Resources and Takeaways from
"Dismantling Systemic Racism in Cultural Institutions: A Conversation"

Co-presented by Cultural Connections and SoCal Museums
Sept. 9, 2020

"Dismantling Systemic Racism in Cultural Institutions: A Conversation" was a virtual program created for attendees to share and generate actionable anti-racist initiatives for cultural institutions.

Within this PDF, you will find takeaways from the program's breakout rooms. The following questions were discussed in small group conversations, and answers were recorded by each breakout room facilitator. The responses shown here reflect what participants felt comfortable sharing and recording, and not every group discussed all four questions in the allotted time. Because each facilitator took notes in the way that worked best for them, the conversations within are recorded in a variety of formats; however, we hope that you'll find these notes and action items helpful in informing your own anti-racist work.

- Question 1: What is the nature of the conversation in your institution around racism and social justice?

- Question 2: Often, there are perceived or real structural barriers in place in our institutions to prevent anti-racist work. What are the barriers to change within your institutions?

- Question 3: What big or small steps have you or your colleagues taken within your institution to combat racism in museums?

- Question 4: It's imperative that we keep working to implement anti-racist policies and structures in our institutions and in the museum field, and envision together what this could look like. Three years from now, what anti-racist changes would you like to have seen happen within your institution?

Additional resources for anti-racist practices in cultural institutions can be viewed at the end of this PDF.

BREAKOUT ROOM A

- "Brave" space

trying to minimize harm

-What is the nature of the conversation in your institution around racism and social justice?

How is representation arrayed along the different levels of the org?

Moving towards creating an equity team that is soley dedicated to equity and not put together with other program

Part-time staff being furloughed/laid off, and the % of BIPOC represented in those jobs and not in the larger org

Collections diversity

Reinvisioning who we want to be moving forward

How are we a community resource?

"performative"

senior staff realizing that what they are doing currently wasn't enough

How do we talk about social justice topics on social media/online?

role of internal vs external conversations around race and social justice

privilege of our online platforms

Often, there are perceived or real structural barriers in place in our institutions to prevent anti-racist work. What are those barriers within your institutions?

inequitable distribuution of work of social justice to tho most impacted by racism

Leadership and power structures that reinforce current systems of power (whiteness, maleness)

COVID disparaties in composition of populations who were laid off/furloughed. Who needed to stay? Who made the decisions to lay off some workers?

Difficulty of starting 'hard' conversations

Leadership in control of resources (hours, flexibility)

Layers of barriers to making change (aquisition, purchasing, etc)

Traditions that don't allow for innovation

Hiring structures, hiring practices

siloing

- What big or small steps have you or your colleagues taken within your institution to combat racism in museums?

Reenvisioning our Equity team

Inclusion and Belonging Assessment

Explicit in goal creation; communicating at all levels

Seeking out external help

Listening Tour of Directors to staff

Examining hiring practices

Creating an internal document that lays out action items in terms of racial justice

Equity Team

- It's imperative that we keep working to implement anti-racist policies and structures in our institutions and in the museum field, and envision together what this could look like. Three years from now, what anti-racist changes would you like to have seen happen within your institution?

BREAKOUT ROOM B

Q1:
No official discussion prior to making BLM statement.
What kind of future support will staff receive?
Interest in DEIA work, but how to thoughtful incorporate with anti-racism work.
Not a place for cultural institutions to have a voice in the matter.

Q2:
Limited budgets to higher appropriate staff and/or implement initiatives.
Donors/board - not supporting/aligning with our beliefs, especially with limited funds coming in.
Perception of the role of museums. "Not part of the mission/what guests want."
Defining who our audience is. Starts from hiring process to lead into other areas.
Orgs slow to change and protects itself from alienating any groups (donors/board members). Fear.
Internal experiences within the institution misaligned. Statements don't match treatment of staff. More of jumping on the bandwagon because it's current focal point. Putting pressure on POC to represent DEIA/BLM work at the museum.
Challenging times. Hard to focus on this important work with so much going on; remote work. Leads in DEIA work were furlough/laid off early.
How to work with the community and keep those relationships alive?
Tired/frustrated. Want change immediately. Been dealing with issues too long. Emotional labor.

Q3:
DEIA strategic plan. Include stories of museum's history in a balanced, equal way. Property previously Native owned.
Involve more voices throughout processes for programming and onsite facilities.
Employees evaluating every aspect from exhibits, media assets, etc. and how they are presenting materials.
We have to be kind to ourselves. It's important work that takes time, even if in small steps.
DEIA consultants to audit work culture.
Higher participation within existing DEIA task forces and more engagement.

Breakout Room Responses from the program "Dismantling Systemic Racism in Cultural Institutions: A Conversation,"
co-presented by Cultural Connections and SoCal Museums on Sept. 9, 2020.

1. What is the nature of the conversation in your institution around racism and social justice?
- One museum has cross-departmental subcommittees that discuss various programs, approaches, and partnerships throughout the institution. Consider who their vendors are?
- Visitor Studies Association - evaluators who work with museums, holding DEAI conversations.
- How do changes in personnel in museums impact DEAI conversations/initiatives?
- One institution has an IDEA Committee - convenes primarily around accessibility, also focused on diversity and inclusion.

2. Often, there are perceived or real structural barriers in place in our institutions to prevent anti-racist work. What are those barriers within your institutions?
- Boards are often monoliths. Importance and difficulty of diversifying boards/trustees. If you bring in one person to represent diversity, it can be very challenging for them to be alone in that position. Important to have more than one seat at the table.
- Internships for indigenous youth - in Canada they've found that they are not staying in the cultural sector.
- Community connections - building relationships and acknowledging where institutions have gone wrong in the past. Part of that is acknowledging the origins of the land where the museum is located. The importance of understanding that this is shared space.
- Nativeland.CA (map of North America - shows the tribal land that we are on) - also acknowledging that sometimes this isn't enough, backed up by actions.
- Struggle that science/tech institutions face, DEAI work is not a space they've historically held or with which they've had overlap.
- One barrier - how your institution goes about recruiting staff. One HR team has made more of an effort to seek out different platforms to post jobs.
- Museums are colonial institutions - they're born and built out of colonialism. The systemic infrastructure and ways of seeing are inherently colonial. "Belongings" rather than "collections" - stewardship rather than ownership.
- Infused indigenous ways of knowing and seeing into various disciplines (geography, astronomy, etc.). Examining what's in your gift shop, what are you selling there? Looking at your vendors.

3. What big or small steps have you or your colleagues taken within your institution to combat racism in museums?
- Museums are colonial institutions - they're born and built out of colonialism. The systemic infrastructure and ways of seeing are inherently colonial. "Belongings" rather than "collections" - stewardship rather than ownership.
- Infused indigenous ways of knowing and seeing into various disciplines (geography, astronomy, etc.). Examining what's in your gift shop, what are you selling there? Looking at your vendors.
- Working with communities - when interviewing someone/gathering stories, think about ways to attribute their quotes, credit them. Make sure that quotes are timely, still relevant and still respect people's perspectives.
- The space where George Floyd was murdered has become a community-driven memorial space. We can learn from that.
- How can we work with community groups that are doing similar work and can contribute to exhibit/program concepts?
- The foundations of those relationships need to be reciprocal - consider both parties' needs
- Setting guidelines for hard conversations (i.e. going into repatriation conversations).
- Trust - determine how to establish trust amongst groups.

BREAKOUT ROOM D

Question 1:
- Community meetings & internal staff/board dialogue
- Conversations about meaningful change, not just one-offs
- Formal and informal conversations, changing fear of speaking up
- Fear within larger organization of being seen as not neutral, need for a timeline

Challenges: rate of change, fear of change, fear of losing control, fear of saying the wrong thing, board has disconnect and lack of engagement, how do we begin this conversation/make this a priority?, lack of interest, finding where the most impact can be made, making this ongoing

Action Steps: purposefully unearthing hidden collection objects, exhibits with scaffolding, MASS Action toolkit, DEIA committee, setting aside dedicated time to make a plan and monitor progress, pay attention to/improve staff retention needs (find out: what are their needs? what is pay?), clear job descriptions, amplify artists of color, use social media platforms to amplify, sharing expanded stories - not just surface level, acknowledge that everything is political (though doesn't need to be partisan - define it), make space for opinions but don't be afraid to challenge them , continue these conversations

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BREAKOUT ROOM E

Question 2
- Resources for trainings; education is a barrier for some of the conversations we are a part of
- Resources for consultants that need to be hired; they are expensive
- Hiring practices need to be reassesed to promote diversity and retention; create better career pathways for BIPOC staff to rise within the ranks
- Leadership not committed to doing the work but asking staff to lead
- Job descriptions can set up the barriers; need to check out own hiring bias

Question 3
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- Art collection needs to be more intentional and diverse; ceramics has been very white male centric and desire to move away
- Encourage colleagues to step up a little bit more
- Seek out new opportunities and connect with new people to showcase more stories
- Create a greater support network within different working teams
- Encourage colleagues to have a say
- Want to see more diverse, BIPOC leadership in the future to lead the way

BREAKOUT ROOM F

Conversations happening

- Staff came forward to express issues experienced, the exec team set aside time and funding to create a DEIA Team.
- DEIA Team suggested priorities to the Exec. team
- Exec Team is working on implementing change
- Utilized mass action as a guide

- Education dept focuses on social justice, not necessarily race though
- Would love ideas on how to approach DEIA

- Reworked core values

Barriers
- Need approval from upper level/brand
- White/liberal majority
- Collections are limited
- Your own status quo/history/"how it's been done"
-

3 years from now…what changes would you like to see?
- Outreach practices more intentional to recruiting
- More internally aware of impl. biases institutions hold and how the system perpetuates inequality
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Steps you're taking w/in org to combat racism

- Forming groups
- DEIA Task Forces
- Making proposals/suggestions
- Reworking Core Values

BREAKOUT ROOM G

Developing shifts in organizational norms
Two different conversations 1. Staff 2. Senior leadership not at same level
BLM was a wake-up call to institutions - now embarking on DEIA committee and still figu
that looks like
Pretty active DEIA committeee, but is really staff resource-based. What is everyone's rol
Lots of versions of these conversations
Things remained stagnant until now
Lots of burnout!
Leadership often working on its own DEI track
Some institutions are big and unwieldly

Issue of accountability - how do you admit wrongs, while making things right?

Top needs -
Director, baord change
pathways for success
hiring practices

What is the work that is actually happening?   [text was cut off when saving - apologies, readers!]

Actionable items:

- Having the discussions in the first place – talking about Black Lives Matter and equity issues in your institution
- Dedicated time in all staff meetings to discuss anti-racism, but also allowing smaller discussions with staff as people may be more comfortable sharing in small groups
- Opportunities to de-stress – from bringing in a therapist to meditation workshops
- Thinking about diversity in the hiring process, especially at the director level
- Removing bias in job descriptions (i.e. if it doesn't require a college degree, don't post that)
- Going to job fairs or reaching out to the community about careers in museums
- Anti-racism training for staff, but make sure it is effective (one museum used Race Forward and didn't feel it was very helpful)

Dismantling Systemic Racism in Cultural Institutions: Short Resource List

Please note: this resource list is by no means comprehensive, and is meant to provide a variety of resources related to anti-racist practices within and for cultural institutions.

HANDBOOKS, TOOLKITS, AND COLLECTIONS OF RESOURCES

AAM Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion
https://www.aam-us.org/programs/facing-change1/

A collection of articles and resources from the American Alliance of Museums, including insights from their DEAI Working Group. Also of note: "Is That Hung White?" article by Joanne Jones-Rizzi and Stacey Mann, originally published in the July/August 2020 issue of Museum magazine: https://www.aam-us.org/2020/05/19/is-that-hung-white-a-conversation-on-the-state-of-museum-exhibitions-and-race/.

AASLH and NCPH Inclusive Historian's Handbook
https://inclusivehistorian.com/

A project from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the National Council on Public History (NCPH), this dynamic reference source supports inclusive and equity-focused historical work in public settings by sharing a knowledge base that invites more people to engage in history projects. This handbook provides concrete examples of how to make history work more relevant. It centers on equity, inclusivity, diversity, and public service while offering accessible windows into the many ways public historians work.

California Council for the Arts Anti-Racism Resources
https://www.californiansforthearts.org/anti-racism-resources

A compiled list of resources, equity-related news items, and events (some outdated) from the California Council for the Arts.

The Incluseum
https://incluseum.com/

The Incluseum is a project based in Seattle, Washington that advances new ways of being a museum through critical dialogue, community building and collaborative practice related to inclusion in museums. The Incluseum is facilitated and coordinated by Aletheia Wittman and Rose Paquet.

MASS Action Toolkit
https://www.museumaction.org/

This collaborative project seeks to align museums with more equitable and inclusive practices. As the museum field begins to shape its identity in the 21st century, MASS Action poses the following questions for practitioners to consider: What is the role and responsibility of the museum in responding to issues affecting our communities locally and globally? How do the museum's internal practices need to change in order to align with, and better inform, their public practice? How can the museum be used as a site for social action? Through a series of public convenings and the creation of a toolkit of resources, this project's intention is to share the strategies and frameworks needed to address these important topics.

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Museums & Race Report Card
https://museumsandrace.org/2020/01/01/report-card/

> A facilitation guide and report card/action checklist inspired by the work and professional reflections of the individuals who have collaborated with Museums & Race since its inception. Questions and areas for reflection relate to governance, funding, representation, responsiveness, and more.

National Museum of African American History & Culture Talking About Race
https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist

> From the National Museum of African American History & Culture, this site provides tools and resources to explore race in America through the lenses of historical understanding, community building, personal reflection, and committed anti-racist practice.

On the Limits of Care and Knowledge: 15 Points Museums Must Understand to Dismantle Structural Injustice
https://news.artnet.com/opinion/limits-of-care-and-knowledge-yesomi-umolu-op-ed-1889739/amp-page

> Article by Yesomi Umolu, published June 25, 2020. The artistic director of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial explores what museums must internalize before moving forward with equity work.

Race Forward
https://www.raceforward.org/

> Founded in 1981, Race Forward brings systemic analysis and an innovative approach to complex race issues to help people take effective action toward racial equity. Founded in 2002, CSI catalyzes community, government, and other institutions to dismantle structural racial inequity and create equitable outcomes for all. In 2017, Race Forward united with Center for Social Inclusion to become the new Race Forward.

Racial Equity Tools
https://www.racialequitytools.org/home

> Racial Equity Tools is designed to support individuals and groups working to achieve racial equity. This site offers tools, research, tips, curricula and ideas for people who want to increase their own understanding and to help those working toward justice at every level – in systems, organizations, communities and the culture at large.

Resources for Accountability and Actions for Black Lives
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Xa9Av-NfuFsWBHlsMvPiqJHdNedZgnCRW56qAS-7PGQ/mobilebasic#

> Living document that compiles information on cases and contact information for attorneys and law enforcement related to Black Americans unjustly murdered and abused by law enforcement and other protectors of white supremacy.

Resources shared at and inspired by the program "Dismantling Systemic Racism in Cultural Institutions: A Conversation," co-presented by Cultural Connections and SoCal Museums on Sept. 9, 2020.

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Scaffolded Anti-Racist Resources:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PrAq4iBNb4nVIcTsLcNlW8zjaQXBLkWayL8EaPlh0bc/mobilebasic

> This is a working document for scaffolding anti-racism resources. The goal is to facilitate growth for white folks to become allies, and eventually accomplices for anti-racist work. These resources have been ordered in an attempt to make them more accessible and will be added to moving forward.

UC San Diego Anti-Racism LibGuide: Resources for Education and Action
https://ucsd.libguides.com/antiracism

> This Libguide, organized in consultation with the UC San Diego Library Diversity and Inclusion Committee with contributions from other units across the library, is by no means a definitive guide. The guide will evolve over time and we welcome your thoughts, suggestions and corrections. The guide is compiled to flow from educating users to the topics of racism and anti-racism, taking a deeper dive into details and exploration of the scholarship, delivering educational resources to use in the classroom or for self-education, and then to build sustained and actionable practices for individuals and institutions.

WEBINARS AND PROGRAMS

Forms of Reparations: The Museum and Restorative Justice
https://www.wedemandreparations.com/

> A virtual speaker series presented by the Museum & Curatorial Studies graduate students of the School of Art at California State University, Long Beach, taking place between Sept. 23 and Oct. 7, 2020 (recordings will be posted on the site after each event). *Forms of Reparations: the Museum and Restorative Justice* aims to identify the many subtle ways by which cultural institutions sustain white supremacy, imperialism, and exploitation.

Online Courses on Race, Racism and Racial Justice (time sensitive course offerings)
https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/online-courses-racial-justice/

> A collection of links to colleges and other organizations across the country that are offering free online courses and resources specializing in matters of race/racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Time sensitive.

TED Talk: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Discussing Race
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbdxeFcQtaU

> In this talk, Jay Smooth discusses the sometimes thorny territory of how we discuss issues of race and racism, offering insightful and humorous suggestions for expanding our perception of the subject.

TED Talk: You Can Help Stop the Violence Against Young Black Men
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qTfX4U6C_0&feature=share

> In this talk, cultural innovator Vernā Myers shares some hard truths about racial injustices, (including the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO), and offers us three ways we can uncover our biases, overcome our discomfort and make a difference in the lives of black men and our society as a whole.

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STATEWIDE OR NATIONAL ACTION-ORIENTED GROUPS

Black Lives Matter
https://blacklivesmatter.com/

#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.

Building AntiRacist White Educators
https://www.barwe215.org/

This group pushes and equips white educators to continuously address their own unconscious biases and take an active role in fighting white supremacy in our schools, communities, and in ourselves. This group has an accountability relationship with the Melanated Educators Collective in Philadelphia.

Cultural New Deal
https://culturalnewdeal.com/

The Cultural New Deal for Cultural and Racial Justice is a call for us to transform our personal, institutional, and global thinking. We believe that culture moves before policy. We believe that culture endures beyond politics. This Call was spearheaded by ArtChangeUS, the Center for Cultural Power, First Peoples Fund, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, Race Forward, and Sipp Culture.

Museum Hue
https://www.museumhue.com/

Museum Hue is an arts platform for people of color. We craft a welcoming, creative environment that encourages exploration, investigation, collaboration, imagination, and creation in museums throughout major cities, countrysides, and everywhere in between. Our vast cultural experiences paints a larger portrait of our transnational, cosmopolitan community across the globe. We curate Hueseum tours and Huenity mixers that provide authentic participation in various forms of expression as well as disrupts the homogeneity of the mainstream art world. Museum Hue is recognized as a cultural movement and structural intervention within the creative ecosystem.

Showing Up for Racial Justice
https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/

SURJ is a national network of groups and individuals working to undermine white supremacy and to work for racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability.

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SOCIAL MEDIA
- @_fortheculture2020 on Instagram
- @BreeNewsome on Twitter (Bree Newsome Bass)
- @changethemuseum on Instagram
- @ckyourprivilege on Instagram
- @laylafsaad on Instagram (Layla F. Saad)
- @MsKellyMHayes on Twitter (Kelly Hayes)
- @museummammy on Instagram (Kimberly Drew)
- @rachel.cargle and @thegreatunlearn on Instagram (Rachel Cargle)
- Twitter thread highlighting Black museums that could use financial support: https://twitter.com/JessDJefferson/status/1267958077745217541

FACILITATION RESOURCES
- Sustained Dialogue Institute
  - https://sustaineddialogue.org/
  - The Sustained Dialogue Institute helps people to transform conflictual relationships and design change processes around the world.

- "Are You Ready to Talk?" toolkit from Stanford
  - http://sparqtools.org/areyoureadytotalk/

- "Guide to Respectful Conversations" from One Table
  - https://onetable.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/General-Facilitation-Tips.pdf

- "Let's Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students" from the Southern Poverty Law Center
  - http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf
  - Geared towards educators, but still applicable in many ways to workplace conversations

- "Interrupting Bias: Calling Out vs Calling In" from Seed the Way
  - https://www.dropbox.com/s/k9hygzu2i6ocent/Interrupting%20Bias-Calling%20Out%20vs%20In.pdf?dl=0