In the following pages, we present a series of "think pieces"—articles consisting of personal opinion, analysis, and discussion—that consider equity, diversity, and inclusion in the U.S. museum field, as well as the field's responses to the refugee crisis and increasing diversity in Europe and around the world. We share these articles with the hope that they will provoke thought and conversation related to some very important issues facing our field and societies worldwide. As in all *Dimensions* articles, the views and opinions expressed in this section are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of their workplaces, their clients, their funders, or ASTC.

Museums, White Privilege, and Diversity: A Systemic Perspective

By Gretchen Jennings and Joanne Jones-Rizzi

"Museums must become more inclusive places that welcome diverse audiences, ***but first*** *they should reflect our society's pluralism* in every aspect of their operations and programs."

—Bonnie Pitman and Ellen Hirzy, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums,* 1992

[emphasis added]

We are grateful to ASTC for inviting us to contribute this analysis of museums and diversity to *Dimensions*. Our intention is to examine the museum field as a whole, and we occasionally present pertinent information that the *Dimensions* staff provided about ASTC as part of this discussion. For purposes of brevity and focus, we concentrate on ethnic and racial diversity, although other important dimensions of diversity such as gender or ability/disability are reflected in some of the studies we cite. Although this article primarily focuses on diversity issues in the United States, elements of this discussion may be relevant in many countries.

We also come to this issue from different experiences and perspectives. For Gretchen Jennings, blogging at *Museum Commons* since 2012 and editing the journal *Exhibition* (formerly the *Exhibitionist*) from 2007 to 2014 has led to a focus in this article on issues of diversity and inclusion in the various disciplines of the museum field and through the different museum associations that provide accreditation and leadership. Joanne Jones-Rizzi reflects on the sustained daily work of inclusion and diversity—with staff, board, and visitors—through the exhibitions, programs, and collaborations that she has generated with a focus on the lived experience of race. Her observations and questions center on the vocabulary, assumptions, thought processes, and practices that promote or impede

Boston Children's Museum opened *Boston Black* in 2004 (right, photo by Karin Hansen) and *The Kids Bridge* in 1990 (far right, photo by Max Belcher).

transformational, embodied diversity and inclusion. The boxes throughout the article provide a glossary of terms relevant to this discussion.

In the first part of this article we look at how museums reflect the issues in their surrounding societies. In the second part, we examine what we have tried and what we are missing in the areas of diversity and inclusion in the museum field. We conclude with thoughts on how museums currently approach issues of "community" and how museums may begin to transform.

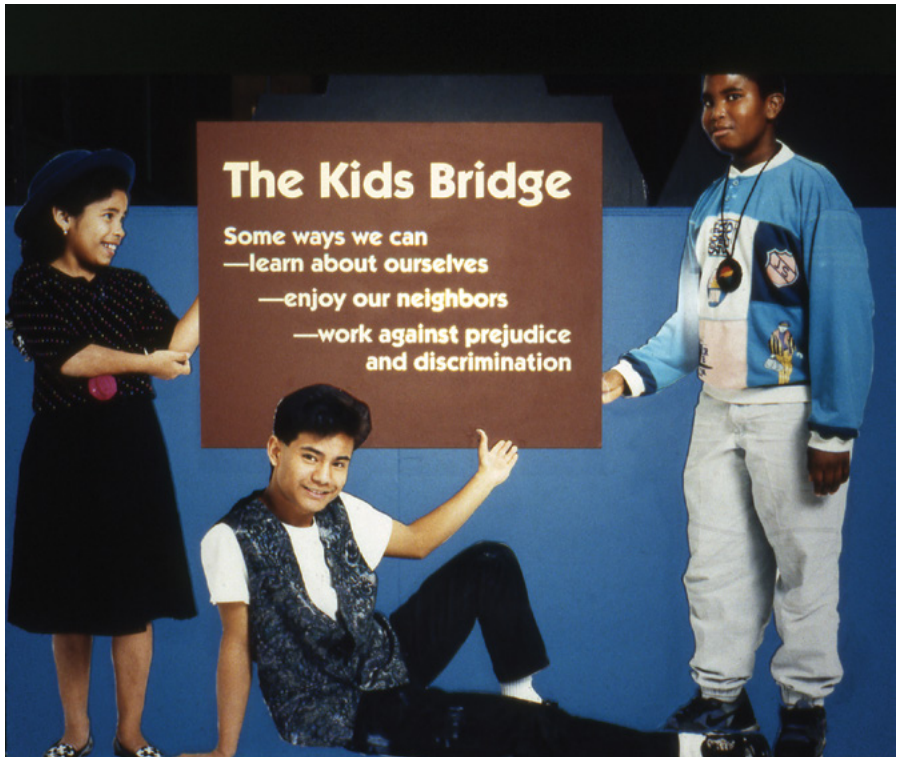
Diversity: Because the studies used in this article compare the diversity in the museum field to general diversity statistics in U.S. population, we are assuming that the minimum goal for diversity in U.S. museums, both in staffing and visitation, is that it matches ethnic and gender diversity in the national population as determined in the most recent U.S. Census. (As of today, this is 2010). Beyond this numeric definition of diversity, we also want to emphasize that a truly diverse organization has shifted in philosophy, mission, and vision, away from white privilege (see pages 65 and 70–71) and toward greater inclusivity at every level and dimension.

MUSEUMS ARE MICROCOSMS

In August 2016, we marked the second anniversary of the killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed young African-American man, by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The events surrounding his killing, the investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice that uncovered blatant racist policies and practices in Ferguson, and the countless deaths of African-American people in cities throughout the country (including two in Minneapolis and Saint Paul where Jones-Rizzi lives and works) leaves us feeling as if our world is on fire.

Museums are microcosms of the world around us, ecosystems with their own governments, caste systems, policies, and practices that mirror much of our society at large. It is not possible to think about museums during these intense times without reflecting on the context of the social, cultural, and political climate.

Given the recent U.S. elections, in which words and actions toward many groups of people have been so lacking in empathy, it is more important than ever for museums to model and embody empathetic practice and inclusiveness. As cultural institutions, we have an obligation to preserve and enforce those aspects of our heritage that are tolerant, compassionate, and respectful of difference, and to work against, in an open way, our traditions of white privilege, racism, inequality, and oppression. (See pages 65 and 70–71 for more about white privilege and oppression. For further reading, see Jennings (2016, March 7) and trivedi (2015).)



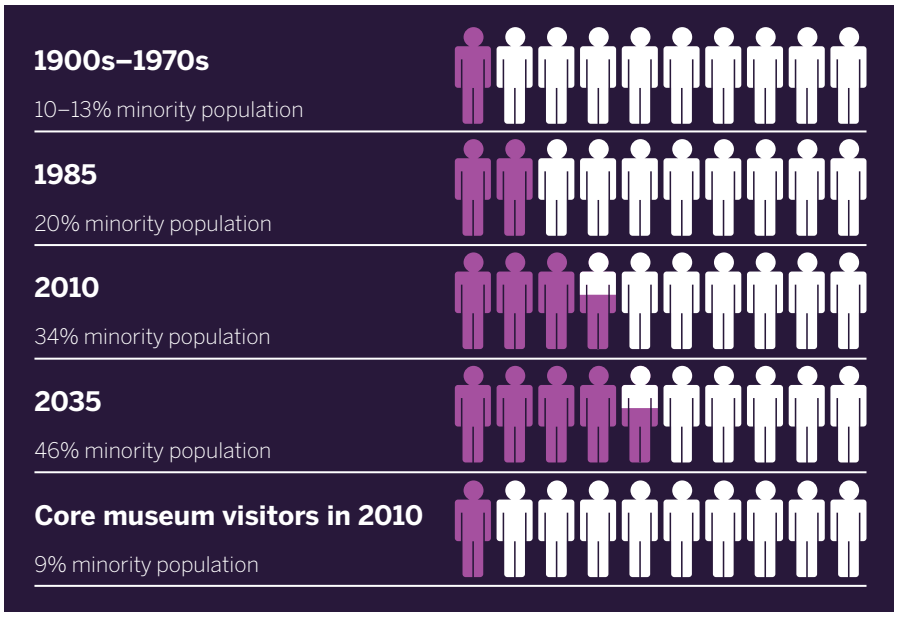
White privilege: "White privilege is like a weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks . . . ; an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious . . . I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage . . . Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow them to be more like us" (McIntosh, 1989). White privilege has less to do with wealth or prosperity than with a common, accepted way of looking at the world that pervades U.S. society.

Oppression: The complex—and too often unacknowledged—ways in which systemic structural norms influence decision making so that cultural institutions present themselves in ways that are unacceptable and exclusionary to many.

Museums, at *best*, reflect the reality of events taking place around us. We are, at best, human-centered places, where everyone can see their experiences reflected and can find relevance in the content and the way in which it is presented. We are institutions that ask visitors questions and provide space for critical discourse and feedback. Museums at *worst* are reminders of power and privilege, tangible just moments after stepping into the lobby. Here we don't see a multitude of human experiences represented, we don't see people who look like us employed, and there is no context for thinking about the world beyond the doors of the museum.

For those of us who are not white, male, English-speaking, educated, heterosexual, or who have a disability or do not have class privilege or gender normative identities, it is often hard to find our voice within the majority of U.S. museums. Yet, we turn to museums in the hope that we will find a perspective through which we can view the world around us. We anticipate that we will discover how others might think, learn with others in the dynamic social environments that museums can generate, and feel affirmed when we see our perspectives represented and voiced.

We often hear museums referring to themselves as "neutral spaces." We liken that perspective to white individuals who tell us proudly that they "don't see color." When museums proclaim their neutrality, it is with a similar naiveté. By claiming that they are neutral they



Source: Reach Advisors analysis of census data and survey data.

avoid a dissent of voices and perspectives, holding onto their positions as culture brokers, not deigning to dirty their halls with real-world events and the people connected to those events.

Studies of art museum audiences by the (U.S.) National Endowment for the Arts, beginning in 1982 (Robinson, 1993) and a study of 40,000 U.S. museum-going households across all museum disciplines in 2010 (Reach Advisors, 2010a) produced much the same data: most of our visitors are still well educated, affluent, and overwhelmingly white, especially when tallied across all museum types. The picture improves a bit when U.S. museums are examined by discipline: science and children's museum visitors are much more diverse, with 34% identifying as members of minority groups, compared with 12% and 16% identifying as minorities in history and art museums respectively (Reach Advisors, 2010b). A fuller discussion of this enduring phenomenon can be found in the report *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (Farrell & Medvedva, 2010), a project of the Center for the Future of Museums at the American Alliance of Museums. The above chart, adapted from a graphic prepared by Reach Advisors in this report, provides an illustration of the widening gap between the makeup of the U.S. population and the "core museum visitor," defined as a visitor who has some type of repeat engagement with a museum.

With discussions of equity, diversity, and inclusion now taking place within the museum field, there are some measurable and visible changes. Many museums have well-articulated strategic plans that place priority on diversity and data dashboards where they have the ability to collect and quantify data about staff of color, audiences of color, and programs designed to increase and shift demographics from mostly white to include more diversity at all levels.

The pervasive feeling is that there is so much more to do. There have been some improvements, yet we need to be vigilant. We can do better.

WHAT WE HAVE TRIED

Since the 1990s, museum associations and museums of all disciplines have created, funded, and conducted a variety of initiatives to address the issue of diversity, some of which are listed below:

- The publication of *Excellence and Equity* (Pitman & Hirzy, 1992), a landmark report published by the American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums (AAM)) and developed by a broad task force of museum leaders, including Bonnie VanDorn, then executive director of ASTC, and Joel Bloom, then director of Philadelphia's Franklin Institute. The quotation at the beginning of this article is listed as the second key idea on which the entire report is based.
- Initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of youth from minority backgrounds in museums, e.g. ASTC's YouthALIVE! (Youth Achievement through Learning, Involvement, Volunteering, and Employment) program (1990s), whose impact continues in science centers and museums around the United States (Sneider & Burke, 2016).
- The Cultural Competence Learning Institute (CCLI)—developed by the Children's Discovery Museum in San Jose, California, in collaboration with ASTC, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM), Garibay Group, and others—which engages the science center and children's museum fields in developing cultural competence awareness. (See the article beginning on page 18.)
- Yearly sessions on diversity and inclusion at international, national, and regional museum conferences.
- Studies such as the Smithsonian

Institution's *Increasing Museum Visitation by Under Represented Audiences: An Exploratory Study of Art Museum Practices* (2001) and AAM's *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (2010).

- Diversity fellowship programs that provide financial support for the attendance of students and emerging museum professionals to museum conferences. For example, ASTC has provided complimentary conference registration and stipends, as well as professional development, to 164 individuals from 87 science centers and museums since 2000 through its Diversity and Leadership Development Fellows Program *(astc.org/professional-development/conference-fellows)*. (See the article beginning on page 23.)
- Increased numbers of exhibitions and programs that feature the research, art, scientific work, inventions, etc., of people of color. Often these exhibitions and programs are featured during specific times of year such as Asian Pacific Heritage Month or Martin Luther King, Jr., Day.
- Groundbreaking exhibitions that directly focus on issues of racism and diversity, such as Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992), Boston Children's Museum's *The Kids Bridge* (1990) and *Boston Black* (2004), and the American Anthropological Association and the Science Museum of Minnesota's *RACE: Are We So Different?* (2007), which has been hosted by more than 50 science centers, museums, and other sites around the United States so far. (Jones-Rizzi co-curated *The Kids Bridge* with Aylette Jenness, curated *Boston Black*, and was part of the exhibition team for *RACE: Are We So Different?*) Other exhibitions that reflected critical yet unheard experiences in museums include *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915–1940*, at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (1987), and *A Question of Truth* at Ontario Science Centre, Toronto (1996).
- Policy statements on the value of diverse staffing and audiences published by several museum associations, including AAM and ASTC.
- In addition, we assume that the National Museum of African-American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., which opened in September 2016, will have a broad and long-term impact on many of the issues we discuss here.

WHAT ARE WE MISSING?

Our work over several decades leads us to conclude that we must focus on our own institutional transformation before (or at least at the same time as) we can expect our audiences to become more diverse. Below are three conditions that we suggest are at the root of our field's persistent lack of diversity and that underlie its challenges in attracting diverse visitors:

1. We focus too much on trying to change others instead of ourselves.
2. Our leadership systems do not consistently serve as models for inclusiveness.
3. The lack of a truly diverse and inclusive leadership in our associations as a whole—a leadership that has examined and rejected the white privilege and oppression that are at the heart of the museum field—contributes to a lack of vision and efficacy in leading the field to embodied diversity and inclusion.

Let us examine these three statements:

1. We focus too much on trying to change others instead of ourselves.

Many of the initiatives listed above are either statements about what should be done (reports, studies, conference panels, diversity policies) or programs directed at changing the attitudes and behaviors of those *outside the museum* whom we wish to engage either as staff or as visitors.

In our view, only a few of the above initiatives address systemic *internal* change: *Excellence and Equity,* the YouthALIVE! program, CCLI, and the ASTC Diversity and Leadership Development Fellows Program. We examine the first two below; the other two are discussed elsewhere in this issue. (See the articles beginning on pages 18 and 23.)

At the time of its publication in 1992, *Excellence and Equity* brought the full weight of AAM to bear on an examination of the *systems* in museums that function as the *public dimension*. The report recommends 10 transformative steps to strengthen this public dimension. Unfortunately, over the past few years, we have watched this report, whose content continues to be fresh and relevant particularly with regard to questions of inclusion, vanish from museum reading lists and discourse on best practice. Its holistic approach to

Visitors explore the issue of racism at *A Question of Truth*. Photo courtesy Ontario Science Centre

museum transformation is still needed.

Another effort directed at systemic change is YouthALIVE! The program was launched by ASTC in 1991 with support from the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund "to bring opportunities for education and personal growth to children of color and those from low-income communities." Ably directed for 10 years by DeAnna Banks Beane, the individual museum programs were small (25–30 youth), and students often participated for several years. In 2001, ASTC reported that about 7,000 youth were served. Yet a 2010 study reports these remarkable outcomes: 44 of the 77 institutions that received funds to establish YouthALIVE! programs still had youth programs 10 years later, and an additional 119 institutions that did not receive YouthALIVE! program grants also had special programs for youth (Sneider & Burke, 2016).

Here is some good news! In looking at the diversity statistics in the *ASTC-ACM 2011 Workforce Survey,* the only job groupings in the United States that very closely parallel the racial and ethnic makeup of the U.S. population today are the floor staff and floor manager positions in which many YouthALIVE! participants served. (See the table on page 69.) And when we see that one of the principal requirements of a YouthALIVE! program was that "the museum is committed to integrating participants *into the fabric of the entire institution*" (Sneider & Burke, 2016) [emphasis added], it does not seem accidental that the greatest strides in diversity appear in a cohort on which there was **systemic and focused attention for 10 years,** such that **10 years later** this diverse engagement persisted.

Public dimension: According to *Excellence and Equity,* the "public dimension" is the "multifaceted educational role of museums . . . the expanded notion of public service, defined here as a museum-wide endeavor that involves trustee, staff, and volunteer values and attitudes; exhibitions; public and school programs, publications; public relations efforts; research; decisions about the physical environment of the museum; and choices about collecting and preserving . . . elements that shape the educational messages museums convey to the public and the public service they provide."

System: A group or collection, the parts of which are interrelated and interconnected, such that what affects one of the parts will have an impact on all.

2. Our leadership systems do not consistently serve as models for inclusiveness.

We believe that internal, systemic progress toward greater diversity in our museums is difficult if not impossible if there is not increased diversity at the top. We are referring not only to the upper management of individual museums but also to the leadership of our museum associations.

A quarter century after the call for more inclusive museums in *Excellence and Equity,* the level of diversity among directors, senior staff, and department

heads in U.S. museums is woefully out of sync with the growing diversity of the U.S. population. One indicator of this increasing diversity is the fact that, in 2015, for the first time, more than half of U.S. babies under the age of 1 belonged to racial or ethnic minorities (Cohn, 2016). According to the Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey, conducted in 2015 by the Mellon Foundation, 62% of the U.S. population is non-Hispanic white and 38% comes from minority backgrounds, but 72% of staff at Association of Art Museum Directors–member museums is non-Hispanic white and 28% belongs to minority groups. In this data set, the 28% includes all people from minority backgrounds working in museums, of which most are in security and service positions. The survey states, "Non-Hispanic white staff continue to dominate the job categories most closely associated with the intellectual and educational mission of museums, including those of curators, conservators, educators, and leadership (from director and chief curator to head of education or conservation). In that subset of positions, 84% is non-Hispanic white." The survey goes on to say, "Even promotion protocols that are maximally intentional about the organizational benefits of diversity are not going to make museum leadership cohorts notably more diverse *if there is no simultaneous increase in the presence of historically underrepresented minorities on museum staff altogether, and particularly in the [major] professions that drive the museum's programs"* [emphasis added] (Schonfeld & Westermann, 2015).

These numbers are generally replicated in the *ASTC-ACM 2011 Workforce Survey* (page 244): with the exception of directors of human resources, **between 80% and 95%** of directors and senior staff in U.S. children's museums and science centers are white. In addition, **94.2%** of U.S. CEOs responding to the *ASTC-ACM 2016 Workforce Survey* self-identify as white and **96.8%** self-identify as non-Hispanic.

Data on the racial and ethnic composition of the boards, senior staff, and governing committees of U.S.-based museum associations are not readily available. We sought specific information from four museum associations: AAM, ASTC, ACM, and the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Some declined to provide figures, citing employee privacy concerns. However, by examining public lists as well as by talking with colleagues in various associations, we have gathered enough information to draw the following general conclusions about how diversity figures in some of our U.S.-based museum associations stack up compared with racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population.[1]

Combined information regarding four museum associations based in the United States (AAM, ASTC, ACM, and AASLH):

- About **12% to 30%** of U.S. members of the boards of directors of major U.S.-based museum associations come from minority backgrounds.
- Executive staff and senior leadership at our major museum associations are between **0% and 20%** minority.
- Committees that plan the annual conference programs at our major museum organizations have varying levels of diversity, several with about **20% to 35%** of the U.S. members coming from minority backgrounds.
- Not all associations have other standing committees or professional networks. For those that do, we found a great range of diversity. Generally, diversity committees had greater inclusiveness than other standing committees.

Demographics of Floor Managers and Floor Staff

	U.S. population	Floor managers	Floor staff
African-American/Black:	12.6%	9.1%	11.0%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native:	0.9%	3.9%	1.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	5.0%	6.5%	3.8%
Caucasian/White:	72.4%	71.4%	71.0%
Hispanic or Latino:	16.3%	5.2%	10.5%
Multi-ethnic:	2.9%	3.9%	2.7%

Source: *ASTC-ACM 2011 Workforce Survey*. U.S. population data are from the 2010 U.S. Census. These data do not sum to 100% since Hispanic/Latino origin is asked separately from race.

1. We should note that ASTC and ACM are both international organizations, and AAM has members and committee members from outside the United States. Because non-U.S. board and committee members do not fit into U.S. demographic categories, our analysis compares only the U.S. board and committee members with the demographics of the U.S. population. Of the four associations, ASTC has the highest levels of international representation on its board and committees, with 30% of its board members and up to 67% of members of some committees hailing from outside the United States.

The American Anthropological Association and the Science Museum of Minnesota's *RACE: Are We So Different?* has traveled to 50 sites around the United States. Photo by Terry Gydesen

Using the current **38% minority/62% white non-Hispanic** U.S. population breakdown as our standard (Schonfeld & Westermann, 2015), we can see that the above levels of diversity in our U.S.-based museum associations do not consistently reflect the diversity in the United States.

3. The lack of a truly diverse and inclusive leadership in our associations as a whole—a leadership that has examined and rejected the white privilege and oppression that are at the heart of the museum field—contributes to a lack of vision and efficacy in leading the field to embodied diversity and inclusion.

Our view is that our museum system as a collective (individual museums as well as our associations and our museum culture) is a place of white perspectives and white privilege. This is because our field is dominated and shaped by white leadership, in which people of color have little representation, despite the powerful voices of our too few colleagues of color.

Words like "white privilege" and "oppression" are hard ones for us to think about in terms of museum practice. Yet as nikhil trivedi (2015) pointed out in his blog post for the Incluseum, while we as individuals may be good people, working for the good of society, we work within systems that we have inherited but have not necessarily dismantled and disowned. It is these systems that communicate messages of exclusion to people who have been objects of various forms of oppression over the centuries.

It is easy to dismiss the concept of white privilege if we equate it with exclusive country clubs or expressions of great wealth. We can say that most museums don't dwell in these rarified realms. However, white privilege has much more to do with broad ways of thinking about the world than with exclusive places or physical riches. Moreover, for white privilege to exist as part of a system, it is not necessary for individuals in the system to be consciously or overtly racist. When we look at ourselves and at our museum colleagues, overtly exclusionary or racist policies, words, or actions are rare in our institutions. Instead, we believe exclusion is expressed silently yet powerfully in institutional body language such as

- Whom we hire, especially for positions of leadership and authority
- The individuals or groups whose work and research we collect, display, and reference
- The stories we choose to highlight
- Who appears on our brochures, social media, and other publicity materials.

It's our view that unless our leadership associations send messages that they are transforming themselves from within with regard to diversity, they cannot credibly ask the field to do this. Unless they become models for how an organization can become more diverse, their beautifully written diversity policies will continue to be pieces of paper. For example, during the past year, we have received association conference catalogs in which all the featured speakers are white men and where some sessions on how to work with diverse audiences feature only white panelists. We have seen websites that talk about diverse audiences but that include only white faces in images of museum visitors. And when professional networks and standing committees recruit new members, they tend to recruit from those they know, continuing the cycle of white membership.

Some may believe that association boards only reflect the level of diversity in the field. However, this is why we are calling for *systemic* change. If the current system for selecting board members consistently yields a monolithic board, and if the association values diversity, then it changes its system for board selection. Rather than blaming its system, leadership adjusts the process to produce its desired goal of a more diverse board. This is true for all levels of association management from the board to the executive staff to the various committees that plan the annual meeting

and other association functions. We are encouraging associations to examine their systems for board selection, staff hiring, and committee membership and to take charge of transforming them to produce greater diversity.

The absence of a truly diverse and inclusive leadership in our associations creates an atmosphere of white privilege from top to bottom. It is difficult to document the effects an absence, i.e. the absence of diversity. We have not found studies on the impact of white-majority leadership in the museum field, but there is extensive research in the social sciences on the impact on organizations of increased diversity in boards and upper management. These studies have been conducted primarily in the area of gender diversity, but there is some examination of the impact of racial and ethnic diversity on the health and effectiveness of organizations. One study found that "board governance can be improved with more diverse membership, but only if the board behaves inclusively and there are policies and practices in place to allow the diverse members to have an impact" (Buse, Bernstein, & Bilimoria, 2016).

The implications of engaging more people of color on staff are also complex. This hiring commitment takes more time, more phone calls, perhaps more cold calls. It means contacting a wider range of colleagues, perhaps including organizations like Museum Hue *(museumhue.com)*—founded to link people of color with arts and cultural organizations. Diverse hiring, especially if it results in more than one new colleague of color, may (and should) lead to changes in organizational culture and ways of doing business. **In other words, the ultimate goal of diverse hiring is not to bring in people of color in order for the organization to continue as usual but to bring in diverse colleagues so that the organization achieves systemic change organically and internally.** These types of changes may well lead to revisions in mission statements, reorganization of hierarchies, and revisiting how collections, exhibitions, and programs are initiated and implemented. This will no doubt cause internal turmoil and soul-searching. It may be that organizations that truly wish to diversify will have to hire organizational coaches or diversity trainers to help the institution benefit from the transition. (See Ivey (2016) for more on hiring a diverse staff. See also Merritt (2017) on the complexities of revising a hiring system to reduce bias.)

In our view, the aura of white privilege and oppression in museums is more potent than any inclusive mission statement. It shapes the stories we tell, the people we put on our boards, the candidates we hire, the flavor and content of our advertising and social media, and the tone of our "community outreach."

The ultimate goal of diverse hiring is not to bring in people of color in order for the organization to continue as usual but to bring in diverse colleagues so that the organization achieves systemic change organically and internally.

THE CODED WORD OF "COMMUNITY"

Empirical evidence suggests there are more staff members of color at museums than there were three decades ago. But we believe many staff members of color are trapped in the coded word and world of "community." We wonder what would happen if museums were to consider "community" as less of an institutional strategy for diversity and more of an integral process of knowledge generation. By framing this as a leadership issue, we believe we can better understand how we might begin to shift this dynamic. There is nothing wrong with museums allocating resources and staff to develop authentic relationships with community-based organizations and building relationships with community members to share resources and knowledge. As long as there is clarity and an explicit understanding regarding expectations, this approach to community engagement can be beneficial to the institution and to the community. Establishing relationships with community members and making a commitment to sustain them is key. If we are not clear and not explicit, relationships can quickly feel strained. Community members feel put upon and exploited, the museum has no credibility with the community within which it is situated, and community therefore holds no viable connection to the museum's mission or strategic plan.

This observational analysis does not diminish the value we place on

Authentic community engagement: Authentic community engagement recognizes, and makes legible, the power dynamics inherent in the exchange of resources between large cultural institutions and smaller community-based organizations. It requires relationships that are based in honesty and trust (which takes time) with clearly stated motivations and goals. Authentic community engagement is the basis of a healthy and sustainable ecology of participation wherein there is a reciprocal relationship between the museum and community. The vitality and culture of the museum is dependent upon the participation of community members as leaders, staff, program participants, volunteers, educators, advocates, and visitors. The vitality and culture of community organizations are enhanced by access to museum resources and participation in initiatives, conversations, activities, and processes that inform and influence the work of the museum.

community engagement efforts in museums. These relationships are critical to the work of many museums, but we challenge museums to find other words and titles for staff involved in community work that don't euphemize "community" with people of color or underrepresented groups within museums.

Buzz words, much like fashion, change seasonally. But within museums, words like "community," "partnerships," "outreach," "collaboration," "engagement," "underrepresented," "nontraditional," and "nondominant" have been in service for decades. They are used interchangeably to describe programs that extend the work of the institution to include perspectives, values, and the presence of people, as audiences of the institution, who come from different backgrounds from the staff. Propagated by the presumption of a structure in which some people are in the circle and some people are outside of the circle, this perspective does not envision the possibility of creating a larger, inclusive circle. This notion of equating "otherness" and "community" communicates a perspective that assumes that a community and the museum cannot be embodied in the same person.

Of course there are exceptions. Just because a museum may use terminology that is not forward thinking does not mean that there are not individuals on staff who do think about terminology and coded words and are doing valuable, critical work. Changing the structure around language would require museums to change in ways for which we don't believe they currently have the capacity. However, there are museums, very notable museums, developed around the needs, values, and cultural perspectives of a particular community or specific collection. These museums have had humble, accessible beginnings characterized by exhibitions, programs, and environments that stem from a need articulated by a community, actualized by a museum, and implemented with participation from multiple sectors within the community. Often these "community-based" museums began in storefronts, churches, historic houses, and small venues situated within neighborhoods, their presence generating a deep source of validation, of experience. Some examples that come to mind immediately are the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C.; Boston Children's Museum; Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, New Zealand; and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit.

As museums consider the implications of segregating work for specific audiences—core audiences, community audiences, members—rather than thinking of community work as the work of the entire institution, and as museums create opportunities to reflect on their early beginnings and motivations for existing, we urge museum professionals to consider the needs and assets of the places and people that self-identify as community. Why do museums continue to need to have programs that speak to "community engagement," "community partnerships," "outreach programs," "access programs," etc.? Understanding the nuances in coded language, the context in which we communicate, and the silos in which we all work can help us to try to choose words that are more appropriate, inclusive, and less coded. We have come to regard this challenge of identifying effective and meaningful language as a signifier of the essential changes now required of museums. Changing the structure around language will require museums to fundamentally change structures of power, authority, and value in words and in actions.

MOVING TOWARD INNER TRANSFORMATION

We need an internal transformation of the field and of each museum: through new and different approaches to recruitment and hiring; through inventively inclusive collection, exhibition, and

programming policies; through equal partnerships with individuals and communities of color. And through frank and respectful discussion.

We encourage our museum associations as well as individual museums to model the inner systemic transformation that we believe is necessary for diversity and inclusion to become part of our DNA, not just skin deep. We suggest the following steps. Since these steps will take time and will come at some cost, it might be wise to incorporate them into future budgets and/or to approach a foundation for funding.

- Begin conversations with museum colleagues of color, from emerging museum professionals to senior thought leaders, on the directions and steps needed for inner transformation. Ask for their advice and hire them to provide assistance and expertise in this area.
- Design these initiatives as reflective practice, documenting and sharing the steps publicly in order to become models for individual museums in this work. Share successes and lessons learned.
- Create resources generated from your work, from readings on race and diversity, to lists of diversity trainers, to lists containing information on recruitment of colleagues of color from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), to organizations that might provide access to candidates from diverse backgrounds.
- Remember the "Rule of Three." (See Jennings (2016, May 25).) There is not much research, but a fair amount of anecdotal evidence, to show that bringing in one or even two people who are in the minority (women on all-male board; people of color in all-white organization) will not make much difference. One or two people often do not feel empowered to speak out, and if they do, are often ignored. Three of the "other" seems to make a difference and can lead to organizational change. Three is the smallest number that indicates a pattern; if three people agree on a topic it begins to seem like a trend, something credible. What would be the impact if each museum association placed a priority on having at least three people of color on every standing committee within the next three years? What if individual museums pursued a similar goal with their staffs and boards?

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture on April 13, 2016, about five months before it opened on the (U.S.) National Mall in Washington, D.C. Architectural photo by Alan Karchmer

AN INSOLUBLE PROBLEM?

Have serious and effective attempts been made to look at some of these systemic obstacles to the equitable involvement of people of color at all levels of our field? Are these insoluble problems? **Not if our museums and associations truly value the cultural competencies and richer perspectives that a more diverse organization might bring.** The point about engaging more people of color (as with other forms of diversity) is not the number of brown faces in an organization. Rather it is the essential life experiences and reflections on the field that people who have grown up "other" in white America can bring to bear on their work, in addition to the critical perspectives that they have

shaped through their education, training, and expertise. Our U.S.-based museum associations and individual institutions represent, by and large, the status quo of white America, yet our country is rapidly diversifying.

In conclusion, let's return to the quotation from Excellence and Equity that began this article:

"*Museums must become more inclusive places that welcome diverse audiences,* ***but first*** *they should reflect our society's pluralism* in every aspect of their operations and programs" [emphasis added].

The contention of this article is that we have not heeded this prescient advice, an observation in 1992 that has become a prediction of the state of the field in 2017. If we, as museums, persist in ignoring and excluding the wider vision and diverse experience of our colleagues of color in reshaping our institutions, we do so at our collective peril. ■

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RESOURCES FOR PROMOTING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

- The Cultural Competence Learning Institute's Diversity and Inclusion Resources: *community.astc.org/ccli/resources-for-action/supporting-documents/diversity-and-inclusion*
- Museums and Race Reading List: *museumsandrace.org/2016/01/19/reading-list*
- The Maturity Model, a metric for institutional transformation, at the Empathetic Museum blog: *empatheticmuseum.weebly.com/maturity-model.html.*

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