing the pay gap with different groups. *Development Opportunities*, looks at making sure your employees have room to learn and grow, which is one of the areas of improvement in current hiring practices that was discussed in various interviews and will be delved into more in the next section. *Promotion Criteria*, looks at making sure that your institution considers its employees fairly for promotions and works to increase the diversity in museum leadership through promotion. *Retention*, means looking at the turnover rate

at your institution and seeing what can be done to make your organization a place of equitable growth. *Belonging Score*, ties into what I have been saying throughout this paper, that this work takes everyone in order to make it last.

Each area has ten diversity variables to consider when checking off these areas: *Age, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Ethnicity, Family Status, Gender, Gender Identity, Race, Religion or Belief, and Veteran Status*. Having these variables in mind when looking at the six different areas of your institution will really help you determine what needs to be done in order to get your institution to its DEAI goals. If you get lost on how to go about these changes, there's a page after the scorecard that has a single question for every variable under each area that can help guide you to through your institution's next steps.

Outdated and Over It

Throughout my interviews I asked variations of the question, "What do you think needs to change in current hiring practices?" No matter how I phrased the question, the same group of issues came up in regards to outdated methods of hiring within the museum field. Education, language, transparency, and where you post were the four biggest factors that the individuals I interviewed believe need to be changed in order to create a more inclusive hiring environment. Many of the job postings listed for museums today require a bachelor's or master's degree, and in some cases even a PhD. If you look at the job descriptions, most of the times you'll find that you really don't need a master's degree or even a bachelor's degree to fulfill the requirement for a job posting. And on top of the degree requirements, many job postings list a further requirement of having at least a certain number of years of experience, which isn't usually possible when you're going to school getting these degrees. A recent graduate trying to apply for

jobs can't because they don't have those years of experience because they were getting the required degree.

Not everyone can afford a higher education and a lot of the time having life experience is just as, if not more, beneficial as a degree. Many of the museum professionals that I interviewed said that the education requirements in job postings create a bias when it comes to hiring practices and still perpetuates a sense of elitism that still lingers with having a higher degree as Monica O. Montgomery said in her interview. Rachel Sanchez, also had something similar to say when I posed the question to her as well:

“I would say that one of the biggest things is the education level needed for certain roles.

I feel like...It's just so antiquated to expect people to go to a four-year college

immediately, go to grad school, and then if you want to be a curator, go get your PhD.

That really limits the pool to a certain kind of people who can actually afford to do that or have the connections to do that, I think.”⁴⁵*

Not everyone can afford to get a higher education and instead go into the workforce and start gaining valuable experience that could easily qualify them for a job, let's say in a museum, even without a degree. Museums need to realize that there are plenty of BIPOC and other marginalized groups either can't afford to go or continue with their education for a number of variables, but that doesn't mean that they can't put in the same effort and do the same job as well as someone with a degree. If museum leadership starts prioritizing training new staff, and current

⁴⁵ Sanchez, Rachel. Interview by Shelby Bergstresser. Zoom Interview. Pennsylvania, Maryland, October 26, 2020. *Edited for clarity

members as well, rather than looking for the “perfect candidate,” then their institutions have a chance of creating real change in DEAI work.

Another barrier that came up multiple times in my interviews was the language that still tends to be used in job applications. There are words and phrases that tend to be more masculine and therefore attract more men to the job rather than women like the words in Figure 6 below. There are also words and phrases that just generally put off BIPOC and others that fall into marginalized groups from applying, such as “Must have” or “Expected to” and all usually followed by a wall of text. Additionally, no job application should have multiple paragraphs and be so wordy that it puts off anyone from applying. That’s not to say that you shouldn’t put in the important parts of the job description, but there are some things that can easily be put into bullet points and short paragraph or two.

Transparency, in terms of pay and benefits, was another common issue brought up in the interviews. This is something that is slowly becoming addressed more in the museum field, AAM has a note on the top of the job posting section of their website about the importance of including a salary range in your job description along with a link to sources on why salary transparency is important for equitable hiring practices. Letting people know how much they can expect to make in a certain position allows them to determine if applying for the job at your institution is worth your time and it also lets them know if your institution has a gender pay gap.

MASCULINE WORDS	FEMININE WORDS
Lead	Join
Head	Dedicated
Determined	Committed
Driven	Motivated
Ambitious	Inspired
Superior participant experiences	Responsive,
Competitive	Sympathetic
Assertive	Sensitive to participants' needs
Decisive	Collaborative
Outspoken	Cooperative
Assertive	Honest
Independent	Understanding
Direct	Engaged
Assist	Loyal
Analyze	Support
Determine	Review
Individualized	Establish
Risk	Community
Gamble	Connected
Master	Interpersonal
Acquire knowledge	Experience
Aptitude	Understand
Self-confident	Learn
Intellect	Ability
Challenge	Self-aware
	Acumen
	Opportunity

Figure 10: Avarna Group Toolkit: A list of masculine words that are more commonly used in job applications that intimidate a lot of potential applicants from applying. Alongside the masculine words is a list of feminine words to use instead. Words that promote more opportunity to grow and learn in a position.

With complete transparency on job postings, potential candidates can determine if they can afford the time it takes to apply and interview for the position as well as if they can actually afford to be paid that particular salary. Not everyone has the luxury of going through a long interview process and not everyone can take a low paying job or a job without livable benefits. There are even some job postings now that include the time frame of the interview, letting applicants know how long it will take to apply, interview, and hear back about the position. Being transparent allows an organization to see the type of candidates their institution has always gotten and allows them to work on expanding their network to include a more inclusive range of candidates.

Alternative posting places was one of the other common changes people in the field want to see become more commonplace. Typically any job posting nowadays goes onto the institutions or companies website, posting sites such as Indeed, Monster or Glassdoor, and even LinkedIn. They can be more targeted depending on the field; for example museums will post to sites such as AAM, Small Museums Association, an arts and culture organization website if that particular area has one, and any other museum and cultural institution related organization in that area. Not everyone has access to the internet, however, or even knows what types of sites to search to find job openings in museums, so new models of job outreach need to be looked at.

Longwood Gardens is looking at new strategies of hiring practices through community partnerships. Think about it, museums already reach out to various community organizations and partners throughout their local area, and once those relationships are built, why not send job postings their way along with the usual program and event details? Using the same model that is meant to bring a more diverse audience into the museum can actually be used to hire that same

audience. This method can be used to recruit not just for front of house positions, such as visitor services, which is usually where you find a more diverse staff, but also with back of house staff as well. As Kim Bountress put it in her interview, “Museums should look more locally--what better way to invest in your community than having the community work there?”⁴⁶ Having community members from the diverse audiences that you’re seeking actually work at your institution, at all levels and in all departments, will truly make your institution more equitable and representational.

Long term solutions

An Actionable Change Halted

Changing how we write and where we place job postings along with changing the requirements of jobs can only go so far if there are no sustainable foundations for these changes to build off of. One of the most sustainable ways to have an equitable institution is through funding, namely: paying all of your staff a fair and living wage, which is something that often requires many barriers to overcome with the funding structures that nonprofits in the United States currently have. During the events of this summer, among the many empty statements of solidarity, there were some museums that actually began putting their words into action, creating plans to work on real change within their institutions.

One such institution is the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) with the “Endowment for the Future” plan that their director, Chris Bedford, began with the assistance of Asma Naeem, Chief Curator, and Katy Seigel, Senior Curator for Programming and Research, for a period of six months, beginning in April of 2020 when AAMD loosened its ruling on deaccessioning

⁴⁶ Bountress, Kim. Interview by Shelby Bergstresser. Zoom Interview. Pennsylvania, Maryland, October 23, 2020.

artwork to fund the care of collections, something that had been prohibited before the pandemic. With the new agreements from AAMD, the team led by Asma Naeem and Katy Seigal spent the next six months researching what pieces from the BMA collection would be right for deaccessioning and once three pieces were identified, they went through the process of having the deaccessioning plan approved through all the necessary channels before announcing the paintings for auction the week of October 25th. The three paintings would gain \$65 million dollars collectively, with \$10 million going to acquiring art primarily created from artists of color and women, with the remaining \$55 million going into what they called the “Endowment for the Future.”

This endowment would create an additional \$2.5 million dollars for the yearly operating budget, allowing the BMA to achieve four key aspects towards their vision of the future, as Chris Bedford stated in the beginning of October:

“We will eliminate fees to enter our special exhibitions; we will institute one late night per week; we will enact an ambitious Diversity Equity Access and Inclusion policy at the Museum that will enrich and transform our working conditions; and we will pay our staff justly, equitably and competitively for the work they do to advance the cause of this Museum.”⁴⁷

These changes would be accomplished in a two year time frame, which is a pretty quick turnaround in the museum field, especially with the amount of money raised for this initiative in such a short period of time. Chris continued to state that the museums, “commitment is to build

⁴⁷ Bedford, Chris. *Friday Missive Volume 24, Later and Longer than Usual*, October 23, 2020.

the most equitable, just, diverse, dynamic, relevant art museum possible for the City of Baltimore.”⁴⁸

Unfortunately, this incredible initiative ended up not going through as two of the paintings were pulled two hours before they were set to go on sale at Sothebys. This decision came as multiple individuals, some former members of the board of trustees at the BMA, some from AAMD, and some from the museum field in general, publicly voiced their complaints about the sale of these paintings. One of these individuals includes Laurence Eisentein, a former BMA board member, who actually took the initiative to write and organize a letter to revoke the sales to the Attorney General and the Secretary of State in Maryland. While the blocking of the sales is a huge setback to the DEAI work that the current staff at the BMA are trying to implement, it does offer us a real world look at how there are still plenty of people in the museum field who are too comfortable and complicit in the common practices of the museum field that were built on the foundations of white supremacy and colonialism and will stop at nothing to block real and vital change needed in the field.

The Endowment for the Future would ensure that every staff member at the BMA, current and future, would be given a fair and equitable salary and a chance to grow in the field, something that has been a key issue in DEAI work for a while now, which is something that has also been addressed multiple times in this paper. Eisentein made a statement in a recent interview that, “the critics of the sale agree with promoting diversity and pay equity but are opposed to ‘taking what seems to be a shortcut approach to monetize the art instead of doing the more

⁴⁸ See footnote 44

difficult work of fund-raising and development.”⁴⁹ What Eisenstein clearly fails to understand is that the traditional modes of fundraising are neither equitable or sustainable. Holding annual galas, finding wealthy donors, and asking for corporate sponsorships still perpetuates a sense of elitism in the field as these modes of fundraising look towards the wealthy who then get a say in how the museum uses their money, usually with no regard to what the different neighborhoods and community groups the museum is trying to serve really needs. And almost none of those funds go towards staff salaries and operation costs as those are seen as the “less glamorous” sides of donating. Traditional modes of fundraising do not work in this day and age, and the museum field needs to move forward and find innovative and inclusive ways of raising money, something that the BMA was trying to do with their Endowment for the Future.

Soft data from the BMA shows that not only would \$65 million be a historic amount of money for the museum, or any museum really, but a two year time frame for this amount of money is also unprecedented. Galas and traditional modes of fundraising never gain that amount of unrestricted money, as stated previously, money donated to museums tends to go towards more “glamorous” operations of museums, such as new wings or programs. The BMA projects that it could host dozens of galas and gain twenty new wealthy donors over the next two years and they would not even be close to raising the type of money the sales would have garnered them.

I’m not the only one who believes that the BMA’s plan is a step in the right direction. Shortly after it was announced that the sales were not going through, the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP (The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) wrote a reader

⁴⁹ Sheets, Hilarie M. “Two Museums Tried to Sell Art. Only One Caught Grief About It.” The New York Times. The New York Times, October 30, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/30/arts/design/baltimore-museum-brooklyn-art-auction-sothebys.html>.

commentary in the Baltimore Sun. In the piece, they publicly thank Chris Bedford, Clair Segal, and the rest of the staff at the BMA for their efforts to diversify their collections as well as this initiative. As they state:

“Their decision to act to provide for the BMA’s economic security for generations to come, to pay BMA employees no less than \$15 an hour and to make investments in Black art is the right choice...The Baltimore NAACP offers its full support to the BMA staff and board, and we urge them to stay the course.”⁵⁰

If the NAACP is offering its full support of your DEAI plan and publicly thanks you for the work that you are doing, then that is a pretty clear sign that your institution is on the right track when it comes to inclusive and equitable work and opportunities.

Internships

It is no surprise that internships are making an appearance in this paper, they are a part of the bigger picture when it comes to hiring practices, but I understand the need for context so we’ll start off with this: unpaid internships within the museum field need to be dismantled and replaced with paid internships. Unpaid internships have been a staple in American culture for decades now in various fields such as business, technology, marketing, media, museums, ect. and while internships are beneficial for both students and recent graduates in order to gain valuable work experience and make important connections, the fact of the matter is that unpaid internships are exclusive and inequitable in practice.

⁵⁰ Baltimore NAACP. “Baltimore NAACP: BMA Must Stay the Course: READER COMMENTARY.” baltimoresun.com. Baltimore Sun, November 2, 2020.
<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/readers-respond/bs-ed-rr-baltimore-museum-diversity-letter-20201102-qubzbz6frnd5zlvhwj6nqgodtu-story.html>.

Jyarland Daniels, the President and founder of Harriet Speaks, a DEI training organization based in Detroit, describes all of the ways that unpaid internships hinder diversity and inclusion efforts in terms of gender, race, and socio-economic class. She points out that a recent study found that three out of four unpaid internships are held by women, contributing to the gender pay gap that is prevalent in every field and does not promote true equity in the workforce. She also cites from Money Magazine, which estimated that internships usually cost \$6,200 for transportation, housing, food, and other expenses, which means that many BIPOC students and students from low income families can't afford to take unpaid internships. As Jyarland says, "The consequences of excluding Blacks, Hispanics, and economically disadvantaged students from participation at this initial entry point due to the lack of financial compensation are long-term."⁵¹

Internships are one of the most common ways for college students and young adults to get their foot in the door in any field that they choose. Internships can open so many doors for people trying to break into the workforce, allowing for valuable work experience and networking opportunities that one wouldn't be able to get without an internship. Internships are crucial in the museum field, they really are one of the only ways to break into this field, allowing for real world opportunities and building a professional network, and the fact that so many of them are still unpaid, excluding so many BIPOC, women, people from lower economic backgrounds, and people with disabilities, makes so many museums hypocritical when they say that they are places for everyone. Clearly they are not.

⁵¹ Daniels, Jyarland. How Unpaid Internships Undermine Diversity & Inclusion Efforts. LinkedIn, June 4, 2017. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-unpaid-internships-undermine-diversity-inclusion-daniels-mba-jd>.

There is a clear pipeline between internships and gaining a job in the field. Many institutions go with the people who had internships with them in the past, they know the work that the individual is capable of and it is, most times, a safe bet. However, as previously mentioned, internships, especially non-paid ones, are only accessible to those privileged enough to be able to afford to take these positions. Which means that these same privileged individuals are the ones considered for careers in museums when a position comes up. This pipeline helps feed into the cycle of white supremacy in museums and doesn't aid in equitable hiring practices. The museum field needs to do better when it comes to internships if they want any hope of creating a more equitable workforce.

Some solutions are being presented for this problem, last summer AAMD passed a resolution that calls on art museums to provide paid internships, stating that, "paid internships are essential to increasing access and equity for the museum profession."⁵² A resolution that is a step in the right direction, but is not an actual requirement and is only specific to art museums. Having only one type of museum pass a resolution like this isn't really equitable for the field as there are plenty of different types of museums out there that people want to intern at other than art museums. Jyarland Daniels suggests that organizations can figure out ways to offset the costs of internships for students if they can't pay them by paying for housing, relocation, transportation, or any other costs that figure into internships. Museums can also start to slowly factor in paid internships into their annual budgets, adding onto the stipend/pay of internships at

⁵² AAMD. Association of Art Museum Directors Passes Resolution Urging Art Museums to Provide Paid Internships. Association of Art Museum Directors, June 20, 2019. <https://aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/association-of-art-museum-directors-passes-resolution-urging-art-museums>.

their institution a bit more every year. Paid internships are another sustainable solution for creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

CONCLUSION

Chris Taylor was recently a guest speaker in one of my classes where the topic was on DEAI work in museums. He told us that, “DEI work is hard, it is frustrating, but it is the most rewarding work you can do in your career,”⁵³ and I agree with him. This work comes with a lot of hard work and setbacks, just look at the Endowment for the Future model at the BMA, a real sustainable model for equity faced a major setback, but the leaders and staff at the museum are going to keep fighting and working towards that equity, no matter how long it takes now. Look at the work that Longwood Gardens is currently doing, or literally any other DEAI initiatives taking place in museums across the country right now, or even look at the people I’ve interviewed and those whose work I’ve mentioned throughout this paper; there are people out there right now in the field working tirelessly for diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusivity in all parts of the museum, from staff to exhibitions to programming.

I know that I haven’t covered everything wrong with the hiring process in museums and other cultural institutions, there are still the issues with funding models that can be talked about at great length in regards to effects on the hiring practices in museums, or how the actual buildings are inaccessible and elitist as well, and how unions in museums are being fought for more in the past few years. There are other topics of diversity that can be discussed, like age and family status, and so many other issues when it comes to DEAI work that I just could not include

⁵³ Taylor, Chris. Prototyping and Community Engagement. Zoom. University of the Arts, November 2, 2020.

in this thesis. But that's the thing, this thesis isn't meant to be a perfect telling of everything wrong with hiring practices in museums, nor is it meant to cover every single part of DEAI work. This thesis is meant to show anyone who reads it that there are options out there to take action in including DEAI work into the framework of the hiring process right now. If the events of this summer showed us anything, it is that people are tired of just talking and no action. They are tired of performative posts and letters that everyone can see right through.

This thesis is meant to be a gathering place of resources made up of case studies, interviews, toolkits, and other helpful resources for people in the museum field to be inspired by and use to create a more inclusive and diverse field. Over the past few decades, museums have put in all of this effort to be open and welcoming to a more diverse audience, but I believe that for museums to really have a diverse audience, they need to hire people from that audience in their institutions. Like Kim Bountress said, "Museums should look more locally--what better way to invest in your community than having the community work there?"⁵⁴ Now is the time to stop just talking about the work that needs to be done and actually start taking action. I hope that these tools I've shared gives museum leadership and other professionals the push they need to start investing in DEAI work and to all of the incredible people that are doing this work right now in our field: Thank you for fighting for the right thing and working tirelessly to make museums a welcoming place for everyone.

⁵⁴ See footnote 43

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FIGURES

Figure 1: Rep. *New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study Results*. National Center for Arts Research, July 2019.

Figure 2: Rep. *New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study Results*. National Center for Arts Research, July 2019.

Figure 3: Rep. *New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study Results*. National Center for Arts Research, July 2019.

Figure 4: Rep. *New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study Results*. National Center for Arts Research, July 2019.

Figure 5: deathtomuseums. *Instagram*, June 10, 2020. Accessed November, 2020.

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Figure 10: Avarna Group. "A TOOLKIT TO MITIGATE BIAS IN RECRUITMENT AND HIRING." The Avarna Group, March 15, 2018. Pg. 4.

APPENDICES

BobSkiba_Interview_5:5:20_11-30-12-01-28:15_Phone Call

Shelby: All right. So if you would just like to state your name and your position where you work.

Bob+Shelby: Yeah, you're here. Are you.. speaker or something like that? Yes. Is that OK? Yeah. I can barely hear you. You're very muffled. Oh, no, I'm sorry. That's better. OK. Yeah, that's great. Okay, perfect. Okay.

Bob: All right, I'm Bob Skiba and the curator of collections at the William Way LGBT Center in Philadelphia.

Shelby: Perfect. Thank you. All right. So I know I sent you a couple questions because I wasn't sure...um, I had just learned about this a couple weeks ago about the LGBTQ+ welcome guidelines that were presented by the American Alliance of Museums.

Bob: Yes. Right. From the American Alliance Museums, right? Well, as it happened, I did go to a workshop in 2017. That was at Eastern ST. Penitentiary. And they had just done the first guidelines in 2016. I know they've been revised. They were revised in 2018, or 2019. But I remember going to that meeting in 2017 and there were probably a dozen or so institutions here in Philadelphia that were presented there.

Shelby: Oh, perfect. Wow.

Bob+Shelby: So my question...And I think I still have my materials from that.

Shelby: Oh, my goodness. That's really great. I was very interested when I read about that and I looked over the guidelines that AMM had presented on their website. I believe it was the updated version.

Bob+Shelby: And I wanted to know....Right, I think the original version was up there, though in 2017.

Bob: I might have, uh, an electronic version of that somewhere, too. I know I have the hard copy somewhere.

Shelby: Perfect. So my question for you is looking at these guidelines and obviously you went to these workshops...So my question is, you obviously have read these guidelines and you've gone to the workshops for these. Do you believe that they are one, well formatted and two, an attainable practice for hiring?

Bob: They are, I thought they were very well thought out. It was obvious that they had done a lot of work and revised it a couple of times, even in 2017. I could tell that it was as a result that they came up with. I could tell were the results of several workshops and that there was a lot of feedback from a lot of different people. So I was happy with it, When I first time I saw it.

Shelby: Great, I really like to hear that because a lot of times I think when people put these guidelines out, sometimes it doesn't work. But that makes me happy to hear that they obviously worked this through and really worked hard to make it...

Bob: ...the point of the workshop that I went to, as I recall, was to get feedback on that. Um, on those guidelines. It was for some people to learn about them and to give feedback. So I'm pretty sure that the feedback we gave in 2017 was probably incorporated into the revisions that were made in 2018.

Shelby: That's really great to hear. I love when they take feedback like that because sometimes I feel...

Bob: Yeah, and it was interesting to me because people represented there, that were from, a dozen, if not more. I took out photos that...Institutions around the city. And of course, we were the only particular being from the archives from the William Way Center, we were the only real LGBT organization there. So it was interesting for me to see that. And interesting for me to see how interested other organizations in the city were of being LGBTQ inclusive.

Shelby: That's really incredible to hear, actually. So in line with that, you said there were other...Other institutions at that workshop. In the meeting you were interested. Do you see, this can be from a Philly standpoint, but do you see that more cultural institutions in Philadelphia are trying to be more LGBTQ friendly?

Bob: Definitely. Absolutely. Absolutely. More and more all the time. I want to go back a bit and tell you about my own experiences. In 2015, I curated...Speaking out for Equality, which was an LGBT exhibit at the National Constitution Center, and it was before, long before this workshop and we had to go the opposite way to rather than tell... What I'm trying to say is that year we had probably a dozen organizations in this city do LGBT relevant programming, either exhibits, or workshops, or lectures or, roundtable discussions. And the way for us to reach out was to kind of...Was to look for the LGBT staff. We knew who were there.

Bob: So in other words...We were working the opposite way rather than going to the organization we were. We knew that...there's lots of LGBT staff in cultural institutions. There just is. So we had to seek them out. We always had a hook when we went in there. But the other thing we found, and this is 2015...we might've started working on this in 2014...was that every single organization was interested.

Bob+Shelby: Oh, wow... Which was absolutely amazing. I still have the contact sheet from that and I'm happy to share it with you.

Shelby: That would be wonderful. I would really appreciate that. Thank you so much.

Bob: Right, so this probably, there probably, might have been as many as two dozen organizations in the city that, in 2014-15, presented. I think it was the first time this was done to such a scale in this city. And I'm definitely sure I have my notes from that, my contacts and my list of organizations that did things too, because, I, um, that was my job to record all of that. So I have that...the African-American Museum did something, Free Public Library, Library Company, the Historical Society, even the Rosenbach did something as well.

Shelby: Wow, that is really incredible. I would love to see that.

Bob: And the American Jewish Museum to. As well as a lot of local university museums and libraries.

Shelby: Wow, that is a very massive project. Oh, my goodness.

Bob: Yeah, it was a really, I would say was like the "year of the queer" we were calling 2015.

Bob+Shelby: *Laughs* So a high point of this, the linchpin of this, was the exhibit at National Constitution Center. And...

Bob: ...I want to tell you this story because I think it's relevant to what you're doing right now. Initially, we went to the Philadelphia City Museum, which is now closed by the way. And we thought... The reason we were doing this in 2015 was that it happened to be the fiftieth anniversary of the first reminder demonstrations at Independence Hall, which I'm sure you know about.

Shelby: Yes, we learned quite a bit about that.

Bob: Yes, right. So, the first one was 1965. So 2015 would have been the fiftieth anniversary. So that was the kicking off point for this so I thought, "Well, these demonstrations happened here in Philadelphia. They're such an important part of the Philadelphia LGBT story. We should be doing it, this, at the City Museum." So we went to the city museum, created a proposal, sent it to them, and they turned us down.

Bob: Now not because they were homophobic, I don't think they were homophobic, but their rationing...their rationality was this: Um..We need to... We talked it over, and the board talked it over. And the board decided that we exist to show off the material that we have in our, in our collections and we don't have much LGBT stuff. So this is really outside of our purview. And I was just astounded by this. I thought, "If you don't do any LGBT exhibit, you're not going to have any people donate LGBT stuff because they're going to think you're not interested at all." So you're creating this catch 22 for yourselves here. And as it turned out, we went to the National Constitution Center, which we felt was way out of our league, but they said yes.

Shelby: No, I understand that, that does seem very catch 22.

Bob: So, we opened in June of 2015 and we were supposed to be up for three months, and the day...

Bob: ...the day before the exhibit opened, we got a call from the staff here, the staff for the exhibit, and they said, "This exhibit is much too important, we want to keep it up till January." So it was up for six months, which is unusual for an exhibit there. And got tremendously positive feedback. And I think that was the first LGBT...uh... exhibit in kind of a national museum.

Bob+Shelby: Think you might be right....So I was really happy to be a part of that. And I do have a lot of documentation on that, that I'm happy to share with you.

Shelby: That would be so wonderful. Thank you again. That would be incredible to see that. Um, one of the things you said, I think, at the beginning of the story was that you looked for the staff there. That was LGBTQ...um...

Bob: Well, we knew them, we did know them. There is um...A consortium of lib...librarians and archivists here in Philadelphia, there's the Delaware Valley Archivists Group. I made sure that the William Way Center, and our archives, were part of that...early on, when I started volunteering there. So for years we've been a part of that, which means we had contacts already. So making sure that we were visible and that we were part of the library and archival community meant that we had connections right away. We really didn't have to look for these people. We knew them.

Shelby: That's really great. That's a really nice system to have. Just knowing that...

Bob: Yeah, it is! It is. And...and I thought I had changed from 2010 till, till today...I saw where the libraries and archives and museums were saying, "Well, well, we probably should have LGBT content..." In, sometime about 2015, or 2016, they were saying, "We definitely need to make this part of our mission and part of our content." So this change that I've seen happen has only been within the last 10 years.

Shelby: Oh, okay....so with this change, you....do you think that more libraries, archives, nonprofits and museums are being more open and welcoming spaces to...?

Bob: Absolutely, yes. Absolutely. Where it's not just, "This is something we should consider," to, "This is a given." Oh...that we have to do this.

Shelby: Ok, I like that. I mean it...it somewhat surprises me, but also doesn't that it's happening within the past 10 years. It...but I do appreciate the fact that they are trying with that. So would you say, just in the past 10 years alone, you've just seen a massive....I guess change in how...

Bob: ...in attitude and policy, absolutely.

Shelby: No, that's really great, cause that was what I was doing, initial research on this. I wanted to make sure...cause what I found is nobody has just one identity. Like, nobody is just one thing. So when museums have these guidelines, sometimes it's only just for gender, or for race or ethnicity, or for sexuality. It's not overlapping. So, I...that's one of the...

Bob: ...issues. I mean, like...just like the studies today, museums and libraries are becoming more and more aware...of what we call "intersectionality". Well, these things overlap. And that's pretty recent. Again, that's a 10 year timeframe here we're talking about.

Shelby: With that intersectionality, I know you mentioned this a bit in your presentation with Polly's class the other week, you said something along the lines of, with the archives specifically,

you were informed or people had told you that the archives only told one narrative. They didn't tell all the other narratives, especially with minorities in the LGBTQ...

Bob: Right, that we've become more aware of deficiencies. So just as mainstream museums and libraries are becoming aware of their lack of LGBT material. As a minority ourselves, we're realizing that we need to be more cognizant of the minorities within our minority.

Bob+Shelby: I think that's wonderful. I think. A lot of people forget that there are multiple narratives with an...absolutely...communities....

Bob: The whole alphabet soup tells you that it's not a monolith.

Shelby: Mm hmm. Exactly. No, I completely agree. So in terms of that, do you see like museums and archives and libraries and other non-profits continuing to grow from this, or...

Bob: Mm hmm. Yeah, absolutely. I've seen LGBT interpretation creeping, I'm calling it creeping, but creeping more and more into mainstream institutions. Um....do you do you know, Susan Ferentinos book?

Shelby: I have heard of it is on my list...

Bob: It just came out, it just came out...I'm in the middle of reading it, but you definitely have to get it and read it.

Shelby: I will definitely check that out. Thank you.

Bob: Interpreting LGBT History in Museums.

Shelby: All right. Thank you. Yeah, I had recently a couple of my friends know that I am doing this thesis project and they had referenced it to me...

Bob: Yeah, I know Susan And the book is really good. It's really laid out nicely. I'm only about a third of the way through it. I just got it. I thought it'd be good pandemic reading.

Shelby: It's always good. We always need a stock of books right now I feel like. Right now, it's a little bit more free time. No, that's...

Bob: Now for instance, um, I was just reading that Eastern State Penitentiary, for instance, is doing LGBT interpretation there.

Shelby: I had heard of that...

Bob: That's pretty...and that's who, I don't know if you know Annie Anderson, who's a, a archivist there, but I've worked with Annie before and she's teaching LGBT content there.

Shelby: I think that would be really interesting to see in that narrative because that's something that does not get talked a lot about, I feel like it's.

Bob: No it doesn't. Exactly. Like, it doesn't seem such and violent, you know, it should be.

Shelby: Yeah. Especially because when you think about it, like...

Bob: It's a same sex environment. And even when it was mixed, it was women on one side and men in the other.

Shelby: Exactly.

Bob: So, it was just a lot of that going on, and just not talked about at all.

Shelby: Mm hmm. Now, I'd be really interested to see that. And I think that's also one of the things I look for with this thesis, because there are so many museums and cultural institutions that are putting these narratives out there. And it just makes me wonder how they're working with the people from that community. Because you do have outreach, obviously, but I feel that sometimes having staff members from that community really do make the difference, not just volunteers.

Bob: Yeah, yeah...let's talk about a little bit now, because I...I have some varying...thoughts about that. Um, I might have mentioned this when I was talking about...my primary philosophy is always that any minority should be the primary custodian of its own history and the primary teller of its own stories. So I believe that you can't do African-American history without involving African-Americans and you can't do LGBTQ history without involving queer people.

Bob: Um...On the other hand, it's important to have people who are allies be educated. So they can work with you too.

Shelby: No, I agree. I think there needs to be a balance.

Bob: So...yeah. So there's both sides. For instance, I work as a tour guide in the city. And I'm often called upon to give tours to African-American groups an average American industry. And I'm not African-American, obviously, or not, obviously. So I was always waffling about that and tried to give them the African-American guide whenever they want to. But sometimes I just had to do it. And after doing it, um, I was also the president of the Tour Guide Association, in Philadelphia. So I sponsored a workshop with African-American guides and doing African-American history. And they were all unanimously of the opinion that it's okay for white people to do African-American history too. And I think I feel the same way about...interpretation of LGBT history in museums. But...the (proveso) is that...you are, or you should, have LGBTQ staff there to consult with.

Shelby: No, I agree. I think with anything, there needs to be a balance. People should be aware of the cultures and the communities that they want to talk about. But there also has to be a line where you go, "I have to hand this over to somebody from this community because I just do not have...the knowledge at this point to work on this interpretation without them." So, no I like that. I think a balance with anything has to happen, otherwise it's just not going to work....so um, well, that's all I had. I thank you so much for telling me these stories. I think it's wonderful to hear because, it's one thing sort of reading about them and trying to get information, but to have a perspective of somebody who worked with this and was part of that. Think it's extremely valuable.

Bob: Beyond having LGBTQ staff, it's also important to stay connected to the community you're presenting this information to. Um...and part of it is through the staff, but it is important to know who your audience is and what they require and how you can best serve them.

Shelby: Completely agree. I think, that's one of the things a lot of our professors like to remind us and classes that we are....

Bob: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

Shelby: Which I think it's important for anything. We've learned so many museums and libraries and archives who are working now so hard to get the audience involved.

Bob: I think so too. They're getting better. They really are. One thing I noticed...with every museum here in the city in the past 10 years, is that more...almost every museum has done some special little exhibit or some special focus on Philadelphia neighborhoods, trying to make it really hyper local to connect with local people and to make that connection with the community.

Shelby: Mm hmm.

Bob: Because before that...a lot of museums, a lot of libraries, a lot of collections kinda lived in ivory towers where they felt like they were the interpreters and you, you accepted without questioning what they had to give.

Shelby: Yeah, no, that seems...that seems about right.

Bob: Yeah, yeah. And it does.

Shelby: Well, I'm glad it's turning a different way now.

Bob: Yeah...and it's, it's not there yet. It's definitely not there yet.

Shelby: Oh no, it needs work. But the fact that they're willing to put in this work and know that it needs to be down.

Bob: Yeah, but the dialogue is there

Shelby: Yeah

Bob: I think the conversation has been started.

Shelby: Mm hmm. I think that's an important step for anything.

Bob: And...and so much of the conversation...is initiated by the LGBT community. It has to be. And so I do, all the time, when actually exhibits that go up when I see, I have to be, you know, a shrill, roaring such, continually questioning things, but I do when I don't see myself represented, I question it.

Shelby: No, I think that's fair. I think a lot of people do that, I know I do for things and I know a lot of my classmates, we're always going, "well, we don't particularly connect to this because we can't see ourselves with this in any of our...context, in any of our identities." We just, we can't find it. So...I think that's something I definitely want to keep in mind when doing this.

Bob: Yeah, and it was, twenty years ago, it was so much worse. It was just so much, so much worse. Now, recently, do you know, the, there's a film series called Philadelphia: The Great Experiment, done by Sam Katz?

Shelby: It was another one I'd heard of, but I wasn't able to view it.

Bob: Yeah, go on YouTube...and you can find them. Well I worked with them before as a consultant. Historical stuff. And I brought up the fact that there's no LGBT content in there at all. Even when they...even when they did one on the 1960s political movement in Philadelphia, they left it out. And when I questioned them about it, really, really defense...which means they know they're doing it, and they're feeling guilty.

Shelby: Yeah, that is definitely something to look out for, when...

Bob: Yeah. But you're still not there And they said, "oh, there's been other series..." I said, "no, that's not the point. The point is you're doing a story on the history and we're part of the city's history."

Shelby: Exactly!

Bob: And that's the whole point that you don't take minority history and box it up. You don't have black history in February and then forget about it the rest of the year.

Shelby: That is a good point.

Bob: Anyway, I'm rambling.

Shelby: No. No, I think it's wonderful, I love getting this insight. Um, this is all I had for right now. But would it be OK for me to follow up at some point? I can email you...

Bob: Sure, absolutely.

Shelby: Beautiful. Thank you. And I will...

Bob: Absolutely...and if I do, if I do find that list of what happened in 2015, I'll, do you want me to send it to you?

Shelby: Yes, please. I would love that. That would be amazing.

Bob: Good. Good. OK. I think I have it in the available form...alright...

Shelby: Thank you. I wanted to thank you again for letting me talk to you and taking the time to do this.

Bob: My pleasure...right, and in reviewing your notes, if you have any questions about anything, do feel free to get back to me. Just email me and I'll...I'll answer you right away.

Shelby: I will do that. And I will send you that transcription this week so you can look it over and see.

Bob: OK. All right.

Shelby: Thank you so much. Thank you. You too. You have a wonderful week.

Bob: Alright, take care. Bye.

Shelby: Bye

EllenOwens_Interview_57:32_5-14-20_11AM_Zoom

Shelby

Okay, that's why I've never recorded on Zoom. I've always been recorded on Zoom so....but thank you. I'll send you the transcript after it's done. It should only take like two days so you can see and if there's anything you'd like to add on for change...

Ellen

Okay. Thanks.

Shelby



Not a problem. So I sent you a couple questions, but when you did talk to us in Polly's class and obviously last fall when we came to see...for Mickey's class you talked a lot about these different programs, which I thought were amazing and we did a couple case studies at the Penn Museum throughout the semester, but I was really interested on the global guides specifically because I thought that was a nice....because jumping off point, I guess in terms of getting a more....

I'll say because I still don't have my key words "diverse" staff, even though not the best word. But I guess what was the inspiration first off to create the global guards program because it's something I really haven't seen in a lot of museums?

Ellen

Well, there were a few things that affected....my thinking about this. One is a long-standing program that has been at the museum for 50 years called the international classroom program and the point of that program is to bring people from other places that are not America into American classrooms to teach children about culture from the actual words and delivery of the person actually from...born from that place.

So, you know that program the intention was really what it was first was started, to kind of expose a lot of the kids that are in affluent schools in the suburbs that the Penn Museum had been serving heavily then, to understanding more about the world around them and actually being in proximity with you know a person...that represents that particular place and culture. So that was one of the foundational pieces...another one is interesting. It's kind of an intersection between my old world at the Magic Gardens and my new world, you know, at the Penn Museum, where I have worked with this program.

That's part of mural arts called the Porch Light Program. I have a friend that works there who's worked for a few other Refugee resettlement agencies and she works specifically with refugees to try and bring elements of their culture back into their lives in America once they're here, because they're experiencing intense culture shock and some have it easier than others because their way of life is more closely related to how Americans live their lives, or some elements of their culture like their language a more closely aligned with with American ways of life, but my friend Melissa, her role is really has been about using art and culture as source for therapy basically for for refugees and

I worked with her on our project at the Magic Gardens regarding this and then actually, like sort of almost concurrently at the Penn Museum, she had brought.... before I receive them.... they're brought a group of women, refugee women, to see one of our exhibitions about the Middle East and then were extremely moved by it. Like they really enjoyed the experience. So... so that was also foundational and then I have to be honest, I've been really influenced by the work of Eastern State Penitentiary with their "Returning Citizens Program." Lauren's Zalut is a very close friend of mine. So we often talk about work together and problem solve together and...

...I was looking for ways that we could...We could take the experience of the international classroom program and expand it and put it into our Our Guest spaces and not just into you know, children's classrooms or adult classes, but how it could be part of a regular visitor

experience. And so I spent a lot of time talking with Lauren as she was developing the returning citizens program and understanding what was...working well and what was difficult for her and that program and so our program isn't the same but I think a lot of the tenants of what we're trying to do with these programs are similar and that we're trying to create a safe space for people to interact with other people. They're not familiar with and to allow them to tell allow are our guides to tell stories that help our visitors reshape their opinions about them or their cultures or their lives.

Shelby

I think that's really cool. I know you had mentioned Eastern State in your presentation to Polly. So a couple of us were also interested in that because we had visited Eastern State as well, for a couple of our classes and they had told us about the free citizens program and everything and we got to be some wonderful tour guides there. So that was really cool. Also, in your presentation to Polly you mentioned that there were a couple other institutions who were interested in your program like...using it as a basis to develop their own. How do you see that working for other institutions?

Ellen

Well, one thing I'll say actually kind of like bridges your first question and goes into this question. Is that there...I was aware that there was a program working with refugees in Germany at the time that I...authored the grant for, for the Global Guides Program. I didn't really know a lot about it. I knew that there are tons of Syrian refugees in Germany and the program was hiring those people to lead their tours, but it took, I don't know it was probably almost a year later, till I actually understood more about what that program was, and where we've been since in touch with the people that...lead that program. It's called the Matoke project. And that program is wonderful. It is very different than our program. There are some similarities, like they hire refugees and they, they give in language tours of of historical objects that relate to their culture, but the nature of the overall projects are a little bit different.

So that that was interesting to, to think about how you can have sort of the same surface level goal of hiring diverse staff or hiring people that are different than maybe the people that have been serving in those roles before, but the actual outcome or the interpretation can be vastly different and the way that it's developed can also look really different too. So other institutions, I mean, part of... part of our goal with this project, or part of our promise to our funder, was that this could be a project that could be replicated. We received what's called a Catalyst Fund grant to do this which in, you know, in your proposal you're basically explaining how this will change the nature of your work or change the nature of your institution in some meaningful way.

So...so that's kind of a big, a big ask to to live up to and...the proposal really does...they ask you how you will be sharing this project widely with your peers to create other institutional ripples in other places, so we have really tried to do that. We've...I have like a long list actually if you're curious about, you know, who has connected with us specifically about this project. We actually had to get together a list for a funder, I think, but I'm going to say that we've talked to in the neighborhood of maybe 10 different museums about how to do this at their own institution and

probably maybe another four to six students that are working to, you know, through different elements. Like there's your project here, but there are many avenues that people are taking in their thesis work or their dissertation work to understand more about things going on in museums, and this happens to fall into a lot of their interests.

So, we've also talked to students about that. So that's kind of great because people are now producing like scholarship around this so it's further disseminating and we've spoken, I think at this point five different conferences about the project. At each of the conference's, I think of each of the conference's we've actually been able to take one or two of the global guides with us and some instances we've been able to take multiple people with us. So, usually we divide up the presentation and such a way that Kevin and I kind of tell the story of you know, our own institutional roles, and what we contribute to the project, but the guides talk about how the project has affected their lives, how it makes them feel to work with the public, and how they have chosen what they want to share with the public. So, it's kind of an extension of like exactly what we're trying to do in the museum where we're not trying to talk for people but allow them to speak for themselves. So, it's the most authentic way we found of being able to spread information about this.

Usually, when we...I mean, we, I can't tell you how many interviews we've done or how many media bits of coverage we've gotten about this program now. It's a lot. I mean we've been on NPR, we've been, gosh, I can't even tell you. It's a lot of different publications... Museum Magazine, which is AAM's museum magazine. There's.... I forget what it's called...if you're interested, I'll give you a list. But, essentially there's like several international... CNN actually recently was one of them. Yeah, I forgot...you know...there's probably been six different super international places that have connected with us to talk about the program and then, you know, several more localized or regional publications. But, oh we're just in Oprah Winfrey's magazine believe it or not. For me, but I guess really where I was going with that was just to say that in all of these publications, no matter what, we have also tried to include an interview with the guides or at least with one at them because we feel that, that's really important to hear from them as well as us, because this isn't this project isn't just... it's about what their their work is in the museum. So without talking to them, it's, it doesn't feel as meaningful.

Shelby

I like that and that list would be wonderful, if you would be willing to share that I would love to see that.

Ellen

Yeah. Yeah. I definitely have the list of institutions we've been speaking with. I think one of your questions is really about how can kind of other institutions pull this off. So, you know, it's really interesting and talking with, and giving presentations about, this because in some ways you I feel like anybody can do some element of this, you know, they can't do it to the extent that we're doing it because we have gotten, you know, a fairly sizable amount of money like a close to \$200,000 to be able to do this and pay people and people properly over the course of the...the grant was supposed to be three years long. We've been really good about spending our money.

So we've actually extended the length of it a little bit, but you know not everyone has those resources or will have access to those resources. So ultimately the people that we've been talking to are like largely different institutions some like really big like we talked to the Met, we talked to a couple of museums and DC, and then we've talked to, you know much smaller institutions that have, like, a much tighter, tighter, budget and have, like, maybe only one or two people working in education there. We developed, like, a worksheet actually for people to start thinking about this, you know, how they could bring this into their own institution and I think our starting point was, like, what what stories do your objects have to tell that you're not telling and who's the most important person to tell them.

So, I don't know and if you took a small historical house maybe the answer to that is, you know, like the elderly people that used to do "X Y or Z," or it could be you know, it's...it was really, our angles, really not just about hiring diverse staff but thinking about what are those interesting stories that your objects have to tell that can't be told as well by you or can't be told as authentically by you? But, of course the heart and soul of our museum and, like, of the program is rooted in World culture. So that's intrinsic to, like, to our work. But, I think that elements of that can be carried into all kinds of Institutions and it's just finding....its finding just the level and the right fit like, actually....I've had you know, it's the... after you have so many conversations you're you kind of like forget the layers, but as I'm talking I remember speaking to somebody that runs a smaller gallery...I think it was in DC, and they were talking, we were talking with them about this program and how they were interested in replicating it, but they are interested in replicating it for a temporary exhibition. And so we are interrogating that like, okay, you know temporary exhibition. How long will it be up?

You know, like, with the process that we have it won't work for you. It won't work for the, like, the eight months that this exhibition.... I think it was, it was an exhibition of refugee photography....it was like a mix of photography by people that were refugees and by professional photographers who were capturing refugee experience, I think. But, it was for such a short period of time my question was like how do you create kind of an experience that's authentic? That allows like, you know, the level of like these people are not going to tour people through that in the same way? They be touring through us because some of the things are quite difficult to look at or experience, you know, it really came with its own set of problems that we are trying to help tease out with them thinking about how, you know, when you're dealing with contemporary issues, you can potentially re-traumatize people by asking them to speak about it again and again, so that's something we're really careful about, you know, putting too much time into something that is super temporal. So if you are training people, you know, our recommendation was like you can absolutely put, you know hire people from the community and have them work in that space.

But you know maybe guiding tours isn't...isn't the thing. Maybe it's sort of them leading some sort of interpretation of things that gathered from their own homes that kind of help tell the story more of one of the pieces that are here, but yeah, that's just a very specific example of how the model could be used in a completely different way, but in an art-based institution with a temporal exhibition, but you can think of all different types of situations, you know from

permanent collections to like pop ups and they all, I think we require their own specific model. I think there are elements of people that take from ours, particularly around the considerations for protecting...protecting the community and being centered on the guides I guess, but yeah, I think that there's no one-size-fits-all approach here.

Shelby

That makes sense... that makes sense, which is.... I think works because everything is different. Every institution is completely different than the other. So, that makes a lot of sense in terms of..... so going along with that with a global.... what really struck out to me. The global guides is one: because when I was researching this and then when you were talking about this in Polly's class like giving the numbers and the statistics of, like, the global guides tours are way more popular than the regular tours... people love to have that connection to these members of those communities or the culture that they're learning.

Do you think that also translates to, like, having a staff... so, I know you guys do a lot of different cultural events, getting a lot of different communities in Philadelphia and it's always... from what I've seen, like, they always turn out great like people from all over come and they feel like really connected to this. Do you think having a staff that is part of the community that they're trying to serve or part of the culture...anything that they're trying to reach out to, is important and makes it more successful than just having somebody from outside of that do the entire thing?

Ellen

Yeah. Yeah. It totally is, for all of our cultural events that... Culture Fest events we, we work with other institutions that represent those cultures, both to give visibility, more visibility, to those organizations, but also to bring in more authentic voices around traditions, and practices, and cultural understanding, so, you know. I'm thinking back we historically done this day called Celebrations Around the World and it's kind of looking at holidays, and holiday celebrations, and we bring people from different organizations that represent those particular celebrations to speak about them. And we, you know, like depending on your own religious background, you know, it's like you're Jewish and you have somebody else explaining to you what it's like to have a Seder dinner.

It's, like, not going to be the same as you talking about your Seder dinner that you've done for all... your entire life and your grandma's part of it, and your little brothers learning how to do it, and you have this, you know tradition specific to your family, and it just opens up like the specialness of things in a way that is so powerful and humanizing and so...yeah, I mean it's like, it's like asking an atheist to talk about why Christmas like morning is important or something. It's just not the same sort of feeling that can be conveyed in the same authenticity. It's like us, you know, it's like you talking about your thesis or me talking about, like my passions, like, these enthusiasm is real and infectious and people care deeply and it helps people care more deeply actually.

So...yeah, so that is like a Hallmark of the work that we try and do and it's actually become...through this program, and also just, you know through other things that we've been

doing that involve consultation with a...communities represented. It's really become how we are, like proceeding with our work. So, you know actually, like, this week I've been working on a grant for the Pew Cultural Heritage application that is focused on further developing and further....what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know... creating a support system for, or work with, the Mexican Community here in Philadelphia. They're one... that's a community that we have historically been somewhat close to and have really deep relationships.

But, we like to deepen them and you know based on the success of the global guides program and things like, you know, we brought Carlos, who's one of our guides, into Celebrations Around the World Culture Fest and he was talking about the Posada, and what the Posada was, and many people weren't familiar with that, and people were, like, totally infatuated by that. And during our opening weekend, we had Aztec dancers that came in for performance, but they also did this pop-up performance. That was basically honoring that, the Aztec objects that are in our galleries. We didn't ask for it. They just decided that it was, like, the right thing to do.

They were moved by the being in the presence of the objects, and it was incredibly powerful to watch and I think they felt...they felt strongly about it, and we felt strongly about it, and our visitors felt strongly about it. So we're looking for ways that we can make those things, allow space for those things to happen, more regularly. If it's, you know, private time, like worship time, or more access to the collection or, you know, we... it's like a little hard to just prescribe like what that looks like, because I think it looks like a bunch of different things. But, we're kind of embarking on this additional project that will help us hire more people from the community to do specific work that allows for that all the time. And, think, you know helps us think about how our collections are catalogued too, like what information is put in the...our EMU database that talks about our, you know, our collections, like, what other things could be captured in there beyond, you know, how long it is and what it's made of and, you know, the historical significance of it. So, that's a work in progress right now, but I think if we can, I mean, even if we don't...even if we don't get that grant, we're going to be thinking about how those things can, we can, open up and provide opportunities for those things to happen, both in a planned way and being open to things that kind of fall on your doorstep. Because, you know, one of the realities of working with communities is that they don't plan on the same scale as us. It's like being open to just running with whatever ideas might be happening at the time or come up and not being...not dismissing them because they're not, sort of part of the plan. So, because you know, as we learned like this with these pop-up performances that weren't part of our plan, they were...they were part of, like, what made the weekend extremely powerful to many people.

Shelby

I think....that is... interesting to do and I think that really makes it because I've been to, the we saw the new exhibition and...specifically with the Aztec and the Central Mexico and my friend and I, she's Puerto Rican and I'm Mexican-American so like going in there we thought it was really incredible how it was laid out of it. Not only did we learn a few things but we also saw things that we had heard of growing up or learned about just from our family members. So, we agreed we're like, "this is actually pretty well done." So.... so but we had always wondered for, like, we like, Mickey told us, you know, they consulted people for designs and everything. We

were just always curious about how much of a community... like people, from that...community, like, that background helped, so it's interesting...it's nice to hear that insight and getting more into that...

Ellen

Yeah, it's...I think one of the things honestly that...that this project might prompt is, you know, the guides have kids and their kids are friends with other kids and you know, maybe one of the things that could happen in, more of a longer term phase, is that you know, because the guys are comfortable and I sort of consider us part of their family, that their kids might be more interested in pursuing careers in the arts and culture that perhaps they might not have been exposed to in the same way, or maybe haven't thought about in the same way.

If I'll be honest one of the challenges that we have, we've been thinking about you know, how can we expand some of the roles of the guides and they're all different right? So like some are like, "We are good. We have our job and this is enough, like we're fine." And some are really, they are interested in doing more but we can't just, like invent a job, you know, and we don't want to create something that isn't sustainable, you know. Like, where if it is only, like two-year-long funding, who else will fund the project? Or, you know, where are we going to find money to continue this work and how can it be... how can things like this be more built into the museum's infrastructure, like the general operating budget?

I mean, that's one of the challenges I think overall with museum education and frontline staff who tend to be, I think, more diverse than many of the other people that work in museums. Most of the people that work in education, many of them, I think, I'd say large are funded through project grants and endowments, you know, they're different sources of funding that support them. And if that money runs out, then those, those things get cut, and that's really hard because that becomes like more of a transactional relationship then, like, a long-term one.

But, it's also a little scary to be on general operating support, especially during a crisis, because there's no pot of money set aside for you. So, you know, if the...the budget needs to be cut, your...the grant funds are still promised for the thing you said you do but, then the operating budget is what gets, you know, attacked. So, so these are, like sort of, real, real life problems that are kind of behind the hood.

I guess that's this situation. But, going back to... there are...there is one guy that we have that's, like, super interested and working in some other capacity in the museum and we haven't quite found, like, quite the right fit for him yet. He's been applying for other things and it's not that we don't... we really want to hire him in some way but, you need to have the right skills to, you know, to be able to do, do the work. And it is very, I think you know, there are some things you can teach when you hire people in and I think there's some things that are just, like, you just can't you, can't stop and, like, kind of pick it apart. And so that's sort of like a tension that we have, but.. but we've been able to put him into other projects that, you know, he's been very interested in.

So, so it's worked out really really nicely but, you know, ultimately it would be really great to think about different ways to, to continuously expand or deepen what we've been able to do with them so far. Right now, during this time that the museum can't be open, we're still working with them. We're paying them to do translation work for us. So they're helping us be able to expand the resources that we have, the print material that we have, in the languages that they speak.

So, that's actually really powerful and we've been doing these, we're calling them "Digital Daily Digs," or recorded sessions that are like three-minute spotlights on objects or concepts in the collection and they have been willing and able to do those too, but they do them in English and their native language. And so that's been really incredible to do and we've been posting them, you know, we post one daily and we post them in English and the native language and, actually Mother's Day, Moumena Saradar did a daily dig about mother figurines and sort of related material. There's a print of a child's foot and some children's toys and a adoption document that are in the Mesopotamia gallery and she does it in English and Arabic, and the Arabic one was more commented on and more shared than the English one. So anyway, even during these, like, stressful, bizarre times where we're not able, they're not able to perform their regular jobs, they're still performing, I think, extremely meaningful tasks for the museum that, you know, help the museum open up its arms wider to the community, but also, like, they I think feel really good about still being able to contribute in a meaningful way.

Shelby

That's really cool, I like the translations. But, I like....you did, so the global guide who wants to do more, and you also mentioned how education in front of house staff tend to be more diverse in the.... so do you, some of the people I interviewed before, they said they've only seen a change in the museum field trying to be more inclusive and how they hire a more diverse staff over the past 10 or 20 years, if that. They said sometimes it's even less than that depending. So do you think that there's a lot of barriers in place for, like, people who do not tend to fit the mold that museum staff have normally been?

Ellen

Yeah...yeah. I well, if you don't there's a whole, you know, train of study that would be you know, maybe it could be part of your... a little part of your lit review, but...they're studies that show that if you've gone to museum as a kid and have museum experiences you will be more likely to want to work in a museum. And so...you know, if you sort of trace that back, okay, who's... how are you getting to the museum as a kid? You're either going on a school field trip, and so if you're in a public school, that doesn't really have money for field trips, or you don't have a teacher who is willing to take your class, which might be wilds on a field trip, or where your prince...you know, the principal of your school is like no, no, no you all are doing so badly. No one is leaving this, this, classroom. If you don't have that, which is a lot of frankly, a lot of classrooms, a lot of schools and, and you know, just to split hairs, a lot of kids go to the zoo. Like, the district will allow kids to go to the zoo and that's kind of it.

So, so if you think about, you know, the sort of types of trips that a lot of public school kids are able to go on, particularly in cities where there are a lot of museums and a lot of diversity, it's

not... it's not varied, it's not terribly varied and it's not often. And, also if you don't have a family who's grown up, like, being comfortable in those spaces, then you're not going, you know, you might go to the IMAX because everyone likes movies, but that's a little different than like walking around exhibits or touching things...you know, it's a very different experience. So, whatever the barrier is, I don't think honestly it's money in terms of like admission a lot, I think it's like, "this isn't part of my practice, this isn't part of like what I've grown up doing or my life. So, why do I care about it?"

So, I think that, that's really really important to consider in this factor, and so I guess, like, when we think about this stuff we...when we talk about it at the museum, we actually talk about it pretty holistically, like we think about all the kids that are coming for our free school district program "Unpacking the Past," and it's like 6,000 kids a year and we give all those kids family memberships. We only get like, of those 6,000 kids, we see at maximum like 9 to 11 percent come back with their families, which is actually extremely high. It's usually like a three percent uptake for things like that, but it means they're coming back and they're having experiences of family. So, that might be... it means the kid actually might be able to teach their parents a little bit about what they learned. So that is actually really valuable, that recognition of the kid, what the kid has learned and excitement that the kids must have had on their trip being acknowledged by the family, so there is that. We have a program that's called the "Teen Ambassador Program," where we work with a very small group of high school age students to think about how we can create programs that are meaningful to teenage kids and be able to create connections between what it is that we do and things that are meaningful to teens, and they host something called "Science Cafés," so that the kids in the ambassador's come from all different public schools. There's maybe a, two homeschooled kids a part of it too, and they work together to identify some topics that they can identify a speaker that's on the Penn Museum or Penn campus that can speak to that topic.

So...let's see...some of the topics could be like bioengineering or global warming and its effects on ancient people and people today. I don't remember all of the topics, but there are topics that are selected by those, those kids, and those kids then basically work with the speaker to, like, create a short talk and, like, an event for kids, for teens, that pertains to that topic. And so, you know, here's another age level, maybe they've been there, been to the museum, in sixth grade because they studied ancient Egypt, but if they come back, and when they're a senior and they're looking at the incursion in Jamaica and how that was caused because of drug relations between United States and Jamaica, that might have, like, a different resonance with them. So, then it's like where are those kids going, like, after they graduate? Are they going to college, they're going to college, do they even try and think about places like Penn, you know, since we are part of a university system, that's something we consider.

This is a long answer I guess, but I feel like it's important. It's important to think about all these things because they all relate because there's no pipeline if kids aren't...don't have an experience when they're young I think. And there's no pipeline if there's not, like, paid internships for kids that are at an age where they need to have experience, that's working experience and maybe, it doesn't, maybe you're filing papers or you're doing data entry, but you're doing it in a museum. And as part of your program, you're being exposed to, like, all the things at the museum. I think

that all adds up to...to students in college then saying like, “wow, like, I'm really interested in this stuff, or I had this moment where this really sparked me and it's come back to me and this class that I now have.” I don't think, I mean, I didn't start off being like, “I'm going to be a museum person,” that came to me way later. But anyway, that's a very long answer to say I think, I think, that the problem begins by institutional poverty and sort of crappy public school system that a lot of kids are filtered into and then perpetuates from there.

Shelby

That was all very fair. We have learned a little about this in our thesis class...my classmate, Zindzi, who was also in Polly's class, she is looking...sort of similar to mine, we have the same, like, how are museums bringing in, like, different cultures voices and all this, and she's just taking a different avenue. But, we had both found articles that we shared with each other about having it start at a young age. So...I think that is something definitely to consider with this, because that's something we've definitely talked about.

Ellen

And I think one of the things is also, may be helpful to think about, is to think about what jobs exist at the museum that can only be done by highly, highly specialized people, like conservation and what jobs actually can be fulfilled by people that have some very similar related experience, but maybe not exactly at a museum. So, if you think about educators, if you're a good teacher in a classroom, you might be a good teacher in a museum, and there's a lot more people that are getting education degrees then getting museum education degree...degrees. So, if you, you know, I think about some of the other roles that exist, there's a lot of administrative assistant positions, there are, I don't know, gosh, there's....there's some preparator roles, there's...which are more hands-on and building things.

You know, visitor services--Do you have a good personality, you know? And so I think museums have started to do a good job, or better job, at addressing people that can fulfill some of those roles, but I think, you know, maybe part of what your work is, is like--what are those roles that exist in museums that are able to be fulfilled by people that maybe don't have, like, extremely specialized expertise? And, you know, then it's a question about, like, what about those other roles? So our conservators, like, care really deeply on this topic, they're very worried about the future of conservation because of how much in-depth studying it takes and how basically, it's been, like, a series of unpaid internships that get people into the fields of conservation and how small, and the size is of the classes that are, you know, there's just very few opportunities for anybody to move up into that role. So they've been, like, highly focused on how they can teach what they're doing to, like, high school kids that come into the museum or...how they can take on interns and find, like, a diversity stipend to pay for them. But, you know, it's... so I think we could do, as a field, a better job of fulfilling the jobs that are less, like slightly less specialized, with, with a wider net of people and we could do...then we need to, like, set our sights on these other very specialized jobs and also say, “okay, what's the problem here? How can we address that?”

Shelby

No, I completely agree and... that's...I think something I'm looking at more in my research what, what I'm learning more and just talking to people about it. So I think that is something I definitely will try to keep in mind but going forward because...something to think about I think a lot of people don't, or when they do it kind of just...they don't understand what they're asking that makes any sense?

Ellen

I think so. I think so.

Shelby

Yeah, sorry, I don't know if that made any sense whatsoever.

Ellen

Well, I guess from a personal, from personal experience, I've been in a position now to, you know, I'm kind of coming up on hiring somebody for a position and, you know, I've narrowed a pool for, of like, a hundred and fifty or two hundred candidates down to like eight or ten that we phone interview and we try and make sure that, that group of people is diverse. We try and make sure that we can't tell exactly, but we try and make sure it's not the same type of person with the same type of experience that is being called, you know, for a phone interview. And based on that, we try and narrow it down to probably three or four people that we interview on site depending on what the job is.

And usually what happens in that phase is, you know, there are, there's usually two or three people that are, like, really really great. Like, we think they can do the job. They have proven themselves in different ways and in my experience, I guess, often the person that we're interviewing that is white might have other museum experience. You know, they might actually have worked in a museum before and, and maybe some of the other candidates they have...they have not and so it kind of just comes down to like, "we need to make a choice and a different direction and be okay with the fact that maybe the person that we hire hasn't worked in this type of institution before." And we've made that choice and, like, many times and it's been really, I mean it's always turned out really really well, but I think it's...it's training our hiring officers to not just also look for museum experience, but really look for comparable experiences at other institutions.

Shelby

Yeah, I'm about to be part of the HR department for the Baltimore Museum of Art starting next week. So, that is one of the things they're going to have me do is, like, work with their hiring agents just because they told me they want to change the hiring practices a little, they want a more diverse staff. So that will be interesting to see how that turns out.

Ellen

That's really great.

Shelby

Yeah, so I think that's the way they want to go too, so that makes me a little excited to see that all of these...a couple of museums, at least, have this mindset or want to have this mindset with the hiring process going into this.

Ellen

That's really wonderful. Well, that's a great, very practical way of starting to explore your thesis in person.

Shelby

Exactly. She's like, "if that's something you're interested in, maybe..." and I'm like, "this is my entire thesis right there, so yes."

Ellen

I don't know if you've looked, looked into it. The Denver....no, the Minneapolis Art Institute, MIA, at Minneapolis Institute of Art. They have a very good process, I think, in place in terms of hiring and thinking about trying to be very equitable in our hiring processes. I'm trying to think if there's anybody else that I've seen...that does a really good job. That's one that comes to mind.

Shelby

I had read, somewhere, about the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago was trying to make a more equitable hiring process. I would have to look more into that, but I had read the director was really pushing for that.

Ellen

One thing, this is something we've been thinking about a lot, and one of the ways that we were hoping to do this is to actually create a list of places that people can post jobs that is, you know, people have access to it. It depends on how big your museum is, right? If HR controls everything, that's a little different, but you could still be speaking with HR, you know, your top officials can still be speaking with HR, but the the sort of crux of the idea is, like, wherever you post the job is going to attract a particular type of candidate, or particular types of candidates. So, if you can make it easier for your staff, you're hiring staff, to have a list of places where they can post the information that will reach a wider audience then, then you will get a more diverse applicant pool to begin with.

So, that's even before, you know, I think...it's the writing, I think things like the writing of the job description, you know, with the guides, actually with the global guides program we worked with the refugee serving centers to write the job description, so it actually would make sense for the types of people we'd be hiring. And would be, like, written in any obtuse language that, you know, people won't understand. But yeah, I think the description and creating kind of a very accessible list of places, newsletters, or bulletins or, you know, also obviously like job sites, but just where else can you spread it that is not your typical place?

Shelby

No, that's...one of the sources I found while researching suggested that too. So, I think that's very smart to begin with because I know there's a lot of people that only go to certain places, either certain websites, or they physically go to a place to look for jobs, and that's it. They don't really know anything...that's not because they don't want to, just that's what they figured worked for them. Like, they like, "I got a job here before, I've done this so, it'll work for me this time." So, but it does eliminate other options. That's all I have right now and took questions. Thank you so much. I...there's a lot of good points in here and a lot of things for me to keep researching based off what you said. So, really I truly appreciate you taking the time to allow me to do this.

Ellen

No problem! If you, as you're going along if you want to check it in or follow-up again, I had a two o' clock but it canceled so it works. But, yeah if you want to follow up about anything or you've uncovered something and want to unpack it a little bit more that's related to stuff we talked about, it's fine, let me know.

Shelby

Perfect, thank you so much.

Ellen

No problem. I'm gonna, when we get off the phone, I'll see if I can find the list of...some of the list of media and of the institutions we've talked to, you know, talked with. And there is the worksheet that we put together around thinking about how to amplify different types of voices. So I'll share that too.

Shelby

Perfect! Okay, I will send you the link to this video because I believe it sends me, like, after I've canceled, so I'll send you the link and then once I have the transcript finished, which should be by this weekend sometime, I will send that to you as well.

Ellen

I'm not, I'm not in a rush, right? All right, good luck with your work and you know reach out if you need anything else.

Shelby

I will definitely do that. Thank you again.

Ellen

You're welcome.

Linda Cairnes_Interview_1:00_9-29-20_4PM_Zoom

Questions:

1. How far do you think DEI has come in the past twenty years?

- a. It's had its hits and misses
 - b. No one's really addressed it over the past 20 years
 - i. But some have in the past 10 years or so
 - c. It's very big recently
2. What do you think could be improved with DEI in terms of hiring practices?
- a. Hire a staff person to lead all of the DEI in an institution
 - b. BIPOC are usually front of house staff and security--no higher ups
 - c. Women also don't get paid enough
 - d. Entry level jobs & other jobs that have people there for decades are part of the problem
 - i. People don't leave & it makes it harder to get new people in
 - ii. People will go into low paying jobs to get a foot in the door
 - e. BIPOC don't come to our organizations as kids
 - i. We need to change the look of our organizations or they'll go away
 - f. Museums don't know how to hire BIPOC--they have no experience
 - g. A lot of museums don't have a DEI teams
 - i. Especially Philadelphia
 - h. Wording of job postings Matter
 - i. "Community" is an empty word
 - j. Creating inclusion task forces lets you reach multiple departments
 - k. Remote working is an equity issue
 - l. Cultural coding in exhibits are different for everyone
 - m. We can't depend on white people to "fix" diversity
 - n. Maslow's Hierarchy
 - o. We need to create safe spaces to make people feel safe to learn
 - p. ADA is very important in hiring--look at what people with disabilities need to order to work at your institution
 - q. "The whole demographic of this country is changing"
 - i. This is why all of this work matters
 - r. Social Marketing: You have to think about who you want to hire & work on the language you use & reach out specifically for that group
 - i. Social Diffusion: Connecting with someone leads to word of mouth
 - s. The systemic issues in museums are tied to hiring
 - t. We need to talk about next steps forward to fix these problems
 - u. Include different groups from different communities in these conversations
 - i. Inclusion officers can really help institutions here
 - v. Creating more entry-level & full-time positions allows people to move up in the organization
 - w. Reach out to institution to see what they're doing right now about equity & hiring
 - x. Bring organization into this because it's all disorganized right now, so organization is helpful
 - y. Look into DEI groups in other institutions
 - i. How do you motivate people?
 - ii. How to ease them into this work?

3. How have you seen DEI change museums and other cultural institutions in Philadelphia?
 - a. PISCC: A collaborative Philadelphia museum effort
4. What is experimental engagement?

Kim Bountress_Interview_45:00_10-23-20_2:30PM_Zoom

Questions:

1. What are some of the things that you have noticed in hiring that are unfair or out of date?
 - a. Education requirements
 - i. Hinders applications
 - ii. Life & experience goals should be looked at more
 - iii. Hinders employing local communities
 - iv. BMA used to require a Masters degree to work in visitor services
 - b. Not every position needs a higher degree
 - c. Salary transparency
 - i. Put the salary or the salary range on the job posting
 - d. Language and word choices
2. What would you change in the hiring practices at the BMA?
 - a. Postings can be listed faster on third party sites than on the BMA site
 - b. However, the BMA site gets a lot of traction
 - c. The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance requires salaries in job postings--which is helpful
3. What do you think that the BMA needs to improve on in terms of DEAI in the institution?
 - a. In general
 - i. Museum's should look more locally, what better way to invest in your community than having the community work there?
 - ii. People don't see themselves reflected at museums if they're not white, cisgendered, have a higher education, ect.
 - iii. The buildings even aren't accessible, they scream "elite, white people"
4. Can you tell me more about the new deaccession plan?
 - a. The Director of the BMA, Chris Bedford, came up with the plan
 - i. He's changed the programming of the institution over the past four years
 - ii. Trying to create systemic change at the BMA
 - b. Once the money is endowed, it's hard to be undone
 - i. Means that whoever comes in next can't undo all of this work
 - c. Let's salaries be a market value
 - i. Gets every position at the midpoint of their salary range (ideally)
 - ii. Will help single parents
 - d. The endowment is to create systemic change
 - i. "How can we say we care about DEAI when your institution doesn't reflect it?"

Shelby

Yeah. So one of the things I asked, so what are some of the things that you've noticed in like the hiring practices that you've seen that you think are kind of just out of date or kind of exclude..?

Rachel

So things that we do here?

Shelby

Here or any other place.

Rachel

I think...Well, I guess yeah the museum field as a whole, not us excluded.

Rachel

I would say that one of the biggest things is the education level needed for certain roles. I feel like...It's just so antiquated to expect people to go to high school immediately, go to a four-year college immediately, go to grad school, and then if you want to be a curator, go get your Ph.D. That really limits the pool to a certain number of people who can actually afford to do that or have the connections to do that, I think. I know personally, I know gap years aren't popular in the US. I probably would have benefited from a gap if they did it. I just went straight to four years and then I ended up not going to grad school.

Because I ended up getting an internship that took up so much time, I was like, you know, I'd rather get experience than go to grad school. And I noticed my classmates, who were in the art history program that jumped right to grad school, ended up not really, doing anything in the field specifically. They ended up being art teachers at high schools or, you know, they kind of didn't really end up in the museum field itself, even though they went to school for art history and the whole time we were there everyone's like, "I'm going to be a curator, I'm going to do this." And then I found it interesting that I was the only person... We were a small school, I graduated with, like, 10 other art history majors, but everybody wanted to do museums.

Rachel

Then I was the only one that ended up going into museums right away because I got offered an internship at the Visionary Art Museum. And I was like, "you know, let me take this and even see if it's worth going to grad school. I don't want to go to grad school if I'm not gonna use it." I thought it was interesting that I, I think I'm the only person from that class that even does anything in museums. So, I think that people put a little bit too much stock into, like, forcing you to pick a study, an area of study at the age of 18 and then really stick with that for the next ten years and spend, like, two hundred grand on an education. So, I would hope that we were moving in a different direction...I know for...When I first got to the museum, I had a really hard time with some departments education level requirements, and when I moved to H.R., it was like...Not the person who runs visitor services now, but back then, thought that you had to have a

master's degree to greet people at the front door to be a visitor services associate. And back then, we only had one ticketed exhibition a year, the pace was totally different. we did not do nearly as many rotations. We were not, like, as highly contemporary and keeping up with social issues and events like we are now, like, back then, it was a very traditional, slow and steady kind of museum.

Rachel

So, asking people to have that level of education for a job that doesn't require it, but you're also telling these people that they're, you know, six-plus years of school and tens of thousands of dollars is worth, like, nine dollars an hour job, which is what it was then. But it was just kind of like, what are we doing? So I remember seeing that I'm like, "wow, I am really glad I didn't waste my money on grad school," at that point. And now that I'm, like, an adult and I'm older, I feel like, sure, I know more what I want to do and I would probably eventually want to go back at some point if our child lets us do that. But, I think that that's definitely one of the biggest antiquated systems that are...Museums really tend to put a lot of stock in that, and it's hard for contemporary curators too because, you can't get a Ph.D. in contemporary art, it's literally happening right now. So most contemporary curators do not have that level of education. So when they come into museums, they're...Especially for us because we're encyclopedic, so we have ancient stuff, and contemporary stuff, and traditional European painting and sculpture all the way up through, like, crazy performance art that came and went, and we don't even really have... Like we have to record that for posterity. So, like, we have all sorts of stuff. And so those contemporary curators that are dealing with stuff like that, like one time performances and all these unique, weird circumstances that go around contemporary art, they...

Rachel

I don't want to say they're looked down on, but in the traditional setting where, if you're a European painting scholar, you probably do have your PhD and you've probably been doing this for a while, and I think that kind of...It makes the playing field a little weird. Everybody has a PhD and you're, like, the only person that doesn't, but you can't because your field doesn't really let you do that. So, I think that...I would hope, museums kind of go in a different direction. And when Chris Bedford got here, it was definitely kind of part of his whole inclusive...Being a little more inclusive, and we aren't, we shouldn't, just be looking for people who were privileged enough to have years and years and years of schooling and, you know, and not saying that obviously people in grad school aren't working hard and struggling themselves, but at the same time, like, maybe we don't need everybody to have a PhD at a certain level. And that also goes along with money. You know, it's like, once you get your Ph.D., there is the expectation that you now make a certain amount just because you have that piece of paper which isn't accessible to everybody. And I know he does not have a PhD and he always has to correct people, which I find interesting. A lot of times he gets referred to as Dr. Bedford or people say that and he is the first one to clarify. He's like, "I barely went back to get my masters."

Rachel

He's like, "I am not at all like a historian or art historical scholar in a traditional sense." Where he went to an illustrious PhD program like some of our colleagues did. You know, like, our African

curator just graduated from Harvard with his PhD. And, you know, and so it's like... And so it's just, like a weird...A whole spectrum of education levels. And he certainly is not one of those that brings that up a lot. But there's still a lot of people in the field that like to really bring up that they have their PhDs and they have all these levels of education and sometimes it makes other people feel less. It's...So I think it's a weird field because we do have such a broad spectrum, naturally based on the nature of our work. So, but I would hope that things are slowly going in that direction and I know that Kim and I have talked about that, too, about making the language on job descriptions a little bit more accessible and not making people feel like that's the part we're stressing the most. We're not stressing your education level and really saying that the years of experience can be equated to that. So if you don't have your master's or your PhD, but you have 15 years of practice, like, you probably got all of that knowledge that you would have gotten in the field. So, really trying to give people the opportunity to have the experience or the education level.

Rachel

So I think that's big. And I really stress that in internships too, a lot of interns...they get a little bit nervous about their transcripts or ask how much stock we put into it, and honestly, we don't really put much at all, it's just there to verify that you went to school or you're in school, it's not like anybody is nit picking it, "you got a B plus or something."

Rachel

We did have one person, who is no longer there, who would make me sit through all of her applicants, read through every single one and read through the transcripts and talk about concerning areas that she had. And I remember one time somebody was, like, a really good candidate. She was really fixated on the fact that they had gotten a C in...I think it was astronomy or something weird, and I was like, "I also had to take a weird science class and did not do great, so I don't really think that this is applicable to their performance."

Rachel

And I think in the country as a whole, too, I know they're trying to get rid of the SATs and getting rid of all these standardized tests that, like, it's not really always an accurate reflection of somebody's performance and capabilities. And so I definitely try to make sure students are not stressed about the transcripts and trying to prepare them, hopefully, for what will be the real world when they graduate, that you really don't need to stress about your grades, literally nobody's ever going to ask you what your grades were. Once you graduate and you start going on real world interviews, nobody is going to ask what grade you got into your Western Civilization class. You know, nobody is going to ever care about that.

Rachel

So, it shouldn't be, like obviously do well in school, and you want to learn and not just sit there, but at the same time, because you were forced to take a weird science class does not mean that you are not going to be a valid employee. You know, it just doesn't translate. But...And I think as we're seeing those types of people retire and slowly, you know, naturally weave themselves out of the field and younger people are coming in that, you know, understand the struggles of an

education, whereas is that generation, it did not cost them seventy thousand dollars a year to go to school. That's what it costs now. And I think they don't understand, like...Or it was harder, especially when I first started the museum, I was the youngest person at the museum, everybody was older than I was. The closest person to my age, I think was, like, three or four years older than I was.

Rachel

So, there's a lot of older people who have since retired. They could have retired then. And so it's kind of, like, they kind of were sticking around with these old perceptions of things. And I think as the field gets younger and we slowly get new generations of people that understand what seventy thousand dollars a year looks like and what that actually...I think they have this...I think that generation also had the perception of, "you're not a scholar if you don't go to school, and if you don't go back, and if you don't get all these extra degrees and certifications," and it's like, where is that money going? You know? And I think the younger, newer, generation of museum professionals are really kind of in that boat of being in crippling debt and understanding we need to get paid a certain amount and how limiting and un-inclusive museums can be, which is why I think a lot of people end up not going into museums and end up going into teaching or trying to do something else with their art history degree that isn't museums, because there was always this weird expectation that limits you and it's just not very accessible.

Rachel

But I think it's getting better a little bit (laughs) or at least try...I think a lot of places are trying with changing the language and putting experience and honestly, they're going to have to with the pandemic, there are so many students who are going to be graduating late...but that, just because you're graduating a year later doesn't mean you don't need to make money. These students would have started work, and just because they're still stuck in school doesn't mean that they don't need to work. So, I think we're going to end up seeing a lot of people who are partially done with their degrees, are still in school, you know, that sort of thing that are applying for jobs, because if they were supposed to graduate this year and they had to take a year off, then they still need to have a job eventually. And, they don't want to be a year behind of their, you know, of other people who were able to stick it through. So I think we're going to have to just all be a little bit more understanding and inclusive. So it might be a good thing? It might force everybody to rethink how they perceive people with or without degrees. So that's my big one, I think, because I'm always in the student world, it's just like that's the biggest roadblock that is so un-inclusive and just and, you know, and it's discriminatory. It has all the connotations of, you know, people who are able to get degrees versus not, you know, and the struggles that you'll kind of have with you through your whole life. So, yeah.

Rachel

So you're welcome! (Laughs)

Shelby

(Laughs) Looking forward to it.

Shelby

But I like, especially because there's a lot of articles that have come out now, obviously during the pandemic of, like, best practices now. But, one of them I read was about ADA accessibility and accommodations and how, people are now like...Before they're like, "oh, I care. I need to work remotely certain days or like I need this to work on site," and it wasn't given to them. And now it's like, well, now everybody has to work at home and you get this and this. Do you think maybe that's going to stick around even if we slowly get back?

Rachel

I think so, I think what we've all learned is that we don't have to be on site. I have a friend who works at the museum and she's in installation, though, so she has to be on site for stuff. But she has a medical issue and she's been turned down from jobs before because she's been told, "oh, well, this isn't, you have to be in the office. This can't be done virtually." And so, she knows other people that also have a disability and so, it's like, you don't have to be in the office it turns out. Like none of those things are really valid and I always felt for her and she said that she was like, "oh yeah, they said it has to be done on site," it's like why? If it's an office based job, it doesn't need to be and it's very frustrating. I think people just kind of use that as an excuse because they don't...I think if people are honest and say, "I have a disability or I need special accommodations," they just automatically think like, "this is going to be extra work and I don't want to do it. So rather than figuring out how we can let that person telework, it's just we're just going to say, like it's not a thing and then move on."

Rachel

And I don't think that's a...That's not going to be valid anymore for any community, whether you have a disability or not. I think it opens up the door to a lot of people who have been told no in the past, which is great, and then I think it also is going to be an expectation that everybody has if you had a job that let you work virtually this whole time, I think employers are going to all have to get in line, because who's going to leave their virtual job to go to a job that just goes back to, like, a standard Monday through Friday? Like, nobody wants to do that unless you have to. And so I think it's going to end up being a perk that all employers are going to have to get behind because there's going to be these expectations that you do things virtually, and I think especially the students who are still in school and preparing for the workforce, they're not going to take that. They did half of their college virtually, you know what I mean? So I don't think you can really say that teleworking isn't valid or that people don't do their work because obviously, they do. Otherwise, this person wouldn't have even graduated from school...It can be done.

Rachel

So I think it's just that more and more, there's more things that are proving that it can be done and it can be done well and you can still do it. And then it's also going to hopefully mean that people aren't discriminated against, that people who need special accommodations or have a wheelchair...In our building right now, the back of house is not set up properly for anybody in a wheelchair. So that was always a concern, like, if this happens, how are we going to accommodate that person? And now...you know, everybody working virtually is it going to make them feel like they were just kind of left out of the building?

Rachel

I hope that if that happens, like, well, everybody's working virtually. So they're still a part of our standard work culture...because that was always my concern, too, is like if somebody in a wheelchair, there's not a lot of space. The hallways are shaped weirdly. It's like curved walls, which is not ideal. There's badge readers that you can't really get to...And I know we're just one example. I mean, a lot of places are like that, especially older buildings that weren't made up to contemporary ADA codes, and it takes a lot to completely deconstruct an entire building and try to rebuild it. But, there are things we could obviously be doing, and especially with our new renovations, we're really taking that under consideration, like how people get around and move. But, yeah, I think it's...I, the other thing that they've done before is if your building can accommodate it and you have a disability, then you do just telework or you work at a different building, which obviously does not give them the same fair experience that everybody else has. So I think everybody teleworking now knows what it feels like to not be able to go into a building in an office. And so I think it's just, I think it'll be good all around, hopefully for everybody and general, but who knows?

Rachel

I know they're still companies...there's a lot of still, especially in the for-profit world, that just don't really seem to be getting that that's the thing you should be doing for everybody, like treating everybody equally and fairly and letting them work from home. But, at least the museum field does as much as it can, you know, especially since we have to be open but, I think kind of as much...As accommodating as possible. So...Hopefully, I know. I think that's the key to everything is, "hopefully this changes stuff and hopefully this brings it to light and people start doing stuff."

Rachel

But as far as, like, the actual building is concerned for, like, visitors and stuff, it definitely is helping, you know, we keep doors open so people don't have to try to manipulate handles, but that's also so they don't touch things. So I think, like, there are some interesting things coming out of the pandemic that are helping with ADA, you know, having people be six feet away from you helps if you are in a wheelchair or having more signage and opportunities for people who have low vision to maybe have more signs with Braille. I've been noticing that, although I know that that's also a big thing right now is Braille, because you have to touch it, and so that's become, I think, it's...I don't even know how that community is going to work through all of that.

Rachel

But that's another thing that's, like, we can put up as much signage as we want and make sure that the colors are right for people that do have low vision or other vision problems. But, if you can't see at all, we still need to have those audio guides to help...To guide people around and everything. And those are just more touchpoints, which are scary right now, but hopefully, I think, I think we've learned that everybody needs a learning curve here because we have to all have four thousand signs to remind us to wear masks and to stand six feet away from people. So, I think it's becoming more natural to think about how other people are entering a space, whether

it's a public space or your offices. And, you know, we're all thinking about that more. So hopefully that means that they're thinking about how if this is challenging for you, how challenging is it for somebody who can't turn a doorknob or who can't reach something, who can't go up the steps or that sort of thing? So I think we're, you know, it's forcing us to think about things in other ways which is nice, so...

Rachel

And then hopefully we just get a bunch of money to tear down all of our old buildings and start afresh

Shelby

One day

Rachel

Yeah, one day...We were doing these accessibility things and we just have like, an intro, I only went to the intro because it's more about, like designing exhibitions for people to make them accessible. And it was very interesting stuff that you don't think about. Like, even with exhibitions, they were saying, you know, some places are trying and making, like, this side is accessible to everybody, but this side of the room, if you are in a wheelchair, like, the wall labels are lower and you can so...But it's, like, that also singles them out, makes them not have the same experience if everybody and everything is happening over here you have to go to this other side of the room or to the...It's not the same experience. So, I think the pandemic's made us think about how we all experience things a little bit more. So I hadn't thought about that. It's like, oh, you do a good job. You're like, oh, this is accessible. And they have an option, but it's not the same option as everybody else. And that's kind of what we need to...Need to do so...

Shelby

Yeah, make it all equitable.

Rachel

Yes, which working from home does, at least if we're all doing it, you know, nobody feels like they're singled out or missing out on anything because this is just our work culture, so...

Rachel

It doesn't excuse the fact that our building can't fit a wheelchair very easily like that still doesn't...You should still strive to fix that, but, you know, at least for the time being, if virtually working is what most people do, then, you know, hopefully, it won't make them feel totally singled out. But, I do not have control over the building and the office. It is weird to get to the offices. You have to open two very heavy double doors, go into a vestibule, then open another set of double doors. And all of that is done by hand and so if you even if you are just in a wheelchair, you have, you know, if you're missing a limb, you have whatever sort of other disability or impairment, it's very easy not to be able to pull those doors back to back. And the vestibule is very cramped, so if you do have anything, you're going to...Especially, like, if you're

blind and are using your walking stick, if you're going to, like, smash into the vestibule and not have anywhere to go. So ideally, in a perfect world, that thing goes away.

Shelby

Things to think about...And then I also talk to Kim about the Endowment for the Future.

Rachel

Yes.

Shelby

And how it's more of a sustainable long term DEAI practice, in terms of it's going to fund much more in the future. It's not like, "we'll slowly... Just here's how you can hire people more equitably. And that's it." A sustainable thing to keep it running. So I wanted to get your thoughts on that.

Rachel

Yeah, I think it's a good plan because it does free up all of those extra funds that would normally be going to other salaries. So it's not only giving fair, equitable salaries to a huge chunk of staff, but it's also freeing up funds to do it for the other chunk. So, it's really thought about everybody across the board, not just...Which has been historically the case in museums. The highest paid roles have been curators, you know, and you kind of expect these hierarchies within that, like the salaries and everything. And I think it is trying to address that as well to be like, "no, like everybody does work," and people are going to continue to do that and with the idea that our programs and initiatives will just grow, and if you want things to grow, you have to make a sustainable plan for funding and for the future.

Rachel

It's not, I feel like before since I was here under the old director, that was never the feeling at all. Everything was like, we do an exhibition a year and we will do like, I think like, maybe once a year some galleries would rotate, but it was really just kind of keeping the status quo and never thinking, like, never even looking at the population of the area. Are there more kids? Is our free family Sunday program going to have to expand because a lot more families have moved into the area? What are we going to do when, as the population increases in the city because people move to cities? Like, should we have more events or are there different demographics we should be targeting? Like, that was never a front priority to even think about that. Now we're actually thinking about what we do and how it's going to actually grow with including, as things grow, more staff and adding people and making sure that those hires are better representations of the world and of our area and making sure that it doesn't just stay the same, which is nice.

Rachel

I think having an actual plan on how that's going to all work is very refreshing because there was not when I started and it was really like, I just...It was dull, I mean, we were doing certain renovations, so you kind of were like, "oh, we're really busy because of that," but when you actually step back and look at it, we weren't doing anything exciting, or cutting edge, or

provocative, or helpful to the community. And then there was also no forward-thinking of how that would be or forward-thinking on how we could give raises or how we would increase people's hourly rates or salaries. It was just kind of like, "eh, we're here and this is what we pay right now, so that's what you should kind of expect for your indefinite future." And, so it was really, like, there is no incentive to really do good or bad and it wasn't great. And there also didn't feel like there was going to be much of a future other than if you want to keep doing the same thing every day. But now under Chris, he just really kind of challenges people to do more and to think outside the box and to do weird initiatives like the voter registration table or, you know, things that would have never been...Those would have "challenged" kind of our day to day norms and would have never been approved before.

Rachel

And so I think it's smart to understand that all of this extra work that everybody is doing comes with the need for extra staff and future planning. So, I think it's good, you know, and the lowest paid workers are going to benefit from it, which is nice and, you know, I mean, we'll all benefit, so I think it's good.

Rachel

Yeah, so I'm included in that group. So it's kind of nice to know that, yeah, things end up growing and sometimes you need to get paid more for it or you need to add staff. And, you know, and of course our focus should be adding staff that add diversity to our, to our teams, because that also is not really much of a priority, when I first started either and I don't think I ever heard anybody talk about diversity or anything. So, yeah...So the fact that that's being pushed is very refreshing and good to know.

Shelby

Yeah, Kim phrased...She said something like, "museums should look more locally. What better way to invest in your community than have it...Than hiring your community to work at your institution?" And I just thought that was a good point. Like, if you want to make all of this programming and you want to help the community, why not make, you know, hire your community to help?

Rachel

Yeah, yeah. And that's the, I mean, that's hopefully sorry, I have, like, a weird thing...But that's hopefully what will end up happening, especially if we do get extra funding and we can have extra staff that can do more targeted recruitment and really make sure that people know what the museums about and working with the community more. And hopefully that will be a good thing that comes from it, as long as everything...sales go through (laughs) You know, I think that there's always, like, always a little bit of question about that, but I think it will be...I think it's good. It's investing in the community and I think it's a plan that's going to outlive him, you know like, he can leave and this is still in place and in theory the new person wouldn't, like, dismantle it (laughs) you know. But, I think...I can't imagine they would. But, yeah I think it's

like a...I feel much more that we're making plans that will thrive past us and be actual parts of the community whereas before I kind of felt like we were copied and pasted into our neighborhood without really much of a thought about who's here or who's not here probably most importantly and, you know, that sort of thing. So, I think he's really making sure that these...There is something in place that invests in our community and our staff, who is also, hopefully, made up of community members and something that will be here well past us...

That's why it's really frustrating the loud staff are not understanding some of that, what's going on. Like, these are plans that are bigger than any of us, they're going in the right direction for the future and not just you as a single individual, you know. I think....And that's the tough job too is he has to think about the institution and the community ten years from now, when he's not here, none of us are here, you know. What's that gonna look like? And so hopefully this will invest in that properly and it will be in good hands hopefully...you know, that's kinda the nice thing too when you invest in your community and people work there, they actually care. So, hopefully that means that there's a lot of room for people to have more opportunities and grow and find their full potential through us (laughs) hopefully.

Shelby

Hopefully! No, it sounds like a good plan...

Rachel

Yeah, yeah, it's exciting. I think it's just, it's not happening, like, tomorrow which is always, you know, nerve wracking for some staff to really grasp. But I think it's...It's happening very imminently so (laughs) I think the plans...Our plans tend to move a lot faster than other institutions which is nice so, there is that kind of, that sense of urgency that it really is a top priority because it's happening, the second that it can happen it's happening. So I think that's also a little bit different than other museums that tend to make plans and multi-year plans and things that tend to take a long time, that by that point, a lot of people are burnt out, who don't stick around, or....So, it's a good plan.

Shelby

Yeah, I'm excited to see how it goes...

Rachel

Yeah, me too

Shelby

So, really those were all of the questions that, like, I asked Kim...

Monica Montgomery_Interview_43:05_10-26-20_5PM_Phone Call

Questions:

1. Have you seen museums practice the MASS Action Toolkit since it came out?
 - a. She's aware of some institutions that are currently using it
 - i. Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami
 - ii. Waves of people do use it, but not a lot
 - b. It was geared towards museum leaders
 - i. Left so many people out of the conversations
 - ii. Students & other professionals
 - c. Suggests making this into chapters across the country to keep the work going
 - i. Same goes for Museum Workers Speak
 - d. Upstart progressive movements have started but crashed because they haven't passed their knowledge to students to continue the work
 - i. Students make this work sustainable
2. What are some ways that you think that museums can become more equitable institutions internally
 - a. Funding
 - i. Likes the BMA plan
 - ii. Look at Brooklyn Museum--similar plan
 - iii. What are other ways to reroute money?
 1. Director's salaries
 2. How do we redistribute?
 - iv. Look at organizations that help fund racial justice
 1. Pew, ect.
 2. Builds strength
 3. White / big museums should let the smaller / ethnic museums get the funding
 - v. "Rich museums divest from your evil practices"
 - vi. Don't take up space in places where smaller organizations are already doing the work
 - b. Hiring Practices
 - i. Who is being recruited?
 - ii. Sending out job postings to all different areas
 1. HBU's
 2. Job fairs
 3. Other online platforms
 - iii. Look at retirees
 - iv. Erasing education bias
 1. Still promotes elitism
 - c. Diversity=Intersectionality
 - d. Giving marginalized people the chance to voice their ideas
 - e. Letting everyone have a say in everything
 - f. We need more people to break down these barriers and be role models for people who aren't comfortable in this field
 - g. Community based input

3. What do you think of the responses that museums have been putting out in regards to BLM and people calling out the museum culture?
- a. Hella performative & in-authentic
 - b. They're just trying to do what is politically correct on a surface level and not much else
 - c. Don't put out statements unless you're going to back it up with action
 - d. Don't make BIPOC take on the roles of DEAI / anti-racist trainers when they didn't sign up for this
 - e. Think about what wrongs need to be remedied
 - f. The theater world is stepping up right now
 - g. Put your money where your mouth is
 - i. Extra paid time off
 - ii. Employee resource groups
 - h. Use the right pronouns for people
 - i. You need to do more than diversity training

Sarahi Zamores_Interview_53:00_11-06-20_9AM_Zoom

Shelby

Oh...

Sarahi

There you go.

Shelby

Perfect. Yeah, like I said, ideas are perfect right now. I will gladly take those. So do you mind explaining a little more detail...Nicole kind of mentioned what you guys are doing...

Sarahi

So before I share. Could you tell me what you're looking for and what you're doing just so I don't share...Like, there's so much going on that I don't want to throw all these ideas and information at you that maybe you don't even need. So it would be good to hear what you're focusing on.

Shelby

So basically what I'm focusing on is, I'm looking at how hiring practices and museums haven't always, you know, been fair to a lot of people and looking at what can be improved on and looking at different, so right now I have the MASS Action tool kit, the Arvanna group tool kit, and there is a DEI culture scorecard as well that I'm looking at as first steps to get, you know, more inclusive and equitable hiring practices in the museum. And then, those are, like, I call them, short term solutions, and then for long term solutions, like sustainable ways to keep the ball rolling, to keep once you hire the people you know, they want to stay and don't feel, like, a token...The Baltimore Museum of Art, had a plan called Endowment for the Future, where they were going to deaccession, three major art pieces to fund operations, and that was going to create fair pay across the museum completely and create more jobs. Unfortunately, it's now a theory as

the sales were blocked. But I'm looking at this as a possible way that museums can start looking at.

Sarahi

And is this just them hiring or also on visitation?

Shelby

Just hiring. I wanted to do visitation, but that was leading me down another rabbit hole and I only have a few weeks left of this, so (laughs).

Sarahi

I'm sure Michelle...Michelle, I'm sorry Nicole, I believe she was part of that committee. We also had a committee for community engagement and we went to...Why am I blanking on this? Wilmington, the museum there.

Shelby

Yes, I don't remember the name, but I know the museum.

Sarahi

And I mean, there's so many articles on how they were trying to increase their visitation and represent more of their local community and all those struggles that they went through as an organization in order to...To even start that process. So anyway, I was just wondering if you were doing visitation, I thought they would be a good museum to talk to just because they've done so much. And I mean, we met with them and they said, "you know, we're just starting this process. It looks like we have done a lot, but it's just the beginning." But that was very interesting.

Sarahi

OK, so I don't know how much Nicole has shared with you about us and what we're doing. We have...We hired a consultant company and they have kind of been leading us through the process.

Sarahi

And we just joined the process this year as a committee that...We created a committee, a DNI committee, and it basically just started as conversations and trainings and information on what Longwood will be doing what the goals are, what the mission is, so....From that committee, we have created three subcommittees, one is mission and the other one's the case for change, which Nicole is leading, and the third one is recruiting. And I'm leading that one. Some ideas and some things that have been implemented even before the committee started because the consultant just sent these ideas to us and said, "These are things that you can start doing now before you even create your committee," were to improve our employer brand. We didn't really have an employer... We, of course, every employer has their brand, right? But we have always had this idea of, it's just about the guest, right? Which is great, and that's our legacy and that's what we

believe in and that's our focus. However, when you try to recruit, it's...it's harder to recruit when our guests don't even think of us as an employer, right? And that happened to me. I would come into the garden as a guest and I never even thought of working here because I never saw someone, like working per say, you kind of just come in and you're so focused on having fun and enjoying and the peace and you see people walking around, but you don't necessarily perceive them as employees.

Sarahi

And then our website, we really just posted our jobs on our employment website that didn't have anything, it just had jobs and...Indeed and all of those major job sites. So one of the first things was to improve our employer brand. So we took pictures of our employees in different departments and then had them quote...And you can see all of this on our website...Have them give a quote about Longwood and what Longwood means to them. And then we also decided to post all of our benefits. I mean, we really had nothing out there about our benefits and what Longwoods offers. And to be honest, it's really what attracts employees at Longwood, our benefits. We really believe in work-life balance and...So we thought if someone can visit our employer brand and picture themselves working here, they will be attracted to applying. So that was the first step: employer brand, and also social media and I feel like we're not there yet. There's not much on social media, I mean, during hiring season, which are usually spring and early fall, we do post our seasonal positions on Instagram or LinkedIn and things like that. But, we're not heavy on social media with our employer brand, at least not presenting the "Longwood life", if you would say it like that. The other idea was to create partnerships with local organizations, so that is something that we have started. There's a lot of organizations that help the community in many ways and including those groups that we are not reaching with our posting's. Not sure if you're aware, but are you from the area?

Shelby

Yeah, I'm... I live in Collegeville, but I've been around Kennett Square and everything...

Sarahi

So in the borough just and this is just the borough, right? Because Chester County is something else. Hispanics and Latinos are about forty five percent. And I mean, that's a group that we're definitely somehow missing with our postings. And then we have West Chester University, who we have a strong connection with. And then there's also Lincoln University, who is about the same distance. And there's really no connection, or at least there was no connection on not even seasonal hiring. I mean, we don't see anyone apply where in West Chester somehow all of these students apply to our seasonal jobs. So it was about creating partnerships with universities and local organizations. So we have started that. We have started by reaching out saying, "We have these jobs, please let us know if there's any information we can provide. Any questions, just reach out. You know, we're happy to talk to you," and hoping that they're passing it on to their students. And then there's also other community...Other organizations like La Comunidad Hispana or LCH, who has kind of like a development group, and they help their clients prepare for interviews or find jobs. We also have Young Moms who is an organization who helps, you

know, the name says it all young moms, but not only in their personal life, but also professional life.

Sarahi

So how do we help you find a job? How do we help you drive? How do we get you from point A to point B, point B being work a lot of the times or doctors. So we have started to work with them and sharing our postings and seeing if there's anything we can do really to have their clients apply. And then... Sorry, please tell me if I'm sharing too much.

Shelby

Oh, this is perfect.

Sarahi

So those were the ideas they provided to us...And I'm looking at my notes... And then from that, we started our recruitment subcommittee. And the recruitment subcommittee's responsibility was to investigate and recommend a variety of outlets and resources to increase diversity and recruitment and staff and recruitment and then presenting those outlets to the rest of the committee. So we started our process by...I just basically presented them with our current process of really posting our jobs and just an idea of our applicants and where our applicants are coming from and we are able to run reports on that would give us numbers on background of our applicants. And I mean, the majority is white. It's probably, like, one percent that is not white and sometimes not even there. So we created a SWOT analysis.

Sarahi

I'm sorry, I'm trying to find the right...And I won't give you all of the all of that information, but our weaknesses were location, which is always a weakness, and anything that we discuss that you have a committee here, everyone will find location as a weakness because there's no public transportation. So that limits not only staffing, but guest visitation. Right? And then some of the subcommittee members still thought that our employer brand was very weak. So we are not doing enough to promote ourselves as an employer. So that's something that we are definitely still looking into improving.

Sarahi

And one of the ideas for that is to really create a social media page dedicated to the work at Longwood, life at Longwood, employment at Longwood, that really shows who we are as an employer because a lot of people perceive us as a formal, extremely formal workplace. And we're not, we're very casual, I would say. So that's one of the things that they want to see...And again, that's...They kept bringing that up as a weakness, our reputation of being in the...Organization location.

Sarahi

And then we always try to find that candidate with the most experience, right? You try to find the perfect candidate. So a lot of the committee members suggested that maybe we have to work on finding candidates who have the soft skills, not the experience, and be willing to train those

candidates and into a job, of course, as long as they meet the requirements. So those were the weaknesses. The opportunities that we recognized were...That we currently, and this doesn't happen, well, a lot at Longwood, we currently have a lot of full-time openings. So we believe that this is an immediate opportunity. I mean, we have this opportunity to really make a change and make sure that...All these groups that we're missing are getting our postings and are finding out about our openings.

Sarahi

And then another, I guess, another weakness that we have, and this is an opportunity as well, is that we basically require you to speak English, right? In order to communicate with the guest not necessarily with staff, I mean, I speak Spanish and there's other staff here that speaks Spanish and other languages. However, in order to communicate with the guests, you have to speak English and...All of the positions, it doesn't really matter where you work, are guest-facing. I mean, if someone sees you with a tag, they will stop you. So that's, I guess, that's a challenge for our immediate community, right, because not everyone speaks English. So some staff gave some ideas on what we could do, such as maybe we can provide English classes. Or maybe there's a way to place these employees in an area where they feel comfortable and they don't necessarily have to face guests, or they are in an area where guests won't necessarily have questions for them. And more than anything, more than the guests...You know, we want to make sure that whoever we hire feels comfortable and feels like they're successful. It doesn't matter what they're doing. And again, opportunity to promote our employer brand and promoting our benefits. And like I said, we have our benefits listed, but they're not detailed. So it will say "personal time," or "parental leave," but it doesn't say that we pay 12 weeks, you know, full pay for mom...And for fathers and mothers. It doesn't matter.

Sarahi

So we think that could help reach other groups and then again, opportunities to reach to organizations and our local community, and then we also have I don't know how familiar you are with Longwood, but we also have formal education programs. So we have internships, we have professional horticulturist program. It's a two year program. And we think we should definitely focus on making those more diverse as well. One of the threats for those immediate opportunities, so if we were to reach out to all these organizations and have all these diverse candidates come in and maybe hire them now, the threat would be that we're not prepared, we're not prepared for inclusion. Which could cause a damage in the relationship that is already damaged that is, you know, you have to start that relationship strong and make sure you maintain it. So it would be a challenge to retain those employees, like you mentioned at the beginning, if you're not prepared for them.

Sarahi

So...And then Longwood is very committed to this process of DEI, but, you know, I do feel like it's a fear of...Or maybe just something that we question in ourselves, will we stay as committed after the initial push? Will we maintain this commitment and this energy and this excitement through I mean, many years? Because it's not something that just happens and that's it. It's definitely a journey that we're just starting. So, yes, that's the goal. That's where we left off. The

other thing that we are currently working on is updating our job postings. Our job postings are extremely formal, they're paragraph, paragraph postings.

Sarahi

And I mean, I don't know if you've been out there looking for jobs, or looking at postings, I'm sure you know that most employers now have bullet points.

Shelby

Yeah.

Sarahi

Postings, and we don't have that, and we do think that that's something that's affecting us. Just, you know, we seem extremely formal, which is good for some people, but, I feel like it also... Writing it in a bullet point format would kind of make it more neutral, you're not necessarily targeting groups. And then our consultant also looked over our postings just to make sure that we don't have any wording that could discourage some groups to not apply.

Sarahi

And I'm sure you're familiar with that, some words as, "competitive." What I try to do now and all of that is extremely interesting. I mean, things that you don't think about. And then right now, we wanted to focus, as we are really trying to reach out to those groups that are not applying and making sure that we're sharing our postings and our current opportunities, we are looking for a ways to train our managers. At Longwood, managers really decide who gets an interview. So, we are wondering how do we make sure that, candidates are actually making it to the interview process. Because a manager will say, "I want to interview out of this one hundred candidates, I want to interview four of them," and how do we know who we're leaving out and what if those groups are not making it to interview process? So, we want to focus on training managers to really review applications and make sure there's no bias. And that has been a challenge, not because... I mean, we're just coming up with a training, but a lot of the research we do on this says, "hide the name, or hide the email and the address." Unfortunately, we can't do that. Our system doesn't allow us to... We can hide the initial name. So basically, it gives you a list of applicants and we can hide it there.

Sarahi

You can say applicant one, two or three. But the moment you click on the application, it gives you a full application and it'll reveal name and address. And we don't think, we don't necessarily think that's an issue, but maybe some groups communicate differently, right? So, you know, sometimes even generations have different formats on resumes. And what seems important to you might not seem important to someone who is older or younger. So the way you basically complete your application can be different. And that doesn't necessarily mean you're not qualified. But it could look that way based on your application, or at least the manager might think, "you know, they're not what I'm looking for." So, yes, we're looking into doing trainings for managers to review applications and not be biased. And then once we're doing the interview process, training them to not be biased during the interview. And the way we plan to do that is by

having a structured interview. Before, for us, the interview was more of a conversation. Let's talk about your experience, let's talk about what I'm looking for, let's see if there's a match. Let's see if there's a match also with our culture, because that's important to us. But, in order to...When you have diverse candidates and you have...Not everyone's the same, you have to make sure you're judging them just on skills just to prevent bias.

Sarahi

So we set up, on our own...Sorry, applicant tracking system, we have as a final step to the interview, where managers have to individually go in and enter their feedback on every candidate and they have to say why...This, if this candidate met all your expectations, you just say yes. And does this candidate have all the qualifications for the position? And you say yes. If you say no, you have to explain why. So then that would be an easy way for us to find out if they're being biased. You know, sometimes it's innocent bias, sometimes it's, you know, I don't think they can handle the schedule because of their family commitments or things like that. Then you can go into that and really say, "OK, stop. We have to re-evaluate this." And so that's what we're doing in terms of interviews. But again, we're really not there yet. I mean, we're training the managers to be prepared when we have those interviews, but right now we don't really have the diversity in our applicant pool. And I should say that it's not really just about race or ethnicity. I mean, we consider...Anyone who's different, diverse, right? So...So, yes.

Shelby

No, it's perfect. Yeah, that's also the thing to talk about in my thesis is when people think of diversity, they automatically think of race, ethnicity and gender. And that's usually it. Like, there a lot more like...

Sarahi

Yeah. And one of the things that some subcommittee members suggested was disability's. And, of course, I mean, there's probably disabilities that we don't have to be aware of, but maybe there's organizations who focus on helping those with disabilities get jobs. I mean, we know there is, right? So why not reach out to them too?

Sarahi

Yeah, and again, language when we're talking about race and ethnicity and all of that and gender, do we...Are we thinking about language? Because language is a big one, right, especially here? I actually think that in terms of, gender and age, Longwood does very well. I mean, you have, you know, high school and college students coming in to work a seasonals and some of them to transition into part time, and then full time, and then you have retirees who just left their full time job and really just want to be here. So we do well with that. And then we have women in leading positions and...So, yes, it's more about finding out what groups are not being represented and why, and a lot of the questions because you...As you're preparing for this journey, you're wondering what questions will I get? Doesn't necessarily mean the people will be against you, but, people will question it because it might not be obvious to some why we're doing it. So we call it resistance, but it doesn't necessarily mean an aggressive resistance, right? It could just mean that to some it's not as clear as it is to others. So some will ask, "Why are you doing this?"

And does this mean that you're going to hire people who are not prepared just so they need that, you know, the diversity goal?" And, the way I have explained it to some people is no, the the reason why we're really making this effort is because we know that there's a lot of community members who are prepared and there's other groups who have what it takes and what the position requires, but we're not reaching out to them. Somehow they're not learning about us.

Sarahi

So we're not including them in the process, we're not giving them the chance to apply. And really, it doesn't matter what race, ethnicity, or anything you are, if you don't have the qualifications, you don't have the qualifications, But...Yes, I mean, I think we're also preparing for those questions, and it's something that I think we want everyone to be on board...I'm sure, again, I don't know how much Nicole has shared with you, but the committee will go through a lot more training and then Vision is finalized, Case for Change, I think Nicole was finalized yesterday or this week, she has been working on that like crazy, and then we will focus a lot on recruitment. And we are very lucky because we have a director of developmental...Learning and Development, so she will be guiding us through some trainings too as the committee is coming up with ideas. We are just meeting with her and say, "Hey, we need to start this training. What can we send to those hiring managers now, to make them realize that this is something that they need to start thinking about?" Because when you present this idea to managers or the interview committee, because we do here as group interviews. No, interview is a one on one, it's always group interviews, which is something we have to look into as well. When you present that idea to them, they feel like, "What are you trying to say, I'm biased? Like, no, I'm not biased." So the first step is how do we make them aware that everyone's biased?

Sarahi

And then once you do that, how do we overcome those biases so it doesn't affect anyone and everyone has an equal opportunity? So that's what we will be focusing on next week, coming up with a quick training to make them realize, to make them face biases. And some of the ideas that the subcommittee came up with was the Harvard Bias Assessment. I don't know if you've seen them. So we did some of those assessments ourselves. And, you know, it's...I do feel like it's a little, hard. We don't know if we'll go with these assessments because it's really kind of...I do feel like it's a little direct, "You're biased on age, you have a preference on, you know, on race and stuff like that." But we're hoping to, again, to come up with an assessment, to that can bring up those biases and then, work on the training after that.

Shelby

Great. Yeah, and all the interviews I've done so far, nobody's really talked about, like training people on their biases and looking at it from a clear standpoint, which makes sense, obviously, but like, nobody's brought it up. So...

Sarahi

Yeah..So, you know, we did a lot of research on, how to remove biases from the interview process and a lot of the articles basically said, "Don't leave it up to managers, you control the interview and you can stop biases. You control it, you don't have to train them, you don't have to

make them overcome their biases. You control it." However, the way we see it is that, that's one step, that's one thing that you're controlling, but biases could also affect promotions, someone's performance review, so, again, it's about us preparing for diversity in the workplace and making sure they're successful and retaining them. So, yes, if you get them through the interview and they're hired, how do you...How do you make sure they're actually being successful and being promoted and being guided through the process and getting what they need? And I do think it's by making sure your managers and your staff are trained.

Shelby

I completely agree. I can't believe no one...(mumbles)...that before.

Sarahi

Yes, and some people have brought that up like, "H.R. can control the hiring process and the recruitment process. We don't have to worry about this," but I do think we can get ahead faster if we just start with the hiring process and make sure that we're training everyone on that step. And I do, yeah, I think we are taking some steps forward if we just start with that training.

Shelby

Yeah, a lot of the conversations, because we have these in class as well about the work and everything, and we've all agreed, like, it takes everybody to do this. It's not, like, one person's job to call it out or, like, a group of people. It's, like, everybody at your institution has to be aware and like, work on this. It's not...It's a group effort.

Sarahi

Yeah, I do think so. And honestly, and in terms of resistance, I don't think we'll have a lot of resistance. Again, we're very lucky. Everyone seems to be extremely excited about the journey and everyone wants it to happen fast and we kind of have to be like, "No, like this is a process we're just starting. There's a lot of steps we have to prepare and it's not kind of like, OK, let's do it, and it's done. It's a long journey."

Shelby

Yeah, I know. I think people get weirded out when you say it's a long time, you know, it's not going to be overnight, because overnight things don't last, so...

Sarahi

Yeah, and, you know, a lot of yeah, a lot of people think it's simple. And I think that for me, at the beginning, it seemed like something simple, like, "Just make it happen, give everyone the opportunity and we'll be fine." And then you realize, that no, people will come in and turn around. And, you know, again, Nicole is part of that...Again, I don't know if she has shared with you...There's another committee idea. And they talk about more of the diversity and visitation...

Shelby

She briefly mentioned that yeah.

Sarahi

Yeah, and we have so much data, and there were focus groups that were done with community organizations and community members, when you hear that, "Yes, I've been to Longwood, but I haven't been back because no one speaks Spanish," or, "Because I didn't...I couldn't find the restrooms, or, "Because there's no food," we have a restaurant. Things like that. I felt like I didn't belong. So that was an eye-opener, right? You have to be ready because if not, you really do damage that relationship and then those people will tell other people, "You know, it's not for us," or, "I don't like it because I didn't feel welcomed and it was hard to navigate," and then other people won't come.

Shelby

Yeah, it sets off a chain reaction, basically.

Sarahi

Yes. Yes.

Shelby

No, I think it's really interesting, like when you say you're reaching out to community partners, because it's usually something we only hear, like, on the visitor side. And I think it's really cool because one of the things...Her name is Ellen, and she works at the Penn Museum, when we were talking about ways to, you know, get your postings out more, and she was like, "Well, don't look at your traditional sites or, you know, look at new ways to do that." And we were thinking of new ways. And I think that's a brilliant way to get it out because you already use community partners to get more visitors, why wouldn't you use them to also say, "Hey we have jobs for you. You want them?"

Sarahi

Yes, and I do think it helps...So if they're going to go to the organizations because they need help navigating through the process, right? So sometimes you think it's obvious to going to indeed and find a job. But there's so many jobs, and some people just really want an organization that is close to home and that they feel like they belong to and that they feel like they're contributing to more. And we do feel like if you send it to an organization and someone has a question, they'll feel more comfortable reaching out rather than saying, "You know, this doesn't make sense, I'm going to ignore it and not apply." If there's concerns of I don't know about them, we already have a partnership. Feel free to reach out, talk to us, you know. And again, I do think it's a two way, it's definitely a partnership, if there's anything they need, they reach out.

Sarahi

And sometimes we're not sending postings and they'll reach out and say, "Hey, you know, I have clients who are looking for jobs. These are their names and these are their resumes and if something comes up, feel free to reach out to them to apply." And I mean, that's the goal, really, you know.

Shelby



I think that's really smart to do. And it definitely I think it would work because we already know, like I said, we already do that. Yeah. And you also hear a lot about what other people have said in other interviews, because I...Usually I'm like, "Well, what do you think needs to change in the hiring process?" And they always say, like, the language is like a big one, they see. And then I've seen postings where they do bullet points, but they also mix them into paragraphs or they don't understand that bullet points are supposed to be short. And it's like a whole paragraph as a bullet point, that's not...

Sarahi

...Not the point, yes! And I, you know, the way I think about it and I've asked friends and family members and co-workers, "What do you do when you're looking for a job? Like, how do you, when you have, you know, maybe 30 jobs that are coming up in your search that match your qualifications, how do you...How much time do you take to go through a posting?" And the first thing people do is they go down to the qualifications, they don't read about the position, they first go down to the qualifications and say, "OK, I have this, I have that. I don't have that, you know, but I can apply." For us, you kind of have to search for the qualifications and so that's a few seconds that, you know, for you to find that and we do think that we lose candidates. They're like, "Oh God, I have to find my qualifications now and see if I even want to apply for this position." And so, yeah, we believe that most people go down, make sure that they meet every requirement and then go up and read about the position, the site, if they want to apply.

Shelby

Yeah, yeah, it's a lot. And with the qualifications, people that I've interviewed have said, like the education requirements usually are a big hindrance they think because...One person I interviewed, they said at their organization, obviously it's changed, thank God, but they were like, when they started in HR, they saw that visitors services, like just a team member, not a manager, not a, you know, not a higher up, but just, like, somebody like a normal position, had to have a masters degree.

Sarahi

Yes.

Shelby

And she was like, "They do not need to have that at all."

Sarahi

Yes. I should mention that something that has really changed with these postings that we sent. I'm sorry, I'm looking for the correct wording we used...But it would say something like, even for our operational services, our custodial positions it said you have to have a high school diploma or...It doesn't matter! It really didn't matter and so we changed the diploma requirement to "equivalent or years of experience," right? So that it would say something like, "Requires just...(mumbles)...candidates must go...Three, it would say three years of diploma or bachelor's degree or three years of related experience preferred," and then we changed the preferred to

required. And really, I do think that makes a huge difference, because when you're saying a degree is required, then you're turning down a lot of candidates with a lot of experience.

Shelby

Yeah, I think that's a lot of what people are focusing on and it's good. It's like you should focus more on experience and education, especially when people go, "You must have this degree plus this experience." Not possible. Not possible whatsoever.

Sarahi

Not possible, and I do think that, you know, universities are getting so expensive. Not everyone wants to go to a four year college or university. Everyone wants to just really get to work, I feel like, and if it's not required, why even mention it?

Shelby

Exactly. Exactly, yeah, it's...There's a lot going on...

Sarahi

And we do believe that some people just have to have the soft skills, because you can really train people on other things, but not on soft skills.

Shelby

No...Yeah, I think you make a good point. Like, if it's...Like you have to invest in the people, if you train them, then yes, that's great. Don't expect a perfect candidate to walk in and be like, "I got this. I'm ready to do this job perfectly. Let's go." That's not happening. Nobody's like that.

Sarahi

Yes and one thing that I...That we have done in interviews, too, is we have started asking DNI questions, which I can I can tell you that candidates have kind of like, "Wait, what does this have to do with anything?" But I start by saying, "You know, this is not necessarily a position...A question related to your position or your skills, but more of an organizational question that we have." And the question that I started asking was, "What does diversity and inclusion mean to you and why are they important?" And a lot of candidates have been surprised by it and have given us really good feedback. And some of the comments we have heard are, "I'm so glad that you have those questions and that this is something that is important to you," because they perceive you as someone who cares if you're asking, that's because your organization cares.

Sarahi

And it can get a little it's hard because as an applicant, as a candidate, you don't really know what the interviewer is looking for, right? So some people get really into it and it can be a little bit uncomfortable sometimes because...And other people just express, you know, that these are conversations that every organization should be having, and for them, diversity and inclusion really means having that safe space to be inclusive and making sure everyone is being successful and being heard. So, yes, that's something that we started doing recently. I mean, I probably did about 30 interviews this week and...Yeah, and it seems it seems to be received well.

Shelby

I love that, though. I love... Yeah, you definitely make a good point. Like, if you show them that you're putting in the effort, that makes them way more comfortable than just like, "I don't know what this organization's stance on this, but..."

Sarahi

...Here's where I stand, yeah. And it also gives you an idea if you're going to have someone who's against it, you know, because why would you bring someone in who doesn't want to be part of it or someone who has really strong feelings about it? I guess candidates could say, "You know, I don't necessarily understand it, but I'm happy that you're asking. And it's something that I want to explore or that I... Just organizations to explore." And that's something... That's a good answer, right? It's OK to not understand and it's OK to have questions. But I haven't received any negative feedback or answers. But yeah, you could have someone who says, "I don't care for it. I really... That's not something that I believe should be part of an organization."

Shelby

And then you have your answer right there.

Sarahi

You have your answer. Does that match your culture? Does that match your organizational goals?

Shelby

Yeah, no, I think that's perfect. That's definitely a good way to see who you have applying for jobs. This has been so wonderful. I cannot even tell you how much information you've given me. That's perfect.

Sarahi

I'm glad I felt like I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I've been talking a lot, it's been an hour!"

Shelby

No, no, it's perfect! Trust me, it is so great because Nicole's briefly mentioned it in class as well. I don't know if she tells you, but we ramble a lot in class about DEAI initiatives and everything. So we talk a lot about this stuff.

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