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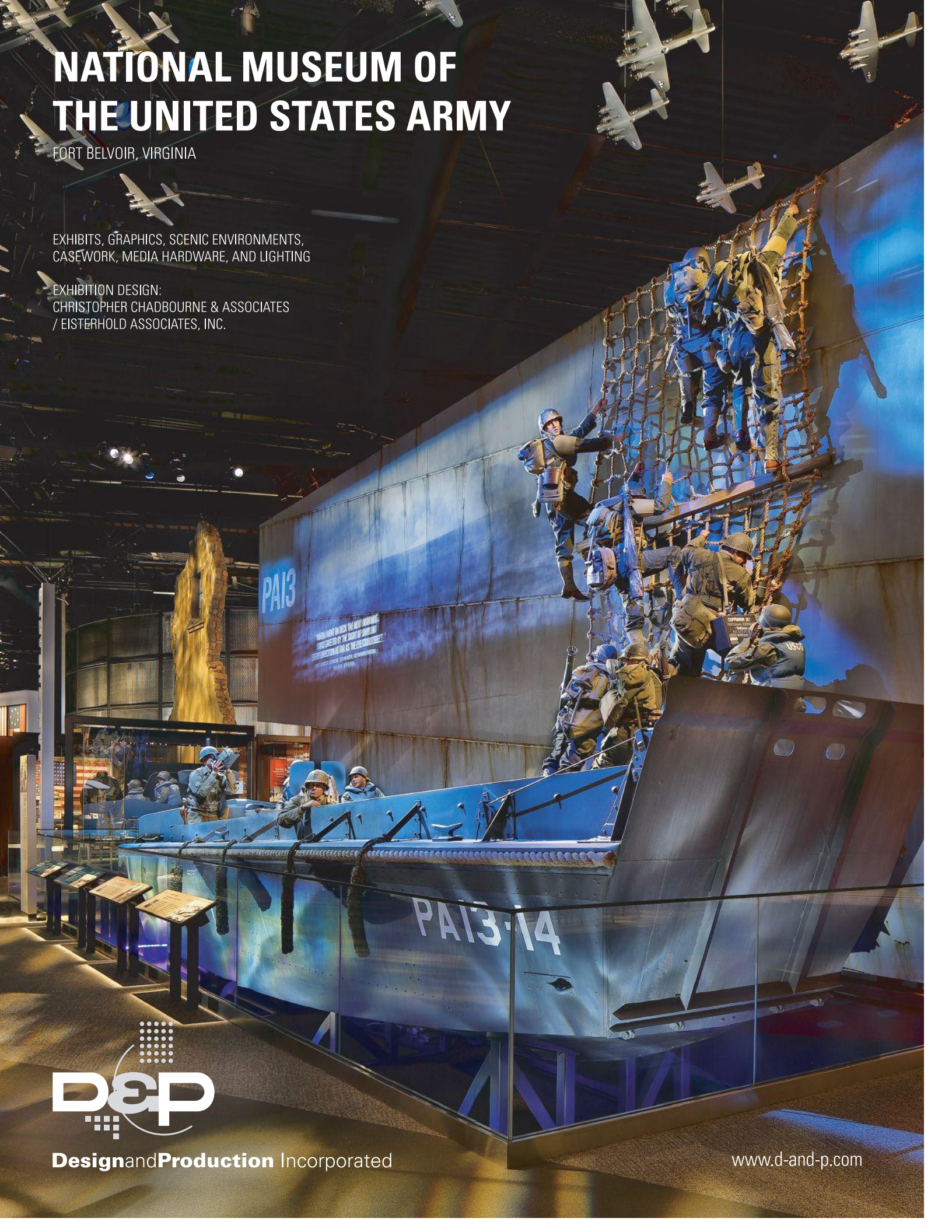


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# CONTENTS

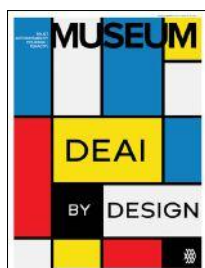


**Correction:** In the July/August issue, the caption for the artwork on page 12 was missing from the printed edition. *Your Hands Shimmering on Legs of Rain* mural by Eurhi Jones and Michael Reali, title quote from Philadelphia poet Sonia Sanchez, was pictured in the Point of View article by Joyce S. Lee. We regret the error.

## FEATURES

- 20** On Board With Change  
The Walker Art Center's Racial Equity and Inclusion Action Plan aims to change the makeup and culture of the institution's board of trustees.  
By Mary Ceruti
- 26** A Transformative Journey  
Participating in *Facing Change* has helped the Naper Settlement board and staff transform the institution.  
By Macarena Tamayo-Calabrese
- 32** Collaboration for Community Impact  
After *Facing Change*, four historical societies in the Twin Cities are working together to better engage the African American communities they serve.  
By Chad Roberts
- 38** Shifting the Conversation  
Two *Facing Change* Senior Fellows talk about their work supporting board members in their diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion work.

**Cover:** Elnur Babayev/  
Alamy Stock Vector



## DEPARTMENTS

- 5** From the President and CEO
- 6** Facing Change
- 10** By the Numbers
- 12** First Look
- 16** Point of View  
**What Matters Most**
- 47** Tributes and Transitions

*Museum* magazine serves as a forum for the museum community to share its ideas, perspectives, and experiences related to magazine themes. A call for submissions is held throughout the year.

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# Facing Change, Making Change

**Six years ago**, AAM convened a group of museum leaders to answer a burning question: Why, despite decades of work from so many dedicated people, was the field still struggling to make meaningful advances in the areas of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI)? Our goal, though we knew it would take time and require trial and error, was to begin developing an actionable strategy that would make lasting systemic changes in the field at large.

The next year, we got a glimpse of what that strategy could include. Our inaugural *Museum Board Leadership Report* revealed that nearly half of all museum boards were 100 percent white, the vast majority of directors were dissatisfied with the current diversity of their boards, and only a small percentage had taken steps to change this. These findings convinced us that the best place to focus our efforts would be at the board level. After all, the boardroom is where values and tone are set, where culture starts, where strategic decisions are made, and where budgets and resources are allocated.

So, in 2019, AAM launched *Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity and Inclusion*, an unprecedented three-year initiative with funding from the Mellon, Alice L. Walton, and Ford foundations. The end goal was to work with museum boards to determine how to create more inclusive cultures and foster greater equity in their museums, creating models in the process for a range of museum types, sizes, and locations. In the fall of 2019, we began working with a cohort of 50 museums that broadly represented our field, holding a dozen retreats for more than 1,000 museum trustees and directors across the country. The work seemed difficult then, but none of us had any idea what was about to happen in 2020.

Despite everything that the next years threw at us, I'm proud to say that we persisted and achieved some amazing results. In the end, 1,400 museum leaders and trustees participated in trainings and assessments to face their unconscious bias. Nearly all of them reported increased knowledge and understanding of DEAI issues in their institutions as a result.

The boards developed and are implementing measurable DEAI goals and plans, and 42 of the 50 have already added new racially and ethnically diverse candidates to their ranks—more than 120 new board members in total. Thanks to the powerful communities of practice the program built, and deep partnerships with our Senior DEAI Fellows, these leading museums and their communities will continue to progress.

What's next for *Facing Change* and our DEAI work? First, we're sharing the resources and model plans developed as part of this program in the coming months, and we'll continue to build on them. Thanks to the *Facing Change* pilot museums and a task force led by Cincinnati Museum Center President and CEO Elizabeth Pierce and Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch, we released *Excellence in DEAI*, a report outlining eight key indicators of excellence in museum DEAI practice. Over the next few years, we plan to embed these into our fieldwide standards and best practices, with updates to the Professional Code of Ethics, the Museum Assessment Program, and Accreditation.

Together, we are changing the field. It's certainly not happening as fast as most of us would like, and you will never hear me proclaim "mission accomplished." But real, measurable progress takes time and thoughtfulness, and it *is* happening. It makes me incredibly hopeful for our collective future.

7/15/2022



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Lott".

---

Laura L. Lott is the Alliance's president and CEO. Follow Laura on Twitter at [@LottLaura](#).

INTRO



# Facing Change

An Overview



**In 2015**, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole delivered a landmark keynote address at the AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo in Atlanta. In it she called upon museums to “be of social value by not only inspiring but creating change around one of the most critical issues of our time—the issue of diversity.” This clarion call continues to guide AAM’s DEAI work seven years later.

In 2016, with Laura Lott newly installed as AAM’s President and CEO, the Alliance included “diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of museums’ structures and programming” as one of three pressing focus areas in its strategic plan. Then, in 2017, building on the decades-long work of many people, AAM convened a Working Group of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) leaders from the field to examine why the field hadn’t made more progress becoming more diverse, inclusive, and equitable—and to begin developing an actionable strategy.

The DEAI Working Group, chaired by Dr. Cole and Lott and supported by AAM’s first chief diversity officer, Dr. Nicole Ivy, issued a culminating report called *Facing Change: Insights from AAM’s DEAI Working Group*. The five insights included the following imperatives:

- prioritize individual work by museum professionals to confront our unconscious biases,
- find ways to make systemic change, and
- ensure ownership of DEAI at all levels of museums.

The same year, AAM’s inaugural *2017 Museum Board Leadership* report became the first-ever comprehensive look at the people, work, and culture of over 850 museum boards. The data was tremendously valuable—but also pretty disappointing. Among many findings, we learned that nearly half of ALL museum boards were 100 percent white—not a single person of color on them. Fewer than 10 percent of museum board members and museum directors identified as people of color. Sadly, decades of investments in diverse pipelines, fellowships, and alternate pathways to museum work had made little progress in our goal to have more racially and ethnically diverse leadership in museums.

At a time when the demographics of our communities are changing rapidly, the lack of diverse

## PARTICIPATING MUSEUMS

### Chicago:

Aurora Regional Fire Museum, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago History Museum, DuSable Museum of African American History, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Lincoln Park Zoo, Museum of the Grand Prairie, Naper Settlement, and Oak Park River Forest Museum

### San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose:

Bay Area Discovery Museum, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Exploratorium, Filoli Historic House and Garden, Museum of Sonoma County, Oakland Museum of California, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose, San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

### Houston/Dallas/Fort Worth:

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Dallas Heritage Village, DiverseWorks, Fort Bend History Association, Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, Holocaust Museum Houston, Perot Museum of Nature and Science, Space Center Houston, and Witte Museum

### Jackson:

B.B. King Museum & Delta Interpretive Center, International Museum of Muslim Cultures, Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Eudora Welty House and Garden), Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, Historic Jefferson College, Manship House Museum, Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Museum of Mississippi History, Old Capitol Museum, Winterville Mounds, and Mississippi Museum of Art

### Minneapolis/St. Paul:

American Swedish Institute, Anoka County Historical Society, Bell Museum, Goldstein Museum of Design, Hennepin History Museum, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Ramsey County Historical Society, Science Museum of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Walker Art Center, and Weisman Art Museum

representation at the top of our institutions, and too few museums doing deep introspective work, meant museums were making little substantive progress in becoming more truly equitable and inclusive.

However, the data also promisingly showed that the vast majority of museum directors believed expanding racial and ethnic diversity was vital to their museums' missions, and they were dissatisfied with the current racial/ethnic diversity of their boards. But only a small percentage (10 percent) of those museums had developed a plan of action or allocated resources to do this work.

AAM's leadership team, including Lott, Dr. Ivy, Brooke Leonard, Rob Stein, Arthur Affleck, and advisor Kathy Dwyer Southern, saw an opportunity to address this gap with a focus on boards because that is where values and "tone" are set, culture starts, strategic decisions are made, and budgets/resources are allocated. Sustained, large-scale, cohort-based **board** work had never been tried before. And many thought it was impossible.

In 2019, AAM launched a pilot, *Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity and Inclusion*, to work with museum boards to reflect and learn, create action plans to develop more inclusive board cultures, and recruit and elect more diverse board members—in most cases that meant more people of color. Three foundations came together to support the museum field in this critical work: the Mellon, Alice L. Walton, and Ford foundations. The project was led by AAM's Senior Director of Equity and Culture Andrew Plumley, Senior Manager of DEAI Programs Grace Stewart, and DEAI Project Manager Ibrahim Shafau.

AAM created cohorts of museums (see "Participating Museums" on previous page) that broadly represented the diversity of our museum field, because DEAI and racial equity is the work of all museums. The cohorts included big and small museums of different types—history and art museums, science centers, and zoos. And they were in several different regions of the country—Chicagoland; the San Francisco Bay Area; the Twin Cities; Jackson,

Mississippi; and several cities in Texas, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio.

A key component of the *Facing Change* initiative was building capacity for DEAI work in the field by hiring, elevating, and supporting 10 Senior DEAI Fellows—Aiko Bethea, Sandra Bonnici, Eric Carpio, Makeba Clay, Omar Eaton Martinez, Ann Hernandez, Danielle Linzer, Azuka MuMin, Cecile Shellman, and Levon Williams—who were assigned a cohort of museums to coach. These Fellows individualized the national curriculum to meet the unique context and needs of each museum in the program.

Beginning in the fall of 2019, AAM held a dozen board retreats across the country. Amid divisive national politics, numerous natural disasters, the very public murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and many other Black and brown people, and a global pandemic that shuttered museums and forced budget and staff reductions, the pilot persisted through 2021—and achieved some significant results:

- 1,400 museum leaders and trustees took the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and participated in multiple trainings to face their unconscious bias. (AAM staff and board members and the Accreditation Commission joined museum trustees in these steps as well.)
- So far, 42 of the participating museums have added more than 120 new racially/ethnically diverse candidates to their boards.
- The museum boards developed and are implementing measurable DEAI goals and plans.
- And nearly all of the participants reported increased knowledge and understanding of DEAI issues during their time in the *Facing Change* program.

There is plenty of work left to be done. And it is ongoing. Each museum's journey has been its own—and yet we have found power in the cohorts, in the communities of practice that are being built.

In the following articles, participating museums and Senior DEAI Fellows share their perspectives, experiences, and learnings from their time in the *Facing Change* program. Over the next several months, AAM will continue to share additional learnings and resources developed throughout *Facing Change*.



Visit [aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion-resources](https://aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion-resources) for museum DEAI resources.



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Just Released

# Excellence in DEAI

## 2022 Report from the AAM Excellence in DEAI Task Force

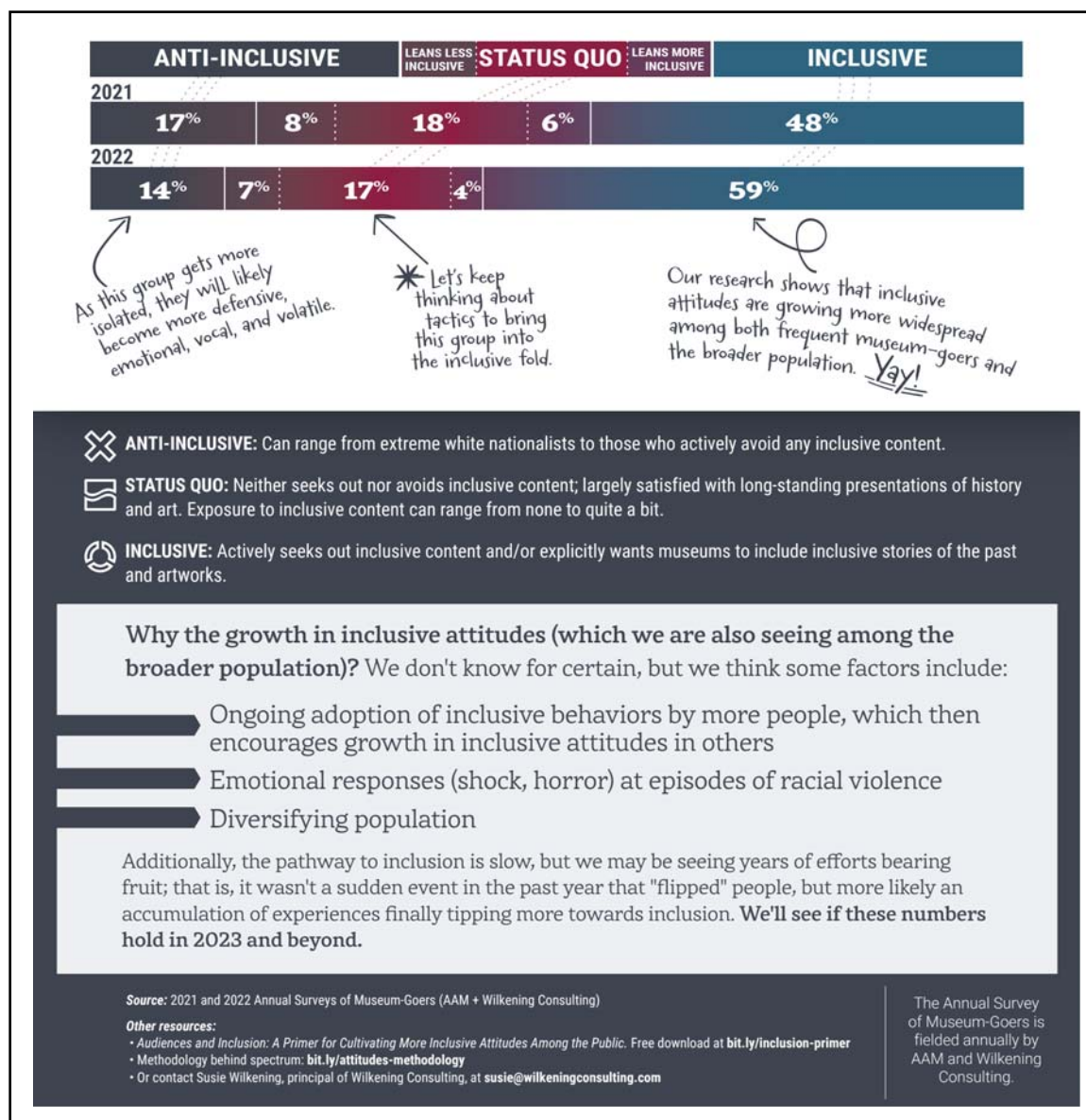
The culminating report from the Excellence in DEAI Task Force co-chaired by Lonnie Bunch and Elizabeth Pierce is now available. A core component of AAM's unprecedented Facing Change initiative, the *Excellence in DEAI* report:

- highlights the results from the task force,
- lays the groundwork that allows our field to establish a common set of Core Concepts and Key Indicators of excellence in DEAI,
- offers strategies for assessing and measuring excellence in DEAI in museums,
- and provides recommendations for how AAM can better embed DEAI within the Framework for Museum Excellence.



Scan or visit [bit.ly/excellence-in-deai](https://bit.ly/excellence-in-deai) to access the full report, discover what's next for AAM, and find resources to support your work.

# Inclusive Attitudes Among Frequent Museum-Goers, 2021 vs. 2022 (estimates)



By the Numbers was compiled by Susie Wilkening, principal of Wilkening Consulting, wilkeningconsulting.com. Reach Susie at [Susie@wilkeningconsulting.com](mailto:Susie@wilkeningconsulting.com).



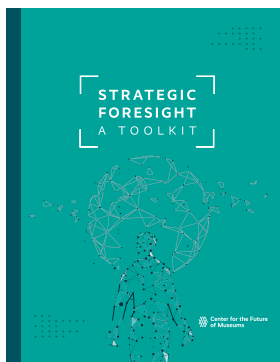
# NEW from AAM's Center for the Future of Museums

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<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/toolkits/strategic-foresight-toolkit>





### Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

“Watershed Moment,” a multifaceted project featuring art and sound installations and an outdoor adventure, presents four experiences created by two collaborating artist teams responding to natural science and the physical properties of water as it moves through Philadelphia’s urban landscape. “Watershed Moment” enables a deeper understanding of the Lower Schuylkill River Watershed and an appreciation of watersheds in general.

**Location:** Philadelphia, PA

**Dates:** through Oct. 30

**Learn more:** [ansp.org/exhibits/watershed-moment/](http://ansp.org/exhibits/watershed-moment/)

### American Saddlebred Museum

The American Saddlebred Museum has reopened the Elisabeth M. Goth History Wing, a \$4 million project that tells the story of the American Saddlebred, a native Kentucky horse breed. The new wing features an expanded history of the American Saddlebred, a virtual reality exhibit, life-size mare and foal sculptures, children’s activities, and exhibits highlighting the versatility of the American Saddlebred.

**Location:** Lexington, KY

**Learn more:** [asbmuseum.org/history-wing-grand-re-opening](http://asbmuseum.org/history-wing-grand-re-opening)

### Bowdoin College Museum of Art

“Antiquity & America” uncovers a new history of a curious and related phenomenon: the intensity and passion with which Mediterranean antiquities have long been collected by Americans and the prominent role the ancient Mediterranean has played in the history of American cultural and political life. In addition to the exhibition on view in the galleries, the web catalogue features more than 200 ancient and modern works of art.

**Location:** Brunswick, ME

**Dates:** through Feb. 5, 2023

**Learn more:** [bowdoin.edu/art-museum/exhibitions/2022/antiquity-and-america.html](http://bowdoin.edu/art-museum/exhibitions/2022/antiquity-and-america.html)

Rendering of Attunement, 2022, designed by David Gordon, fabricated by Jordan Griska; Ron Morrow; Courtesy of BCMA



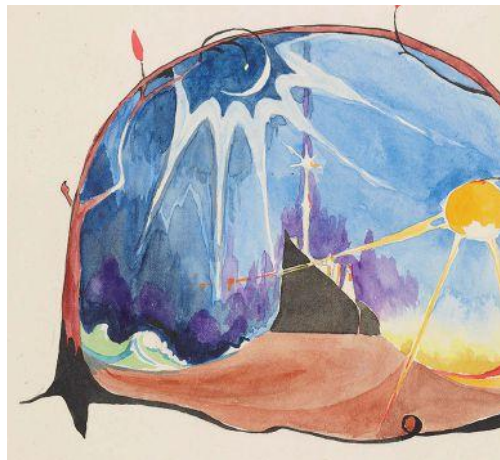
## Burchfield Penney Art Center

Artist LeRoi Johnson describes his work as “electric primitive”; his vibrant compositions are internalized and abstracted reflections on personal experiences. “LEROI: Living in Color” reframes the attention given to Johnson in a global context through a localized and collaborative curatorial position as the artist’s first retrospective exhibition. Students in youth programs will engage with Johnson’s work to create multimedia compositions that enhance and support the exhibition’s central themes.

**Location:** Buffalo, NY

**Dates:** Nov. 11, 2022–March 26, 2023

**Learn more:** [burchfieldpenney.org/exhibitions/exhibition:leroi-living-in-color/](http://burchfieldpenney.org/exhibitions/exhibition:leroi-living-in-color/)



## Haggerty Museum of Art

“J.R.R. Tolkien: The Art of the Manuscript” considers Tolkien’s work through the lens of manuscripts, in terms of both the materials that he studied as a medieval philologist and the manuscripts that he created while developing his legendarium. The exhibition illustrates how different aspects of the manuscript tradition found expression within Tolkien’s scholarly life and in his creative writing.

**Location:** Milwaukee, WI

**Dates:** through Dec. 23

**Learn more:** [marquette.edu/haggerty-museum/tolkien.php](http://marquette.edu/haggerty-museum/tolkien.php)



## Huntsville Museum of Art

“Rania Matar: SHE” features 50 of Matar’s large-scale color images of contemporary girls leaving the cocoon of home and transitioning into womanhood. In earlier projects, Matar photographed young women in relation to the controlled environment of their bedrooms. Here, she captures them in the larger arena they find themselves in after leaving home—the global and complicated backdrop that now constitutes their lives in transition.

**Location:** Huntsville, AL

**Dates:** through Nov. 26, 2023

**Learn more:** [hsvmuseum.org/rania-matar-she/](http://hsvmuseum.org/rania-matar-she/)



### The Columbus Museum

“Alma W. Thomas: Everything Is Beautiful” provides a comprehensive overview of the artist’s extraordinary career as an abstract painter during the mid- to late 20th century. This exhibition features more than 150 objects, the largest retrospective of the artist’s work to date, including rarely seen marionettes, her work as a student, and her well-known abstract paintings.

**Location:** Columbus, GA

**Dates:** through Sept. 25

**Partner:** Chrysler Museum of Art

**Learn more:** [columbusmuseum.com/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/everything-is-beautiful.html](http://columbusmuseum.com/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/everything-is-beautiful.html)

### Mississippi Museum of Art

“Maude Schuyler Clay: Portraits of a Place” showcases nearly 100 photographic works by the artist from the early 1980s to the present, including intimate family portraits, still-life images of fruit, haunting landscapes, and glass-plate images taken by Clay’s grandfather, Joseph Albert May. A fifth-generation Mississippian, Clay records local history as a visual archivist, capturing domestic, agricultural, and civic subjects unique to the Mississippi Delta—a section of the state known for an array of cultural traditions.

**Location:** Jackson, MS

**Dates:** through March 5, 2023

**Learn more:** [msmuseumart.org/exhibition/maude-schuyler-clay-portraits-of-a-place/](http://msmuseumart.org/exhibition/maude-schuyler-clay-portraits-of-a-place/)

### National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum

“Pioneering the Field: Women in Mining” showcases the careers of 15 women who represent a variety of mining sectors and have influenced the mining industry both historically and contemporarily. The exhibition tells the stories of these women using personal objects and images from their time working in, managing, and supporting the mining industry.

**Location:** Leadville, CO

**Dates:** through mid-Feb. 2023

**Learn more:** [leadvilletwinlakes.com/things-to-do-detail/national-mining-museum-and-hall-of-fame/](http://leadvilletwinlakes.com/things-to-do-detail/national-mining-museum-and-hall-of-fame/)

### What’s New at Your Museum?

Do you have a new temporary or permanent exhibition, education program, partnership/initiative, or building/wing? Tell us at [bit.ly/MuseumNewsAAM](http://bit.ly/MuseumNewsAAM), and it might be featured in an upcoming issue.

Alma Woodsey Thomas, *Air View Of A Spring Nursery*, 1966, The Columbus Museum (Georgia) purchase and gift of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Clubs and the artist; Maude Schuyler Clay, *Hopscotch*, n.d., collection of the artist; Jordan Bennett





Barbara Chase-Riboud, *All That Rises Must Converge/Red*, 2008, photo courtesy of Noel Art Liaison, Inc. © Barbara Chase-Riboud; TSENtral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy; Mark Nesmith, *Sea Glass*, 2022, photo provided by LMFA

### Pulitzer Arts Foundation

“Barbara Chase-Riboud *Monumentale: The Bronzes*” is the first retrospective in over 40 years of the trailblazing artist. The exhibition brings together some 50 major sculptures from the 1950s to the present day, accompanied by 20 drawings, including both well-known and never-before-seen works. It illustrates how the artist has developed a highly original visual language that is also fundamentally global and transhistorical, with influences ranging from Italian Baroque architecture to West African bronze making.

**Location:** St. Louis, MO

**Dates:** Sep. 16, 2022–Feb. 5, 2023

**Learn more:** [pulitzerarts.org/art/barbara-chase-riboud/](http://pulitzerarts.org/art/barbara-chase-riboud/)

### United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

For over 25 years, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has partnered with the Ukrainian State Archives to copy more than 10 million pages of its Holocaust-related records. Now, in a critical moment in Ukraine’s history amid Russia’s unprovoked invasion, digital copies are being posted online for the first time and made available to scholars, historians, family researchers and the public. The first one million pages of records are now easily searchable at [ushmm.org/ukraearchive](http://ushmm.org/ukraearchive), and additional records will be available every month until all of its Ukrainian archives are accessible.

**Location:** Washington, DC

**Partner:** Ukrainian State Archives

**Learn more:** [ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-makes-holocaust-related-ukrainian-archives-available-online](http://ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-makes-holocaust-related-ukrainian-archives-available-online)

### Longview Museum of Fine Arts

“Transformation in the Wild World of Mark Nesmith: A Retrospective” explores the artist’s career and multitude of themes, from the bayous, beaches, and woods he roamed as a child in Southeast Texas to whimsical critters addressing the superficiality of modern society and the artist’s unease with mankind’s relationship to nature. From diminutive paintings to large, expansive canvases, his expressive artworks combine observation, memory, and imagination.

**Location:** Longview, TX

**Dates:** through Sept. 24

**Learn more:** [lmfa.org/art/upcoming-exhibitions/the-wild-world-of-mark-nesmith/](http://lmfa.org/art/upcoming-exhibitions/the-wild-world-of-mark-nesmith/)



# What Matters Most

Accountability to our community means making changes from the inside out as well as from the outside in.

By Lori Fogarty

**AAM's initiative to enhance diversity** and inclusion in board governance is called *Facing Change*. This prompts the fundamental

question: What change must we actually face?

Clearly, museums must continue to face the imperatives of our country's changing

demographics and consider how our institutions reflect these changes through their boards, staff, collections, programming, and audiences. Are our institutions



Oakland Museum of California's longest-standing community advisory council has partnered with staff and community members for 26 years to present El Día de los Muertos cultural celebration, one of the museum's most popular annual events.

Odell Hussey

truly reflective of, and in service to, our communities? And if not, what are the broader and necessary changes that need to be faced and, perhaps more importantly, made? What are the profound and fundamental changes required in the way we operate at every level of the organization? And are we really ready to face these truths?

One of the most profound lessons I've learned over the past few years—both as a participant in the *Facing Change* initiative and in our museum's work to advance anti-racism and equity—is the need to shift our thinking around the core concept of accountability. To whom are we as institutions most accountable?

Most often, I would argue, museum leadership has been most accountable to its donors and funders, driven by financial considerations and the urgent need for funding to accomplish our priorities, whether that is mounting an exhibition or acquiring a work for the collection. Because boards often comprise our major donors, we typically hold ourselves most accountable to our trustees or board members. This notion of accountability centers extraordinary power within our boards, which we have clearly seen creates formidable barriers to inclusion and equity and has limited our ability to face change.

So facing change must involve transforming our thinking and practices about accountability. What if we were most accountable, truly most accountable, to our publics, and especially the members of our communities who

have been traditionally left out of, or deliberately excluded from, museum participation?

Whose stories have been overlooked or under-valued by our museums? Who are we most accountable to when we have to make trade-offs or sacrifices due to budget limitations? While our museum certainly has a long way to go in answering these questions and embracing new notions of accountability, I believe that we are learning what it means to face this change and how accountability to our community means making changes from the inside out as well as from the outside in.

### The Work Within

The first significant shifts in facing change and shifting accountability at Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) began as they do in many institutions—with programming. Our museum has a decades-long tradition of working with community advisory councils, the most long-standing being the volunteer advisory council that has co-created our annual El Día de los Muertos celebration for the past 26 years. Through this annual event, our staff and a volunteer committee share authority, power, and accountability to convert OMCA to a sacred space for community gathering, honoring cultural traditions that for many years did not have a place in museums.

More recently, we have engaged in rigorous and deep community engagement practices in developing exhibitions, often collaborating with dozens of

community members at every stage of the process. From the outset of exhibition planning, our staff and community members partner so that participants bring lived experience and personal impact to the stories that are shared in the exhibition. This work requires an enormous amount of trust-building, finding and defining the delicate balance between expertise, influence, and authority.

As we moved forward in the work of equity, inclusion, and anti-racism over the past few years, however, we've learned that the most profound change—and the most difficult—is internal. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, national protests in support of the Movement for Black Lives, and 15 months of closure, our board and staff have engaged in deep internal work that has called upon us to think very differently about accountability.

We've examined our decision-making processes, bringing to the forefront those most impacted by the decisions we make on everything from COVID protocols to approaches to staff restructuring and pay equity. While we traditionally made major institutional decisions within our executive team, we've now formed cross-functional teams to facilitate all major initiatives that include staff at every level and utilize staff surveys and other feedback mechanisms to gather broad staff input.

We've transformed our approach to budgeting, both in the substance of the budget as

well as in the process itself, guided by our equity and social impact values. This spring, our CFO led more than a half-dozen full-staff sessions on the budget—making transparent every phase of our work, including the difficult budget trade-offs—and we incorporated key elements in the budget for which staff advocated, such as specific marketing dollars allocated to promoting our free and discounted admission programs.

The board, too, revised its trustee recruitment and onboarding process and experimented with new meeting and committee structures, utilizing the same community agreements for board meetings that we use for all staff and staff team meetings. We are also beginning to bring staff and board together around joint initiatives, such as anti-racism learning and training and socially responsible investing policies.

### Rethinking Accountability

As distinct and sometimes incremental as some of these

activities may appear, they share common and vital principles: the work of equity and inclusion happens in day-to-day organizational practices. These new practices call for a different definition of accountability that centers those most impacted, internally and externally.

A true shift to become a just organization requires more than diverse representation on the board, of staff, or in programming. It means examining and transforming the processes, policies, structures, and culture of an organization. It also means shifting the focus of accountability and the centers of power. This shift is not a one-time or short-term initiative. This work, and the accountability for it, must be ongoing and must become part of the organizational DNA.

Of course, our organization has a long journey ahead in this work. Personally, as a white leader who has benefitted from many long-standing museum structures and systems, I am particularly accountable and

responsible for examining my own role in these systems and for taking meaningful action. I have undertaken my own learning journey to better understand how whiteness shows up in museums and in my leadership, and I strive to recognize and address my discomfort, whether that is disrupting typical hierarchies in decision-making or having difficult conversations with trustees about evolving long-standing processes.

As we learned through the *Facing Change* initiative, the work of equity and inclusion must start with the personal before it can move to the organizational and systemic. The museum field has taken way too long to hold itself to account. I believe this is what facing change is all about.

**Lori Fogarty** is Director and CEO at Oakland Museum of California.

## TIPS FOR FACING CHANGE

- The work of “facing change” must be grounded in clear purpose and values.
- Fundamental organizational change requires new understandings of accountability and a willingness to share power, authority, information, and decision-making.
- Changing an organization’s relationship to the community requires changing the organization’s relationship to accountability and power, internally and externally.
- Facing change means becoming a learning organization and requires personal as well as organizational humility, curiosity, and self-reflection.
- Facing change means an ongoing commitment beyond the short term and must become part of the organization’s DNA.



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# ON BOARD WITH CHANGE

The Walker Art Center's Racial Equity and Inclusion Action Plan aims to change the makeup and culture of the institution's board of trustees.

By Mary Ceruti

## When the Walker Art Center

joined the *Facing Change* program in 2019, the organization had been engaged in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) work for several years. The Walker's program has long championed under-recognized and marginalized artists, and in 2016, the Walker Art Center, along with several other institutions including fellow *Facing Change* participant the Science Museum of Minnesota, co-founded the Twin Cities Large Cultural Organizations Forum (TCLCOF).

TCLCOF, a collective impact consortium of 10 of the largest cultural organizations in the Twin Cities, aims to support each organization as it works to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. These organizations and their boards committed to specific goals, including that by 2020 their programs, audiences, staff, and trustees would be 20 percent Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), in line with the projected demographic makeup of Minnesota. TCLCOF spurred several initiatives, including baseline education and skill-building workshops for all staff and board members and sustained year-long programs cultivating cultural competency among staff and board members.

By 2017, the Walker had achieved the TCLCOF 20 percent goal in each category, but we weren't always able to maintain those percentages. As we entered the *Facing Change* program, we recognized that our efforts had focused primarily on representations of diversity as expressed by percentages without ultimately creating a more equitable and inclusive board culture.

When George Floyd was murdered in May 2020, we felt an institutional responsibility to do more, which generated new resolve for this work. Museums across the country felt this responsibility, but in Minneapolis, where racial inequalities in education, health, employment, and wealth are among the worst in the country, the urgency was palpable.

## A Plan for Change

The Walker's Governance & Nominating Committee initially led the board's *Facing Change* work because of its focus on governance, new trustee cultivation, and board policy. But in September 2020, the board

formally approved the formation of the Racial Equity Committee, charged with ensuring that the Walker fulfills its commitment to racial equity and inclusion.

The committee's first task was to complete the Racial Equity and Inclusion Action Plan, which establishes specific quantitative racial equity and inclusion goals that are critical to ensuring that the Walker can achieve its mission, serve its audiences, and maintain its position as a global leader in the contemporary art and museum fields. The board formally approved the plan in November 2020, but it is a living document intended to guide the board as it becomes more reflective of and responsive to the communities among which the Walker is situated and those that it serves.

The action plan is organized into seven sections: education and training, governance, board culture, cultivation, nominations, leadership, and evaluation tools. Specifically, it focuses on:

- cultivating and recruiting trustees of diverse racial backgrounds, specifically from BIPOC communities;
- nominating, electing, onboarding, and retaining diverse and multiculturally aware trustees;
- creating pathways to board leadership positions for BIPOC trustees;
- examining board policies through a lens of racial equity and inclusion;
- improving trustee engagement and creating an anti-racist culture bolstered by the tenets of trust, support, respect, and inclusion;
- expanding opportunities for learning and self-reflection for all trustees; and
- developing and implementing an equity impact assessment tool to guide organizational planning and decision-making at both the board and board committee levels.

While the action plan establishes specific, measurable goals, its long-term success will be the evolution of the Walker board of trustees as a space where diverse backgrounds (racial, social, cultural, economic, and professional) and lived experiences are valued and contribute to excellence in governance and the stewardship of the organization. This fundamental change in board culture will allow the Walker to





The Walker Art Center, together with the adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, attracts more than 700,000 visitors per year.

serve its current constituents locally, nationally, and internationally, as well as connect authentically and sustainably with communities in the Twin Cities that have been historically underrepresented on the Walker board, among staff and audiences, and in the museum's programming.

### Creating Bespoke Education

Early in the *Facing Change* process, we recognized that our trustees were at different places in their own DEAI journey based on their lived experience and current workplace. Many of our trustees work in major corporations or serve on other boards where they have taken the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) or participated in cultural competency training. A uniform, mandatory DEAI development program would not be helpful for us.

Instead, we opted to create a bespoke education and training program that focuses on how racial equity matters to our mission. We created a guest speaker series that has included prominent philanthropist Agnes Gund discussing her work on mass incarceration; artist Jason Moran talking about his relationship to institutions, particularly cultural institutions with whom he has collaborated as an artist, and how racism shows up in these spaces; and Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, addressing the importance of diversity and excellence in trusteeship.

We also have bimonthly, facilitated coffee hours that include video segments focused on artists whose work engages with issues of racism and colonialism. These events spur both personal reflections and recognition of where these issues show up at the Walker. Resources referenced during the coffee hours, as well as those that support or go deeper into topics covered during these conversations, are also included in a bimonthly newsletter so that board members can take advantage of them on their own time.

Our education program recognizes the ways in which art and artists can create space for these conversations while also affirming the Walker's mission and trustees' passion for the arts. "I have always been fascinated by how art—particularly contemporary art—connects us to others through its ability to simultaneously shift and broaden our understanding and perspectives," says Seena Hodges, President of the Walker Art Center Board of Trustees. "It allows us to engage with difference and see beyond it at the very same time."

### Our Progress So Far

We approved the action plan in November 2020, so we now have 18 months of data with which to track our progress. We know this is a long-term effort, but we already can see measurable progress on quantitative measures.

## LANGUAGE MATTERS

Decisions about precise titles of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion initiatives—including what acronym to use for this work, such as DEAI, DEIA, DEI, or IDEA—have the potential to stymie momentum. However, alignment on the language that staff, trustees, and other organizational stakeholders use to discuss DEAI goals is critical to the work's success. We chose the term “racial equity and inclusion” for the Walker’s action plan to prioritize the need to address systematic racism. We believe that if we could have difficult conversations around race, we could likely have them around other issues of inequity.

A key quantitative goal of the action plan is for the composition of the Walker board to be 30 percent BIPOC by June 2022 and 40 percent BIPOC by June 2025. This goal was set based on U.S. Census Bureau estimates as of July 1, 2019, which showed the BIPOC population at 32 percent for Hennepin County and 40 percent for Minneapolis.

Following the strategies and tactics of the action plan, the Walker has added nine BIPOC-identifying trustees to the board since beginning the *Facing Change* program in summer 2019. The percentage of BIPOC representation on the board increased from 16 percent in 2020 to 32 percent as of June 2022. In September 2021, the board elected Hodges as the first Black board president in the history of the Walker Art Center. Additionally, from 2020 to 2021, the number of BIPOC-identifying trustees in positions of board leadership—defined as officers and committee chairs—has increased and include the board treasurer/chair of the finance committee, corporate gifts committee chair, and co-chair of the Racial Equity Committee.

We diversified our board by identifying authentic, existing community relationships within the Walker through our program partners, donors, artists, and members and bridging those relationships to cultivate

new trustees. We encourage individual trustees to attend programs and events at community and peer institutions, make financial contributions to those institutions, and serve on other boards. This porosity is key—it is as important to welcome new individuals into the Walker as it is to move outside the walls of the institution and into local communities.

It is, of course, always more challenging to measure the progress of a culture shift, but we have implemented the following concrete changes:

- Integrating questions into the annual board survey that evaluate the board’s culture of inclusivity;
- Conducting exit interviews for outgoing trustees that specifically inquire about perspectives on inclusion and racial equity in a board context;
- Holding check-ins every six months between “board partners”—relationships between new and longer-term trustees—at which board culture is openly discussed; and
- Using the IDI results to chart the board’s collective progress along the IDI intercultural continuum.

The Racial Equity Committee and our bespoke education program have been key elements in our progress. The committee ensures that the DEAI work stays at the forefront of the agenda and offers tools and support to committee chairs and other board members. For example, earlier this year the committee developed an equity impact tool that the committees are using to review their charters as well as the decisions and recommendations they make.

As museums face the changes to the narratives we tell ourselves, demographic shifts in the populations we serve, and evolving expectations from our communities, our boards must also change. They must represent and reflect the lived experiences of the communities we serve. Equity and inclusion create excellence in governance that will help make us more essential to our communities.

**Mary Ceruti** is Executive Director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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# A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY

Participating in *Facing Change* has helped the Naper Settlement board and staff transform the institution.

By Macarena Tamayo-Calabrese



Visitors browse Naper Settlement's "Unvarnished Naperville," the on-site companion exhibition to the online "Unvarnished: Housing Discrimination in the Northern and Western United States" exhibition.

All photos courtesy of Naper Settlement

### **When AAM asked my institution,**

Naper Settlement, to participate in a prestigious and cutting-edge project related to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI), I confess that I had reservations. I even considered bringing it to our board with a recommendation not to participate.

I should have been elated. After all, this was the first national initiative of its kind, and it was funded by nationally and internationally recognized institutions like the Mellon, Walton, and Ford foundations. Why would I consider declining to participate? I have a list of very good reasons, but three years later, it really comes down to one—fear.

No doubt this project was appropriately named: *Facing Change*. Facing change is scary. When it involves 18 of your bosses and the body that governs and sets the pace for the institution, it is downright frightening. To add to our complexity, Naper Settlement is owned by the City of Naperville but is managed and operated by the Naperville Heritage Society (NHS). This means that there is yet another layer of oversight

through a city commission board called the Naper Settlement Museum Board (NSMB), chaired by the city's mayor.

NHS and the City of Naperville, via NSMB, have constructively worked together for over 50 years through a public-private partnership. While the city is respectful of the museum's independence, it too has a commitment to the residents and taxpayers who help support the museum. As such, we present, discuss, and share the result of all projects and grants with NSMB. In other words, this was yet another board that I would have to face if we failed.

If you've ever been involved in transformative work, you know it is the epitome of controlled chaos. Everything must run like normal while change abounds. Could we really wrap our arms around such introspective work? What if we didn't like what we saw? What if this worked to divide our board? What if we failed?

### Making the Choice for Change

In 2019 we were already immersed in self-evaluation, two capital campaigns, and the realization that our city had changed and we had not kept pace. We were

telling a one-facet and one-sided story that younger generations and a large part of the residents in our community did not relate to. I had been hired a few years earlier to bring about the transformation of the museum from a strictly 19th-century settlement story to becoming a campus of lifelong learning, discovery and fun for all people. We were now going to tell Naperville's whole history, from pre-settlement to current day.

Until the latter part of the 20th century, we were a predominately white community, but even once we neared 32 percent people of color, we had little to nothing in our collection to reflect that part of our population. With the expanded mission, we had an entire century for which we needed to collect, document, and develop programming, not to mention conducting rapid collection initiatives to ensure we captured historic times—from COVID to political protests.

While we had a lot going on, in the end I felt that forgoing the opportunity to participate in *Facing Change* would be a disservice to the institution. I was relieved when our board chair immediately welcomed the idea. Boards govern and set the tone for the culture in and outside of the institution, and this was leadership at its best. Board



Naper Nights brings the community together with themed tribute concerts throughout the summer.



Artifacts, including Hearts for Peace signs, a Women's Christian Temperance Movement booklet, and a hand-knit suffrage scarf, on display in Naper Settlement's "Women: Waves of Change" exhibition.

members were also facing change and acting on their commitment to represent the community they serve. Even though we would embark on this journey hand in hand with AAM and notable experts in this field, I confess that I began with great excitement and perhaps even greater trepidation.

### Our Change Process

The NHS board appointed an ad-hoc committee comprised of diverse long-standing and new board members. One of the most salient and reassuring moments came before our first meeting. All participants were asked to read the book *Filter Shift* by Sara Taylor. The book was a quick read (literally—five chapters that could be read in less than one hour), but it was a game changer. The book describes the notion of unconscious filters: how we create them, how we perceive the world through them, and how they impact us.

These unperceived dynamics were made even clearer at the first all-day retreat of museums and boards participating in *Facing Change* in our

## WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

Naper Settlement is owned by the City of Naperville but managed and operated by the Naperville Heritage Society (NHS). Here's my advice for working with or under a government entity.

**Focus on your joint commitment to the public.** The city is accountable to the residents who support the museum with tax dollars. The museum educates, engages, and serves as the community's memory.

**Insist on respect for the independence of the museum.** A city government is not an expert in history or museums, nor is that its purpose. Museums must have independence to focus on their purpose—education, culture, information, and engagement.

**Focus on the mission and goals.** In our case, the city and NHS had previously agreed to tell the whole history of Naperville. Now we must educate the city on how the new initiatives support the new mission.

**Stay focused.** You will need a road map for change and a commitment to stay on that road. Some might try to force you off the road or take an exit. DON'T.

**Use and require good judgment.** As transformation happens, you are bound to fail or be called on the carpet for something. Use factual information to show the value of your decisions.

**Develop thick, thick skin.** Make peace with the fact that you will have naysayers and perhaps even enemies. Do what's right.

region, led by Taylor and consultants from her firm deepSEE Consulting and the AAM team. In the first session, Taylor brought up prejudice, explaining that we all *pre-judge* other people's actions or beliefs and that our brains are hardwired to do that. There were many other *what!?*, *aha!*, and *urgh!* moments as we met as a large group and in individual museum groups that day.



A Naper Settlement building interpreter speaks to visitors at the Blacksmith Shop.

The project was able to maneuver through 2020, which included the beginning of COVID, the extreme polarization in the country, mass confrontation, and even rioting in Naperville. The *Facing Change* senior fellows and leadership moved sessions online, continuing their work as facilitators and accountability partners.

The selection of the experts and material responded to the changing needs of the museums, and the addition of the consultant Beth Zemsky deepened our learning and reflection. She and the project helped us understand the challenges of the multigenerational, multicultural workplace. The consultants provided us with tools to measure both individual and organizational cultural competence.

For example, they utilized the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment. Among other things, it measures the capacity of the person

taking the assessment to recognize complex cultural differences. The individual reports were aggregated to create a group profile for each participating museum board. That information was then used to tailor goals and strategies for each board.

I am also grateful for the CEO charrettes. Each meeting was organized by type of museum and later by museum goals and plans (e.g., board recruitment, community engagement). In these meetings, we could share our accomplishments, complexities, and even frustrations as we faced this transformative work. Some CEOs were dealing with resistance from an individual board member. Some were confronting the mismatch in the perceived and actual IDI assessments, and brainstormed ideas to bridge those gaps. Overall, these meetings demonstrated that we weren't alone and there was ardent support for staying the course.



## Building on Our DEAI Work

NHS, the administrator of Naper Settlement, made a commitment over a decade ago to expand its story, to allow the history-makers to speak in first voice about their own experiences, and to ensure that the museum was a welcoming place where everyone could see themselves. Since then, we have had our first-ever Asian exhibitions—“Me = We” and “Come As You Are,” which focused on our Chinese and Indian populations, and “Unvarnished,” which examined our city and nation’s history of segregation.

Additionally, for the last five years, Naper Settlement has been leading a national leadership grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to examine de jure and de facto segregation in the north and western United States. The project focuses on the history of six communities from Connecticut to California and includes the thorny history of Naperville, once a known and revered sundown town—an all-white town that excluded Blacks and other minorities through the use of discriminatory laws, harassment, and threats or use of violence.

The value of *Facing Change* is not that it fixes the problem, but that it helps all of us identify it and embark on a course to improve. Our board had

previously made the commitment, and had started working to expand our story, but with *Facing Change*, we had to draft goals, set timelines, create action plans, and report our progress to the consultants, other museum colleagues, and AAM. This brought helpful structure to a desired outcome. *Facing Change* was the impetus that pushed all of us to *act* despite the fear, doubt, worry, and uncertainty that come with any change.

We are firmly on our way, and there is much more to be done. But it is reassuring to know that our board was willing to start by examining itself. The great gift of this project is not just getting the results, but bringing this issue to the forefront, pressing the board and staff to examine themselves individually and as an institution. Most important, the project doesn’t leave us at the doorstep of realization, but provides us with guides and tools to begin dismantling barriers to get to the heart of the matter.

Throughout our journey, we have continued to tell the European settlement story, but we are also now researching the history of the Native American tribes here before settlement and showcasing the cultural and historic contributions of the many groups in our community. Our collection now includes artifacts from the Multicultural Awareness Committee at

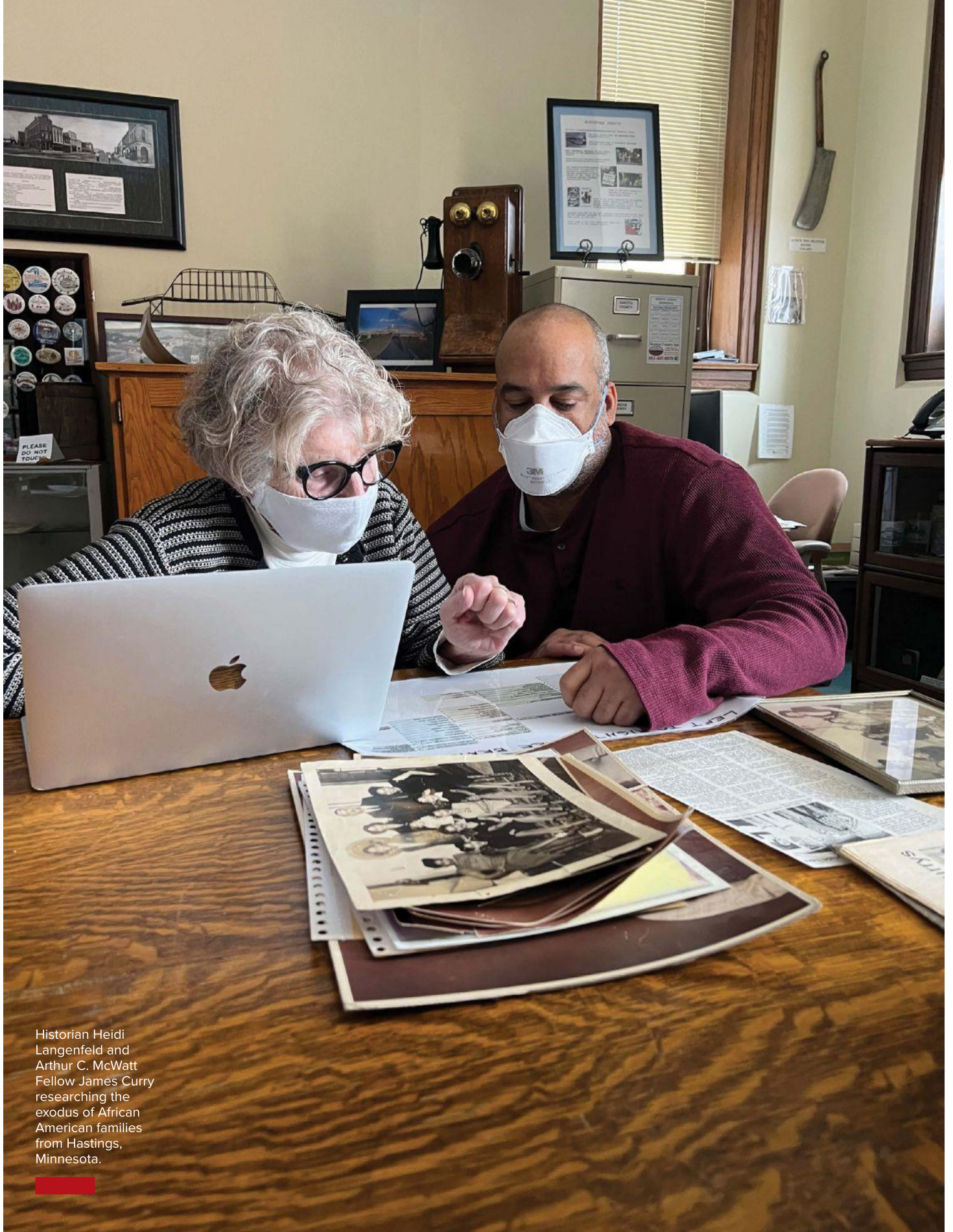
our local schools and the Mexican boxcar families who once lived in Naperville; we host the story of Ram to celebrate Diwali; and we held the first-ever Celebrate Naperville, a festival to share the music, dance, and traditions of our Muslim and Sikh communities.

These new and important additions live alongside our settlement story, the Scottish Pine Craig Games, Hometown Picnic, and our agricultural history. Why? Because this is us—all of us.

**Macarena Tamayo-Calabrese** is CEO and President of Naper Settlement in Naperville, Illinois.



Visitors at the “Unvarnished Naperville” exhibition.



Historian Heidi Langenfeld and Arthur C. McWatt Fellow James Curry researching the exodus of African American families from Hastings, Minnesota.

# COLLABORATION FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT

After *Facing Change*, four historical societies in the Twin Cities are working together to better engage the African American communities they serve.

By Chad Roberts

**Museums exist to serve** community, and most museum leaders understand that this means their entire community. We are trying to create institutions where everyone interested in and impacted by a museum will be represented, welcomed, and engaged. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, however, the enormous gap between this aspiration and reality was brought into sharp focus.

In 2020, the Ramsey County Historical Society's (RCHS) connections in the African American community existed but were limited, and many of our colleagues across the state were either in a similar situation or had no network at all to help them

understand the impact of Mr. Floyd's killing. In a community forum hosted by the Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) and sponsored by RCHS to address what role, if any, museums should be taking in the preservation and exhibition of the uprising art being created by local artists, the absence of trust between the Twin Cities' African American community and its museums became incredibly clear.

As a field we had not invested the time to build trust or, worse, had exploited cultural groups and then let the relationships wither away when no longer "needed." At the forum, community members explicitly named museums as part of the problem and said

they did not trust us to preserve and provide access to this art. While the leadership teams at the M, RCHS, and several other museums were not surprised by this feedback, it was shocking to some museum staff and volunteers and hard to hear regardless. A community approach, with limited museum involvement, evolved that has partially addressed art preservation and access. There is still a role for museum expertise in these efforts, and I am hopeful that ultimately this will be an opportunity for us to do better—time will tell.

The idea of doing better spans the museum field and progress is happening, thanks in part to the *Facing Change* program, which sought to accelerate this conversation by improving the diversity of museum boards. When we learned that the Twin Cities was going to be one of the communities included in the first iteration of the program, I had a series of conversations with our board leadership. Diversification of our board was a strategic priority, and while we were making inroads in recruiting, we knew there was a lot of work to be done if RCHS was to evolve more quickly into the organization we aspired to be.

This program could help us, but it would require more time from our staff and board, which were already involved in large, transformative initiatives. Could we do it? We also wondered if we had done enough work to achieve buy-in from our entire board by the time the program started. Ultimately we decided the answer to both questions was yes, and we applied.

### Our Facing Change Experience

By the time the program kicked off, RCHS had achieved a representation milestone, namely that seven people of color were serving on the board of directors, representing 25 percent of the board. As *Facing Change* moved through its first year, it was clear that the program was providing good foundational building blocks. Our board and staff learned a lot about what we did not know. Without *Facing Change*, we would have been hard pressed to absorb that information independently in the same amount of time.

We needed tools to better communicate about racism, a schedule to follow that kept us from wallowing in paralysis analysis, opportunities for individuals to build their cultural competencies, regular access to

counselors who had gotten to know us, and the skills to identify systems and processes that were exclusionary, biased, or racist. All of these things were available in the program and continue to serve us well.

However, some of our team were concerned they would make mistakes and be labeled racists, and they moved through the start of the program cautiously. Missteps happened, and they will continue to happen. That is simply unavoidable, and anyone undertaking this work needs to accept that reality. However, nobody was labeled racist. That was essential. These were people whose intent was good and who wanted their time, labor, and resources to make the world better. They were able to engage in the work and learn, and positive change is happening as a result.

Not everything went smoothly the first year of the program: there were some communication issues that were later resolved, and the pacing was too slow for some of the organizations that were further along. The program leadership adapted to ensure each organization could get from the program what it needed while still helping build what I think is the most important legacy of *Facing Change*: establishing connections and a community of action among the participating museums.

### Arthur C. McWatt Fellowship Program

In the second year of the *Facing Change* program, RCHS joined with Anoka County Historical Society and Hennepin History Museum—also *Facing Change* participants—and Dakota County Historical Society to establish a new partnership to accelerate our engagement of the African American communities we serve. With some guidance from the community, the Arthur C. McWatt Fellowship program was born.

The program built on a similar idea that had died from lack of funding interest eight years ago. This time it took about a year to secure the funding to create a pilot program focused on helping each partner organization engage the African American communities they serve, advance various history projects (either identified by the McWatt Fellows or selected from a menu of options at each partner museum), and identify a network of individuals and organizations engaged in preserving and presenting Black history in Minnesota.



Participants in the first Kinara held in Red Wing, Minnesota—organized by Arthur C. McWatt Fellow James Curry and Artist, Elder, and Advocate Seitu Jones—built connections and shared dozens of projects related to African American history in southeastern Minnesota.

After an exploratory conversation with Jeremiah Ellis, an author and board prospect, about the scope of the project, he followed up with a proposal in which he suggested naming the program after the late Arthur C. McWatt. McWatt was a social studies teacher at Central High School in St. Paul, an author, and a former member of the RCHS Editorial Board who had written for RCHS on several occasions. A civil rights activist himself, he was married to the renowned local civil rights leader Katie McWatt.

We initially planned to employ four fellows (one per location) working a combined 60 hours a week over about nine months (one at 30 hours/week; three

at 10 hours/week). One of the roles would be eligible for health insurance, all would be employees instead of contractors, and the rate of pay would range from \$20–\$25 per hour. We expected applicants to primarily be early career folks and people working in the museum gig economy. The Fellows would facilitate weekly meetings between African American historians, community leaders, or organizations and the leadership at each partner museum.

As we prepared to roll the program out, COVID-19 persisted, inflation was becoming an issue, and other initiatives at RCHS took time away from the launch. By the time we launched the program at the beginning

of 2022 we had increased the wage range to \$25–\$30/hour, heavily promoted the flexible nature of the work, and knew we could hire more than four people because we were working with a 19-week timeline instead of 40.

We hired seven Fellows, who averaged about 25 hours per week, and five were mid- to late-career individuals with important projects in mind or in the works. Fellows included the founder of the African American Registry, the founder of Memorialize the Movement ([memorializethemovement.com](http://memorializethemovement.com)), and one of the founders of the St. Paul Black Lives Matter chapter. The Fellows' projects were impressive and included "If not now, when?" which focused on connecting youth with elders in the community; the second annual "Justice for George: Our Strength, Our Story" event, which included an art exhibition with painted plywood murals, performances, and speakers from across the Twin Cities area; and "Building Remembrance for Reconciliation" (BR4R), an on-going effort to use history and the arts to remember, reconcile, and heal from generations of racism through ongoing community discussions, web-based

information, and future exhibitions.

When we launched the fellowship, there were people in the community who knew us and loved the idea, folks who didn't know us and had serious concerns and doubts (even opposition in one case), and people who knew and loved us but were cautious about this endeavor because it involved four white-led organizations. These were all reactions we expected.

We also recognized that we did NOT have the networks necessary to be trusted by the community at large, and we didn't know how those networks would manifest. We learned later that some folks chose not to apply due to that lack of trust, and others applied to see if we were for real. The fellowship program is helping us build the relationships needed to serve all parts of our community, but it is a process that will take time.

In terms of structure, we provided museum memberships and research subscriptions for each Fellow, computers and technology stipends, expense reimbursement, and funds to pay for their time with members of the community. Fellows met regularly with partner museums and as a cohort. We paid for

## THOUGHTS ON DEAI PARTNERSHIPS

The Arthur C. McWatt Fellowship program is a collaboration between Ramsey County Historical Society, Anoka County Historical Society, Hennepin History Museum, and Dakota County Historical Society. We had previously worked together on different projects, so there was shared trust in our intent and abilities at the outset. However, working together on diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) projects created unique challenges. Following are some of the lessons we have learned.

**Leave more time than you think you need for community input, even if you have community relationships in place.** Each partners' network of advisors may get feedback that contradicts that received by another partner. Take the time necessary to understand those differences, acknowledge them, and determine your path forward.

**Remind yourself and your team that no community is a monolith of thought.** We have been praised by one segment of a community for our work and chastised for it by another. Those moments can be unsettling and discouraging.

**Accept that you will make mistakes and that you will learn from them.** Share these mistakes with your partners—no need for everyone to make the same ones.

**Plan your meetings and calls with partners well in advance and make those times sacred.** This important work is challenging and must be well aligned.

**Senior leadership must be directly involved in this work.** While meeting the needs of the communities your institution serves is a great opportunity to involve your larger team, senior leaders must be visible in the work for it to be credible. Carving out time to attend additional community events is a big challenge for leaders in this work.



fellows to attend the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums conference, arranged meetings with community leaders, and helped fund a Kinara (community gathering) of folks committed to preserving and presenting Black history in southeastern Minnesota.

The first iteration of the McWatt fellowship program ended on June 30, 2022, culminating with presentations by each Fellow on their project and an assessment of how to make future iterations of the program better. We have already applied for a second round of funding with the same partner institutions.

### The Work Continues

RCHS is committed to continuing our DEAI journey, including recruiting diverse individuals to serve on our board, committees, and staff. We will continue to amplify stories that had previously been ignored or erased in our publications and exhibits. We are also committed to maintaining the community of action created via *Facing Change*, a community that represents the real, lasting legacy of the program.

The Bell Museum of Natural History and RCCHS hosted a gathering of *Facing Change* alums in the spring of 2022, and two others in our cohort will host the next one. At these gatherings we share experiences, problem solve, and maintain the momentum we have built over the past several years. The work of the entire cohort is essential for lasting change in our community, and the cohort needs to grow to include museums that could not participate in the first iteration.

There is real momentum at each of our individual museums, and by continuing our work individually and together we just may create that better world where everyone feels welcomed, engaged, and represented.

**Chad Roberts** is President of the Ramsey County Historical Society in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Memorialize the Movement interns and founder during the installation of “Justice for George: Our Strength, Our Story” in May 2022. Left to right: Amira McLendon, Semhar Solomon, Arthur C. McWatt Fellow Leesa Kelly, Hannah Yee, and Dani Follet-Dion.

### Acknowledgements


Special thanks to the extraordinary folks on the RCCHS board and staff traveling this path together; the exceptional leaders of our partner museums: Rebecca Ebnet-Desens, John Crippen, Acoma Gaither, and Matthew Carter; and the Arthur C. McWatt Fellows who have made transformational impacts on all of us: Jeremiah Ellis, Ben Mchie, Adem Ojulu, Greg McMoore, James Curry, and Chauntyll Allen. Finally, I am grateful for Levon Williams, whose wise counsel has made me a better leader, and the American Alliance for supporting a better, more inclusive community of members.



# SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION

Two *Facing Change* Senior Fellows  
talk about their work supporting board  
members in their diversity, equity,  
accessibility, and inclusion work.





***Facing Change* was a large and complex** initiative in which museum boards worked independently and collaboratively over three years to become more representative of the communities they serve. Perhaps one of the most vital components of the project was the dedication of the 10 *Facing Change* Senior DEAI Fellows. These Fellows were assigned an average of five museums each to guide through the program by customizing the overarching national program curriculum to fit the context and needs of their unique institutions. Work included hundreds of hours of individual coaching with museum CEOs and senior leaders; facilitating board meetings, trainings, and retreats; providing feedback and direction to the American Alliance of Museums to continuously improve the program; and participating in their own training and professional development as a cohort to support one another.

Roman Budnikov/Alamy

Here two Senior Fellows, Danielle Linzer, Senior Director of Education, Learning, and Research at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh and MuseumLab, and Levon Williams, an Equity, Inclusion, and Antiracism Consultant for nonprofit and arts and culture organizations, share their thoughts about their experience with *Facing Change*.

### Why did you initially decide to be a part of the *Facing Change* program as a Senior DEAI Fellow?

**Danielle Linzer:** After years of working on DEAI projects inside museums, I was excited about the prospect of having direct access to museum boards and receiving advanced professional training in this field. In the end, the bonds we formed as a Fellowship cohort were truly incredible, and I will value them for a lifetime.

**Levon Williams:** I was very excited about the program when it was initially announced. I deeply understood the impact boards of directors have on their respective organizations from my time in the field. An opportunity to work directly to build capacity around equity, inclusion, and antiracism with folks who hold significant power in museums was exciting to me.

### Why do you feel museum boards need to be engaged in DEAI work, including developing more inclusive cultures, equitable practices, and diverse representation of their communities?

**DL:** Boards have an absolutely critical role to play in advancing DEAI in museums. For so many years DEAI initiatives have focused on audience development, programming, staffing, collections, and more but have failed to reach the actual seat of power in our institutions. Boards set priorities and strategy, shape organizational culture, control resources, and guide leadership. They have the ability to make lasting changes that will impact the organization at all levels.

**LW:** It really comes down to relevance. Without a meaningful connection to community, museums as a whole risk losing their relevance. For so long, much of the field's focus has been object based, the growing movement toward a more people-centered orientation is one of the most significant changes happening in

the field at present. When we center people, topics such as belonging and psychological safety quickly move to the forefront. Trustees understanding their role in intentionally creating spaces of belonging is super important.

### From your perspective, how did the pandemic, racial justice movements, and other crises since 2020 impact the *Facing Change* program? How were your specific museums impacted, and how did you respond to their changing needs as their Fellow?

**DL:** We could never have anticipated what 2020 would bring. The COVID pandemic and the global reckoning over racial justice brought our work to the fore, created a sense of urgency, and stripped away many of the excuses and distractions that often keep people from digging into racial equity issues. It quite literally changed the conversation, from the vocabulary and concepts we could use together to the level of commitment we saw from museum leaders and trustees.

**LW:** My work in the *Facing Change* program was with organizations in the Twin Cities. The murder of George Floyd impacted the institutions I was working with in a very visceral and direct way because it impacted the communities these institutions serve in a direct way. To their credit, the conversations and commitment deepened as everyone worked to process what we'd all witnessed.

### What have you observed to be the most critical areas/issues that museum boards need to contend with as they engage in DEAI work at the governance level?

**DL:** I think this work requires ongoing commitment and humility. It requires us to lean into discomfort, to take responsibility for harm, to be open to seeing things in new ways. It's essential to do equity work at multiple levels, from addressing bias at the individual and interpersonal level to engaging in deep structural and systems-level change. Boards are uniquely positioned to make changes that will impact organizations and communities in transformational ways.

**LW:** There were a few barriers I saw. Primarily, fear of open conflict. It was such a significant barrier to

getting to impactful conversations about racial equity work and taking action. Another was perfectionism. Perfectionism is rampant throughout most museum work, but it is particularly harmful in equity, inclusion, and antiracism work. It can easily become an excuse to opt out of changes that desperately need to happen. Believing “If I cannot do it perfectly, and perfectly the first time, then I’m not going to do it.” does not leave room for iteration, mistakes, accountability, or repair, all of which are salient to this work.

### What challenges did you encounter as a Senior Fellow working with your museums over the past three years?

**DL:** Facilitating conversations about equity, bias, minimization, decolonization, and justice is challenging and intense interpersonal work. It’s emotional and energetic. Because of the pandemic, we conducted most of our meetings, trainings, and conversations over Zoom—while it made it possible for us to continue despite the disruptions of COVID-19, we also lost something by not being in the room together.

**LW:** Both the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd presented challenges. That said, they also presented opportunities that we tried to leverage with our museums. People becoming more comfortable using video conferencing for meetings was a game changer. The fact that we were collectively learning how to connect via video conference helped immensely.

Another challenge was helping trustees begin to view equity, inclusion, and antiracism as important and as high a priority in their work as their budget, the capital campaign, and strategic plan. This work should be embedded in all of the board’s functions. Understanding and embedding these concepts proved

to be a significant challenge for many trustees to wrap their heads around.

### What successes are you most proud of?

**DL:** I believe that DEAI work is never done and requires continuous commitment, learning, connection, and reflection. So while I don’t feel that we “completed” the work of *Facing Change*, I do feel genuinely proud of the progress I witnessed at several of the museums I worked with—from small shifts in personal awareness to a wave of next-generation leaders reshaping museums. I’m excited to see what’s next for them.

**LW:** Each of the museums I worked with had a dedicated group of champions for DEAI work on the board. During the program I had an opportunity to support these champions as they pushed themselves to deepen their personal commitment to DEAI as well as support their colleagues in doing the same. I’m grateful for the relationships I had the opportunity to build through this process.

### What surprises did you encounter during the *Facing Change* program?

**DL:** I worked with several museums in the San Francisco Bay Area (I am based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). At one point during 2020, I was on Zoom with a group of board members in California. I saw in the background of the small squares on my screen that the sky in San Francisco was an otherworldly shade of orange, clogged by thick smoke from the wildfires raging out of control nearby. This was shortly after Jacob Blake, a Black man, was shot by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse had murdered two civilians during the

“The COVID pandemic and the global reckoning over racial justice brought our work to the fore, created a sense of urgency, and stripped away many of the excuses and distractions that often keep people from digging into racial equity issues.”

unrest that followed. COVID numbers were on the rise again, and museums were struggling to safely stay open. Our deeply polarized and fractured political system lurched painfully toward the 2020 election, as many of us continued to learn and work from home. But it was the surreal orange skies that really brought it home. I recall that several of us wept during that meeting. DEAI work requires a core of optimism and a belief that a better world is possible. In that moment, in the face of overwhelming loss, it was hard to find the hope we needed. I feel proud that we stayed with it and worked together through some very dark days.

### What lessons will you take with you as you continue DEAI work beyond *Facing Change*?

**DL:** The most powerful part of *Facing Change* was the Fellowship experience for me. The Fellows were truly an incredible group of humans—brilliant, supportive, humble, hilarious, wise people with whom I was so fortunate to share this experience. It was an honor to work and learn alongside them over the past three years, and I do feel changed by knowing them. In the midst of so many challenges and disruptions, I think our connection really sustained and fortified the *Facing Change* project. So one of the big lessons I am taking away is about the relationships and support networks necessary to sustain deep DEAI work. Make sure you have the right people in your corner.

**LW:** I'm deeply grateful to have met and had the opportunity to work with the other Senior DEAI Fellows—a truly wonderful group of people.

### What advice would you offer to others who may be interested in supporting cultural change and DEAI work at the museum board level, either as museum professionals hoping to support change within their own institutions or as consultants hoping to work with other institutions?

**DL:** Hang in there, it's a bumpy ride! Sometimes it's easier to be on the outside of an institution when doing this work. As they say, you're never a prophet in your own land. While I had worked inside museums for over a decade before I started *Facing Change*,

I had always internalized the power dynamics and norms around the board. *Facing Change* was an excellent opportunity to approach the board in a new way, to shift the conversation. As Fellows we did our own personal work to understand and unpack the role power and identity play in our facilitation work. I found I had to face up to my own imposter syndrome and sense of self-doubt, to trust myself and rely on my colleagues for support.

**LW:** Prioritize identifying champions of equity, inclusion, and antiracism among the board. Strategize with them about ways to truly make this work a priority among the board. Leverage their existing peer-to-peer relationships among board members, and foster new ones, all in support of bringing people along on your board's equity journey.

### What advice would you offer to museums that are interested in bringing on fellows or consultants to help with their DEAI work?

**DL:** Support them. Invest in them. Listen to them. Believe them. I've heard deep frustration from many of my BIPOC colleagues who work in the DEAI space about the lack of support and authentic engagement they've received in institutions that claim to want change. Set your consultants up for success. You really get out of the relationship what you put into it.

**LW:** Make doing so part of the budget. Budget for external support to help your board grow in this area.

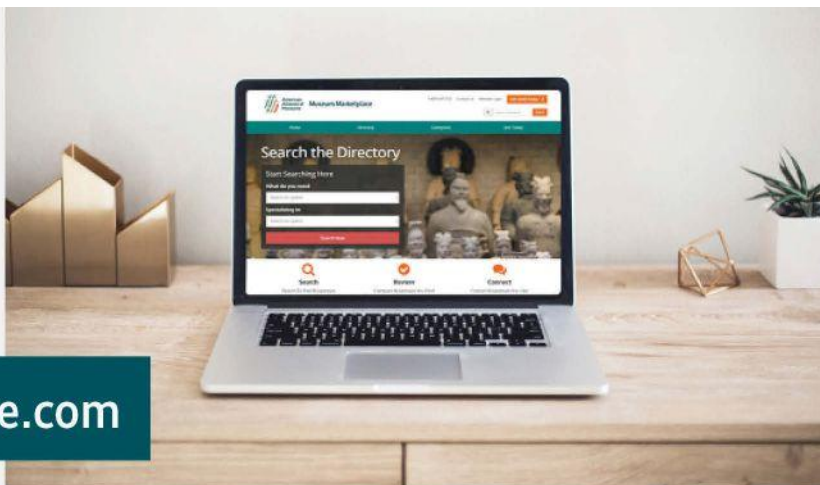
### Where do you hope the museum field goes from here in terms of advancing DEAI?

**DL:** We need to keep it going. We need to make sure that a focus on DEAI is not just a passing fad. It has to be embedded, there has to be accountability, and we have to allow time for the seeds we have planted to bear fruit. I can't imagine what conversations about equity and justice we'll be having in 10 years, but I know that we'll still need to be having them.

**LW:** My hope is that the commitment to equity, inclusion, and antiracism deepens fieldwide. *Facing Change* helped this movement gain some momentum, but the work needs to continue beyond the program to make the changes the field needs.

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Over the course of our four days together in Boston in May, attendees from around the world were connecting, learning, and forging a brighter future for the museum field. **You** helped make the 2022 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo experience an unforgettable one.

Every year, the AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo is organized by the dedicated AAM staff, Content Advisory and Local Host Committees, Professional Networks, and volunteers. The Annual Meeting wouldn't be the meaningful, educational, and inspiring experience it is without them, all of our attendees, and our generous supporters.

**From all of us at AAM, thank you!** We hope you **save the date** for May 19–22, 2023, when we reconvene in Denver, CO for the 2023 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo.

- Laura, Brooke, Megan, Kaitlyn, Elizabeth, Natanya, Dean, Cecelia, Joseph, Rachel, Vida, Jennifer, Eileen, Julie, Danyelle, Brianne, Martha, Susan, Carol, Amy, Vanessa, Ember, Barry, Katherine, Grace, Joshua, Anthony, Carlos, Ryan, Shelon, Shelagh, Kristin, and Tiffany



## AT A GLANCE:

At the 2022 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo...

### 3,000+

museum professionals came together in-person again to learn, reconnect, and experience Boston.

### 100+

interactive sessions across four focus areas offered new, innovative ways to learn together.

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### 72

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Check out the #AAM2022 **photo album** and what attendees are saying at: [bit.ly/aam2022recap](https://bit.ly/aam2022recap)

The four focus areas were grounded by inspirational keynote speakers (top row, left to right): **Thomas L. Friedman** (Museums in Society), **Michael Bobbitt** (Financial Wellness), **Jake Barton** (Innovation), and **Sandra Jackson-Dumont** (Organizational Culture).



# Annual Meeting Acknowledgments

The Alliance wishes to express appreciation to the following organizations and individuals that have generously supported the museum community and the 2022 Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo.

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## Retired



**Kent dur Russell**, Founding Director of the Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, Massachusetts, retired in May 2022 after a museum career of over four decades in the US and abroad, including the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, the Discovery Museum (Connecticut), the Arts Council Gallery in Belfast, the Parrish Art Museum (New York), and the Higgins Armory Museum (Massachusetts). Russell served on the board of Mass Humanities, on the regional council of AAM, and as President of the New England Museum Association. In 2002 he received the keys to the city of Worcester, Massachusetts, for his work as Founding Chair of the Worcester Cultural Coalition.

## In Memoriam



**Edward Jay Pershey**, Ph.D., historian of technology and consummate museum professional, died on May 17, 2022. After receiving his doctorate in the history of technology from Case Western Reserve University, he worked briefly at the Dittrick Medical History Center in Cleveland and then became curator of the Edison National Historic Site in West Orange, New Jersey. He then became the founding director of the Tsongas Industrial History Center in Lowell, Massachusetts. He returned to Cleveland in 1995 and assumed a number of leadership roles curating exhibitions and supervising special projects at the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS). He traveled frequently in the US on behalf of AAM to assist other museums in strategic planning and collection assessment. Dr. Pershey retired in 2020 after a quarter century of service at WRHS.

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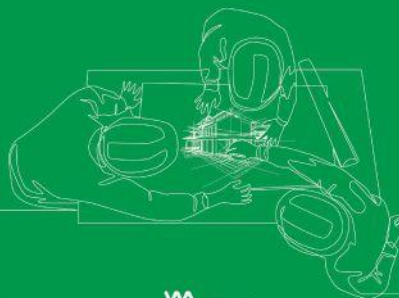
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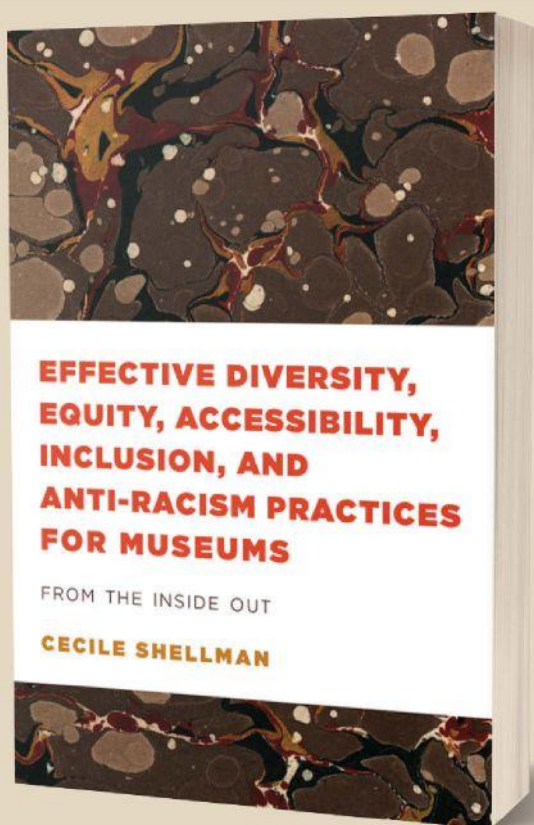
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## Effective Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Practices for Museums

From the Inside Out

By Cecile Shellman



“This book is a phenomenal resource for organizations working on DEI initiatives. . . . This is a wonderful pairing of knowledge and practice to create awareness and movement for institutions that desire to change.” —Chris Taylor, former Chief Inclusion Officer, Minnesota Historical Society

“Cecile Shellman has provided a combination of her personal journey as a museum professional to a much needed and thorough template for DEAI implementation and success in our cultural institutions. Sharing her story is compelling and yet her providing a strategic approach to building a productive DEAI culture is brilliant. She not only ‘knocked it out of the park . . . she hit a grand slam!’”

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Cecile Shellman is a full-time consultant in diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion for museums.

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