



Activating Diversity and Inclusion: A Blueprint for Museum Educators as Allies and Change Makers

Wendy Ng, Syrus Marcus Ware & Alyssa Greenberg

To cite this article: Wendy Ng, Syrus Marcus Ware & Alyssa Greenberg (2017) Activating Diversity and Inclusion: A Blueprint for Museum Educators as Allies and Change Makers, Journal of Museum Education, 42:2, 142-154, DOI: [10.1080/10598650.2017.1306664](https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2017.1306664)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2017.1306664>



Published online: 08 May 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 28



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Activating Diversity and Inclusion: A Blueprint for Museum Educators as Allies and Change Makers

Wendy Ng , Syrus Marcus Ware  and Alyssa Greenberg 

ABSTRACT

Within the museum field's recent emphasis on diversity and inclusion to create meaningful experiences for *all* visitors, there remain problematic power dynamics that maintain white supremacy and re-inscribe disparities in privilege among museum workers and visitors. We introduce guiding principles of allyship and practical strategies for enacting equitable relationships with visitors and staff across lines of social difference, providing a blueprint for a rigorous approach to how museum educators can activate diversity and inclusion to create social change.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 12 January 2017
Accepted 11 March 2017

KEYWORDS

Museum education; allyship; social justice; anti-oppression; intersectionality

Allyship as critical analysis

There is no time like the present for museums to demonstrate their relevance by critically engaging in the political, social, and cultural realities of society today. The political pendulum has swung toward the far right as Brexit, the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union, and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, clearly demonstrate. Both events were fueled by racist, Islamophobic, xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynistic rhetoric that brought to the forefront a reality that racialized and marginalized communities have known all along – our societies are built on white supremacy; the belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, and should therefore dominate society.¹ Museums are not immune to this new reality; the Lower East Side Tenement Museum² in New York City and the New Americans Museum³ in San Diego can attest to this. After the election of Donald Trump, anti-immigrant graffiti and comments by visitors that were once infrequent are now a daily occurrence. Now is the time for museum workers to put significant energy and effort toward allyship. This means taking an unflinching, self-critical look at how museums relate to visitors across lines of privilege, and putting allyship into practice.

Museum education's capacity for creating meaningful experiences across lines of social difference is the unique joy and motivation of practitioners including ourselves, the authors – and this capacity is widely understood as central to the social value of museums. Since its Board of Directors adopted the report *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* as policy in 1991, the American Alliance of Museums has recommended that every museum's mission statement must clearly express the commitment to education as central to the museum's public service.⁴ Although *Excellence and Equity* frames education as a museum-wide pursuit, education departments are, in practice, the main agents of this purported social good. As practitioners, we take

this responsibility seriously – museums should not just be institutions of social value, but institutions of social justice. For us, this responsibility entails creating museum education experiences that are meaningful and relevant to *all* visitors, not only those who benefit from white supremacy and other forms of privilege. In other words, only anti-oppressive museum education can enact social good – and social change. Without an anti-oppressive framework, museum education is at best upholding a vacant notion of diversity and at worst actively re-inscribing and perpetuating privilege by excluding or disempowering visitors with marginalized identities.

Recently, this expectation for social transformation has extended and shifted toward a focus on inclusion and diversity work within museums. We embrace and participate in the recent proliferation of conferences, publications, lecture series, and initiatives centered on diversity and inclusion in the museum field that have created a discourse around museums' potential for social good. As change-makers in our host institutions and in the museum field, we, the authors, have been pushing for shifts that reflect current understandings of social justice, and we have wanted to help ensure that our institutions are inclusive of the diversity in our communities. Diversity work in museums – which typically takes the form of community engagement, hiring initiatives, outreach, or programming targeted at a particular cultural community or demographic group – is often understood as indicative of social good. Yet we believe this discourse often lacks criticality and rigor. When examined closely, these initiatives often reveal hidden problematic power dynamics that actually maintain the status quo. For example, an analysis of an education program for *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) that specifically targets Latinx⁵ audiences can actually reveal how, implicitly, the museum centers white audiences every other day of the year. We recognize that diversity work is complex and heterogeneous, and not all diversity work actually enacts social good. Diversity and inclusion work can be shallow or tokenizing – with the potential to re-inscribe and perpetuate white supremacy and oppression, even if the intention is to challenge it – or it can be transformative.

This article will present guiding principles of allyship, and provide some practical strategies for developing equitable processes and systems in your organization. Our vision for equity and inclusion – our visions for how museums can enact social change – is about more than demographics (for example, how many people of color attend a given program): it is about transforming museums into spaces where people from all backgrounds have agency and representation. This text aims to be a blueprint for a rigorous approach for how museum educators can activate diversity to create change. We must approach our work from a critical and self-reflective perspective. It is essential for us to be critical about the language that we use and the actions that we take (or abstain from taking).⁶ We envision this article as a dose of tough love for the museum field – we celebrate the field's recent emphasis on diversity and inclusion, but we encourage all museum practitioners to apply critical analysis to this work. Diversity work and allyship are ongoing practices, not an identity or an item to be crossed off a to-do list.

Why allyship in museums?

Working with ever-changing language, we have chosen to focus on the concept of allyship, which we define as a way of working together, across multiple identities, to create

work environments, programming, and exhibition content that embraces all humanity, specifically racialized and marginalized peoples, from a social justice lens. Racialization is the process by which societies construct races as real, different, and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political, and social life.⁷ Marginalization is the process when people are systematically excluded from meaningful participation in economic, social, political, cultural, and other forms of human activity in their communities and thus are denied the opportunity to fulfill themselves as human beings.⁸ Our definition of allyship considers both audience-facing museum work – curation, education, programming – and internal museum work including working conditions and hiring. Both external and internal factors matter when orienting museum work toward social justice. Our definition of allyship also centers the experience of racialized and marginalized people to interrupt the traditional museum status quo that privileges white, elite perspectives. Finally, our definition is based on a collective, rather than individual, approach to working toward social justice. Words have power so in proceeding with this definition, we acknowledge that definitions are impermanent and are a reflection of their time; we recognize the term “ally” is contested, with alternative terms such as “accomplice” proposed. *Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex, an Indigenous Perspective* by the Indigenous Action Media was an influential text for us.⁹ Building on the group members’ critiques, and rooted in their foundational theorizing, we are choosing to consider the term *allyship* as a lived practice rather than an identity. In order to do the work of allyship, museums need co-conspirators who will move beyond the concept of allyship toward a framework of investment and become accomplices in the struggle for change. By doing so, we can begin to decolonize museum practice by centering Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and by considering anti-oppression, social justice, and an understanding of intersectionality as essential to its daily work.

Empathy is at the heart of allyship – a museum’s ability to understand and share the feelings of its communities helps to develop a deeper, more profound purpose to the work of museums. Allyship is a conscious and constant practice – being an ally to racialized and marginalized communities means museums must fully commit to this work, through intentional actions such as partnering with community organizations doing social justice work. We are inspired by the work of The Empathetic Museum, a collective of museum professionals who use empathy as a lens through which to build a more inclusive future of museums. For the Empathetic Museum,

Just as empathetic individuals must have a clear sense of their own identities in order to perceive and respond effectively to the experience of others, the empathetic museum must have a clear vision of its role as a public institution within its community. From this vision flow process and policy decisions about every aspect of the museum ... all the ways in which a museum engages with its community(ies).¹⁰

Most recently, the collective created a resource called *The Empathetic Museum Maturity Model: A Metric for Institutional Transformation*, which is an assessment tool museums can use to progress toward a more empathetic future.¹¹ For us, like the Empathetic Museum, cultivating empathy in museum practice requires attending to both external and internal museum practices, as well as to our own actions/perceptions and our relationships among staff and community members.

Guiding principles for allyship

Within our individual and institutional practices as museum workers, how can we deepen the conversation around diversity in museums, and support racialized and marginalized communities that we do not belong to in an anti-oppressive way? Working within a social justice framework, we have drafted the following guiding principles for this kind of allyship based on a literature review and our professional work experiences:

An ally understands it is not about themselves

Allies create spaces and opportunities for racialized and marginalized identities in museum personnel, programs, and exhibitions. They pause and listen – they do not monopolize these spaces and opportunities with their own thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Allies must be humble, admit mistakes, and learn from them. Being an ally is not about “always getting it right,” it is about being open to learning, and continuing to expand one’s knowledge and to keep trying even after a string of missteps.¹² For example, when consulting with LGBTQ+ communities as part of the exhibition development process, a cisgender ally whose personal identity and gender corresponds to their birth sex,¹³ must be willing to listen to the feedback and ideas voiced, and change her exhibition development plans in response.

An ally practices active listening and self-reflection

Allies listen intently with their full attention, withhold judgment, check and address their implicit biases, and respond thoughtfully. Active listening is a difficult, but crucial skill that takes practice and training.¹⁴ For example, when concerns are raised about the lack of cultural diversity represented in a marketing campaign for a public program, listen intently without jumping to defend, check your assumptions about who the target audience is, and work collaboratively to change the campaign.

An ally is always learning

Allies “do their homework,” meaning they make concerted efforts to learn and to continue to educate themselves on anti-oppression, social justice frameworks, and other tools and resources for this important work. They research resources authored by racialized and marginalized writers. They take the initiative to seek out answers and do not expect the communities they are allying with to teach them.¹⁵ Many resources, including the #museumsrespondtoferguson Tweet chat,¹⁶ the Brown Girls Museum Blog,¹⁷ and The Inluseum¹⁸ are specifically designed for museum workers to continue to learn.

Allyship is a conscious and constant practice

Consider “ally” as a verb, not a noun. To ally is to take action – it is not a self-proclaimed identity. Allyship is not applied only when it’s convenient – to attract “new audiences,” celebrate a designated month, or exhibit a “different culture.” Allies avoid tokenism. Oppression is a constant for the oppressed and marginalized – there are no breaks.

Allies do not retreat into their privilege and disengage when things get tough as that is not an option for those you are allying with.

Allies need to be able to take direction well

Much has been written about the importance of doing ally work in a good way.¹⁹ We need strong allies who are willing to try and take risks, but who are committed to taking direction from those with whom they are allied. This work should support the efforts and follow the direction set by those on the margins. For example, in her article “‘Loving, Knowing Ignorance’: A Problem for the Educational Mission of Museums,” Lisa Gilbert describes how the Boston Museum of Fine Art publicly took direction from activists who criticized the museum’s “Kimono Wednesdays” programming by collaborating with them to program a public panel called “Kimono Wednesdays: a Conversation.”²⁰ The museum posted a video of the conversation online – and we highly encourage you to watch, in particular noting that the writer and academic Junot Diaz as an audience member weighs in on white supremacy.²¹

We must fight for museums to be welcoming and reflective of the beautiful diversity of our communities. This means our work must speak to and be relevant to those who are most affected by systems of racism, ableism, queer and transphobia, classism, etc., those whose lived experiences are shaped by intersecting and interlocking oppressions. As Crenshaw explains, if we can make a working environment safe(r) and by extension for the purposes of this article, more welcoming and supportive for those who are at the intersections of these interlocking systems, then we will have created a safe(r) space for everybody.²² This is our work as allies. As such, we need to talk about race, gender, class, disability, sexuality, and other related concepts in concert in order to ensure that our work has deep and rooted meaning for those who are black *and* queer *and* disabled *and* ...

Putting it into practice: critical self-reflection

A fundamental process to being an ally is critical self-reflection. We must clearly recognize and understand our individual identities and our positionality, and continually reflect on how we perpetuate or address oppression in our work. This self-reflection and assessment work is messy, uncomfortable, and absolutely necessary to be an effective ally because as educators, we often teach how we learn, privileging our own ways of knowing over others.²³ By not recognizing how we might be applying certain pedagogical approaches and facilitation strategies while omitting others, for example, whether consciously and/or unconsciously, means we are only reaching a few visitors among the many in our museums. The same can be said about how we work with colleagues in our institutions, who we invite to be museum workers, and what content is created and exhibited. The following self-reflection activities are concrete strategies that we, as museum workers, can put into practice immediately and continuously.

Self-reflection activity part I – identity markers

Begin by asking yourself two questions: “How do you define yourself?” and “How do others define you?” Create two lists of words when answering these questions – these

are your identity markers.²⁴ These can include, and are not limited to, your race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, geographic location, religious affiliation, political views, and personality descriptors. The purpose of defining your identity markers is to understand the basis of your worldviews – your positionality. When leading colleagues through this process, we have modeled the activity with our own identity markers to demonstrate critical self-reflection and vulnerability to encourage the same in our colleagues.

Self-reflection activity part II – positionality

Extend your self-reflection by asking two additional questions: “How have your identity markers provided privilege?” and “How have you created oppression through your identity markers?” Create two lists of your position in relation to others – your positionality.²⁵ For example, if you identify as a cis female, you have the privilege of not giving a second thought to which bathroom to use, and you may have created oppression by assuming others’ gender pronouns. If you identify as white, you have the privilege of seeing yourself regularly represented in films, and you may have created oppression by assuming racialized actors lack sufficient talent to be awarded for their performances.²⁶

When modeling this process for our colleagues, we have begun by establishing the purpose of the activity – defining your positionality is to understand how you engage with the world, and how it influences your recognition of and responses to oppression. The process of identifying your positionality as describe above encourages the development of humility and empathy, qualities that are at the heart of allyship. Having a clear understanding of your positionality is also a step toward taking an anti-oppressive approach to your work.

Group reflection exercise using scenarios

With an awareness of your identity markers and positionality, convene a small group of colleagues from your museum who have also completed the self-reflection activity to participate in a group reflection exercise using scenarios. As a group, draw upon your collective experiences to create your own scenarios to unpack together as a way of building solidarity and connection with each other, and locating instances of bias in your past and future museum work. Recall past situations, interactions, and exchanges, both personally experienced or observed involving museum workers and/or the public, to create your own scenarios. Identify the main issues and challenges within each scenario. What is the offensive action in the scenario? In what ways might the action be offensive and potentially oppressive to an individual or community? Through discussion, writing, and/or role-play, imagine ways to respond to this situation as an ally. Following this group reflection exercise, identify resources authored by the racialized and marginalized identities in your scenario to continue the learning process. For example, organize a monthly book club to discuss, reflect, and act on such readings collectively.

Museum workers benefit from a community of practice and professional development training focused on reflection and the use of participatory, practice-based approaches.²⁷ By practicing scenarios, we exercise our abilities to be sensitive to instances of marginalization and oppression, articulate who the actors and stakeholders are (including our own

roles), consider harm on individual, institutional, and societal levels, and imagine possibilities for addressing harm. We investigate our unique roles and styles for allyship and advocacy, and how those approaches are shaped by our identities. Are you a skilled listener or naturally self-reflective? Do you feel that because of your gender expression, people expect a certain kind of behavior from you? We model that there is no correct approach or magic formula for addressing harm, that there are pros and cons within all possibilities. This is messy work. We are training ourselves to be not passive observers, but active participants in transforming harm and creating inclusive institutions – with compassion, understanding, and solidarity.

In this exercise, we also practice holding ourselves and others to a higher standard of allyship – including practicing *not* making excuses for ourselves or our colleagues (i.e. “they meant well”). In other words, we position allyship as part of a shared set of professional expectations. As a shared effort and responsibility, we recognize that allyship is not an effort we undertake alone, nor a responsibility that we expect others to manage for us.

Real-world scenarios demonstrate the fact that museums and museum workers have the capacity to perpetuate and re-inscribe injustice. Social good is not automatic – instead, we are individuals and institutions for whom every day contains opportunities to listen, learn, and improve. Museums do not exist in a bubble distinct from the “real world,” but rather, museums are steeped in (and inextricable from) the realities of marginalization and oppression. We hold museums to a rigorous standard of equity and inclusiveness because the public trusts us and our institutions to tell stories about our world.

Our identities and our practices as allies shape our work as museum educators. They inform which teaching objects we select, what forms of knowledge we sanction, what audiences we connect with, and how we value the knowledge and lived experiences of our visitors and colleagues and stakeholders. We believe that identities and practices of allyship shape the work of museum professionals in all departments. The consideration of identities and allyship is valuable for visitors as well – this awareness will help visitors better understand how bias manifests, and help visitors collaborate with staff to create museum experiences that reflect the world we live in, and the world we *want* to live in.

Of course, the group reflection is only one approach – there are many adaptations and alternatives. You can apply scenarios in a professional development session, or crowd-source scenarios from your own institution or network. Another activity we recommend is collectively interpreting a shared text – an artwork, a reading – in relation to allyship. The most important part is to build time for this work into your practice as an individual, with your team/staff, and with community partners and visitors.

Theoretical foundations and terminology

Museums are inherently political as every decision made is based on a specific point of view or framework, and they cannot claim to be neutral spaces given their origins in colonialism and imperialism.²⁸ These origins in colonialism and imperialism do not exist exclusively in the past – indeed, they manifest in contemporary museums as well. For example, in *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, Carol Duncan argues that the contemporary art museum is scripted to white male subjects.²⁹ The future of museums today will rely on understanding the need to resist the legacy of these histories through

intentional diversity work. Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter exemplifies such resistance. On July 10, 2016, the artist in residence at the New Museum in New York City, Simone Leigh, convened a group of more than 100 black women artists “in response to the continued inhumane institutionalized violence against black lives.”³⁰ This collective, Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter (BWA for BLM), held a public event on September 1 that art critic Jillian Steinhauer describes,

The event began with a procession into the museum and ended with a parade out; in between, the space swelled with an unapologetically empowering celebration of Black women and lives. It was unlike anything I’ve ever seen in a museum. It is something I hope to see much more of.³¹

As individuals, we are all politically motivated – our life experiences and worldview inform our understandings of situations and influence our actions. As museum workers, our perceptions of black, Indigenous, people of color, and other communities that have been traditionally marginalized from museum spaces directly impact who gets hired, whose stories we choose to tell through our exhibitions and programming, and who we invite to the table through our public programming and other engagements. The functions of museums are traditionally understood to be grouped around the work of collecting, conserving, displaying, and interpreting objects/specimens through exhibitions and programs. In contrast, we are suggesting that our understanding of the work of museums needs to shift. Museum workers need to acknowledge the role of such institutions in fostering *justice*, *community accountability*, *equity*, and *inclusion*. Museums are accountable to the public, and this collective responsibility includes not only caring for the material culture and natural specimens in our collections, but more importantly, caring for the communities in which museums are situated.³² This politicization and responsible empathy must be a strategic directive guiding the work of the institution, starting at the top with museum directors and board members explicitly prioritizing this work across all areas of the museum. Members of museum leadership are in a powerful position to model the principles of allyship themselves.

Informed by British-Australian scholar Sara Ahmed, who works at the intersection of feminist theory, queer theory, critical race theory, and postcolonial theory, we approach *diversity* (and the rhetoric around it) as a contested site rather than an automatic social good. Diversity is not an outcome. For example, we believe that anti-oppressive museum work is more systemic than merely hiring a demographically diverse staff. Hiring a diverse staff can still result in tokenizing power dynamics, such as expecting a staff member to speak or act on behalf of their marginalized identity or maintaining white privileged staff members as the leaders and decision-makers. Rather, diversity is a means to an end. As Ahmed writes, “If diversity is to remain a question, it is not one that can be solved.”³³ Diversity is not an end that can be achieved through demographic changes in museum staffs or audiences. Ahmed describes diversity work as “work that has the explicit aim of transforming the institution”³⁴ – in other words, diversity is a tool for transformation.

Our perspectives on diversity work are grounded in the theory of intersectionality. Intersectionality is a concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw that describes the ways in which oppression and systemic discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.)³⁵ are interconnected and cannot be examined

separately from one another. It is also rooted in an approach borrowed from disability justice activism and Disability Studies, which explains “Nothing about us without us.” This way of working suggests that those who are most affected by marginalization are in the best position to articulate how and what their liberation should look like. We believe this phrase should be printed out and mounted above every desk in every museum administration office! Marginalized communities have a crucial voice and museums need to start and keep listening. Participation in direction setting by those who are most affected by the decision and outcome is a call to action that all museum workers should heed.³⁶ How this way of working manifests in our work is the liberation from an essentialist, identity-driven lens. Rather than focusing on how one identity group might experience an exhibition or a program, we recognize the heterogeneity of all identity groups, and how all individuals experience life filtered through multiple intersecting, and ever-changing, identities. This philosophy informs our community-engaged work: amplifying individual voices rather than positioning an individual as a representative for an entire community, and counteracting dominant narratives through solidarity and allyship.

Justice, equity, and inclusion are *the* work of museums

Museum leaders must analyze their institutional compositions, identifying the gaps, and recruiting board members from local community organizations, businesses, and sectors to ensure that their team reflects the diversity of the communities in which they are situated. With humility, and underpinned by a sense of justice and a desire for rigorous scholarship and better outcomes, museum boards should work with local community advisors to identify leaders with the mindset and shared networks to participate in change-making work that will help advance the work of our sector. Boards should seek the help of organizations such as DiverseCity onBoard,³⁷ who match qualified individuals from racialized and marginalized communities with board opportunities through a searchable database.

A critical step is to build the capacity of board members, staff, and volunteers to be effective allies. Training in anti-oppression, social justice frameworks and inclusive collecting, displaying and pedagogical practices should be required of all museum personnel, and made a mandatory part of orientation for new volunteers, staff, and board members. Performance evaluations at all levels should include active listening and self-reflection activities that support personal and professional growth as an ally. The creation of a cross-departmental, cross-hierarchy committee with the budget and authority to address justice, equity, and inclusion issues should be one measure of institutional accountability. Building this work into yearly departmental budgets ensures the financial support needed for continuous training, professional development, accessibility, and accommodation needs, to name but a few examples.

The human resources of a museum are its greatest assets – being an ally means creating opportunities for racialized and marginalized people to work, and to thrive – in museums. We must diversify the current pool of museum workers to be more reflective of the intersectional experiences of ethnicity, gender, class, and disability in our communities. All job and volunteer placement descriptions should explicitly state the museum’s commitment to equity and inclusion in plain language, and specifically encourage applicants who self-identify as black, Indigenous, people of color, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and people with disabilities. How qualifications are defined and where these opportunities are

advertised directly affect the pool of potential applicants. Museums must rethink the traditional museum studies pipeline for museum workers, and look to other programs of study and work experiences that develop the kind of growth mindset and cultural competencies needed to move museums forward into the twenty-first century.

Museums also have the power to work directly with their local post-secondary institutions to influence their recruitment strategies and offer paid internships that support racialized and marginalized students. Museums must check their hiring processes for implicit biases, and institute measures such as blind hiring to ensure an equitable playing field. Museums must invest in retention strategies such as offering a living wage and benefits, ensuring wage parity and transparency, supporting career and skills development, and providing authentic recognition of good work at all levels. The recruitment, hiring, and retention of diverse personnel brings multiple perspectives, ideas, and networks to museums, which help to broaden their community engagement and demonstrate their relevance.

Starting cross-departmental teams aimed at addressing systemic practices that affect hiring, retention, board development, and volunteer recruitment; considering access in the most broadest sense and taking concrete steps toward ensuring that the communities in which the museum is situated are able to access the museum, its collections and its staff team; and committing to addressing the daily minutia of systemic oppression as it plays out in teamwork, museum visitorship, and exhibition content.

Allyship as critical practice

There is a movement afoot to push for a new way of “doing” museum work that looks more critically at the institution’s relationship with visitors of racialized and marginalized identities, and recognizes the power dynamics operating in this relationship that are maintaining white supremacy. This movement is connected to and inspired by community activism, critical race theory, critical museum studies, critical disability studies, and feminist theory, amongst others. As institutions become more permeable, and community leadership more concretized in the infrastructure of museums and galleries across North America, the practice of allyship can create space for addressing these problematic power dynamics. We need a strong team of allies to get us through the tough parts of change-making, to listen and understand visitors, to help set a direction informed by racialized and marginalized voices, and to establish ways of working together that are supportive, rooted in social justice, care, and consideration. There is no more urgent a time than now to do this critical and necessary work.

Notes

1. “Definition of White Supremacy.”
2. “At New York Immigration Museum, Guides Cope with Hostile Remarks.”
3. “Anti-immigrant Graffiti Found at San Diego Museum Entrance.”
4. “Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums,” 4–5.
5. A person of Latin American origin or descent (used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina), “Definition of Latinx.”
6. This is a great example of shifting understandings and language. We developed the title of our NAEA Annual Convention session, *When do I sit down, stand up, or lean in? “Lead” as an*

Ally, almost a year before we presented, and during that time considered the implications of using language that was predicated on one's ability to stand or use their legs. Much of our work has been rooted in disability justice and some of us identify as having disabilities. We wanted to ensure that the title was not participating in an ableist culture that prioritizes using one's legs. We chose to keep this language and add an * to create a talking point that revealed our process and the need to be in allyship with each other through the learning process.

7. *Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System*, 40–1.
8. Jensen, *Thinking about Marginalization*, 1.
9. Indigenous Action Media, "Accomplices Not Allies."
10. "The Empathetic Museum – Home."
11. Jennings et al., "The Empathetic Museum Maturity Model."
12. Russell and Bohan, "Institutional Allyship for LGBT Equality," 335–54.
13. "Definition of Cisgender."
14. Rogers and Farson, "Active Listening," 168–80.
15. Taylor, "Activating Change Through Allyship."
16. "#museumsrespondtoferguson Hashtag on Twitter."
17. "BGMB."
18. Kinsley and Wittman, "The Inluseum."
19. Edwards, "Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development," 39–60.
20. Gilbert, "Loving, Knowing Ignorance," 125–40.
21. "Kimono Wednesdays."
22. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1241–99.
23. Bevan and Xanthoudaki, "Professional Development for Museum Educators," 107–19.
24. Hendrick and Crum, "Multicultural Critical Reflective Practice and Contemporary Art."
25. *Ibid.*
26. This example is drawn from the Twitter hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, which was started in January 2015 by April Reign, managing editor of BroadwayBlack.com, in response to the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity amongst Oscar nominees.
27. Castle, "Blending Pedagogy and Content," 123–32.
28. Edwards, Gosden, and Phillips, *Sensible Objects*, 209.
29. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 113.
30. "Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter."
31. Steinhauer, "Reflections from Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter."
32. Ng and Ware, "Excellence and Equity?"
33. Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 17.
34. *Ibid.*, 175.
35. Crenshaw, "Why Intersectionality Can't Wait."
36. Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–67.
37. "DiverseCity OnBoard."

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

About the authors


Wendy Ng is the Manager of Learning at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. She is interested in the conscious practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion in cultural and education work, and the process of leadership development and support. She holds a BFA and BEd from York University (2001), a MAT in Museum Education from George Washington University (2006), and is a certified teacher in Ontario.

Syrus Marcus Ware is a visual artist, community mobilizer, and educator. He is pursuing his PhD in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. Syrus' research focuses on experiences of marginality and the ways that the presence of racialized, trans and disabled people can challenge 'static' social environments. In 2009, Syrus co-edited the Journal of Museum Education issue *Building Diversity in Museums* with Gillian McIntyre. Syrus holds an Honors BA from University of Toronto and an MA from The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (2009).

Alyssa Greenberg is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research interests include museum pedagogy and the museum as a site of activism. She currently serves on the leadership committee for Chicago Emerging Museum Professionals and is a founding member of Museum Workers Speak. She received a BA from Oberlin College in 2009 and an MA from the Bard Graduate Center in 2011.

ORCID

Wendy Ng  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3520-2908>

Syrus Marcus Ware  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5295-2543>

Alyssa Greenberg  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0822-7616>

References

- Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- "Anti-immigrant Graffiti Found at San Diego Museum Entrance." *KPBS Midday Edition*. San Diego. November 29, 2016. <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2016/nov/28/new-americans-museum-reacts-slogans-scrawled-entra/>.
- "At New York Immigration Museum, Guides Cope with Hostile Remarks." *Reuters*. November 21, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-museum-idUSKBN13G2BI>.
- Bevan, Bronwyn, and Maria Xanthoudaki. "Professional Development for Museum Educators: Unpinning the Underpinnings." *Journal of Museum Education* 33, no. 2 (2008): 107–119.
- "BGMB." Accessed November 10, 2016. <http://www.browngirlsmuseumblog.com/>.
- "Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter." Accessed January 11, 2017. <http://www.newmuseum.org/calendar/view/1061/black-women-artists-for-black-lives-matter>.
- Castle, M. "Blending Pedagogy and Content: A New Curriculum for Museum Teachers." *Journal of Museum Education* 31, no. 2 (2006): 123–132.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (n.d.): 139–167.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1299.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Why Intersectionality Can't Wait." *The Washington Post*. September 24, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait/>.
- "Definition of Cisgender." English Oxford Living Dictionaries. *Oxford Dictionaries | English*. Accessed January 11, 2017. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/cisgender>.
- "Definition of Latinx." English Oxford Living Dictionaries. *Oxford Dictionaries | English*. Accessed March 5, 2017. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Latinx>.
- "Definition of White Supremacy." English Oxford Living Dictionaries. *Oxford Dictionaries | English*. Accessed January 11, 2017. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/white_supremacy.
- "DiverseCity OnBoard." Accessed November 10, 2016. <http://diversecityonboard.ca/>.
- Duncan, Carol. *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1995.

- Edwards, Keith E. "Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development: A Conceptual Model." *NASPA Journal* 43, no. 4 (2006): 39–60.
- Edwards, Elizabeth, Chris Gosden, and Ruth Phillips. *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*. Vol. 5. Oxford: Berg, 2006.
- "Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums." Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1992.
- Gilbert, Lisa. "Loving, Knowing Ignorance': A Problem for the Educational Mission of Museums." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 59, no. 2 (2016): 125–140. doi:10.1111/cura.12153.
- Hendrick, Keonna, and Melissa Crum. "Multicultural Critical Reflective Practice and Contemporary Art." In *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, edited by Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, 271–298. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
- Indigenous Action Media. "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex." *Indigenous Action Media*. Accessed May 4, 2014. <http://www.indigenouaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/>.
- Jennings, Gretchen, Stacey Mann, Janeen Bryant, Matt Kirchner, Rainey Tisdale, Elissa Frankle, Jim Cullen, et al. "The Empathetic Museum Maturity Model: A Metric for Institutional Transformation in Museums." *The Empathetic Museum*. May 2016. <http://empatheticmuseum.weebly.com/maturity-model.html>.
- Jenson, Jane. *Thinking about Marginalization: What, Who and Why?* Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2000. http://rcrpp.ca/documents/28944_en.pdf.
- "Kimono Wednesdays: A Conversation." Boston Museum of Fine Arts. February 7, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_M0m8qaXrus.
- Kinsley, Rose Paquet, and Aletheia Wittman. "The Inclusion." *The Inclusion*. Accessed January 11, 2017. <https://inclusion.com/>.
- "#museumsrespondtoferguson Hashtag on Twitter." Hashtag. *Twitter*, n.d. <https://twitter.com/hashtag/museumsrespondtoferguson>.
- Ng, Wendy, and Syrus Marcus Ware. "Excellence and Equity?" In *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, edited by Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, 37–57. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
- Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System*. Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009, 40–41.
- Rogers, Carl, and Richard E. Farson. "Active Listening." In *Organizational Psychology*, edited by Newman, R. G., Danziger M. A., and Cohen M., 168–180. Washington, DC: Heath and Company, 1979.
- Russell, Glenda M., and Janis S. Bohan. "Institutional Allyship for LGBT Equality: Underlying Processes and Potentials for Change." *Journal of Social Issues* 72, no. 2 (2016): 335–354.
- Steinhauer, Jillian. "Reflections from Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter." *Hyperallergic*. September 15, 2016. <http://hyperallergic.com/322742/reflections-from-black-women-artists-for-black-lives-matter/>.
- Taylor, Hudson. "Activating Change Through Allyship." *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport* 8, no. 1 (2015): 37–42.
- "The Empathetic Museum – Home." Accessed November 10, 2016. <http://empatheticmuseum.weebly.com/>.