

# Race, Gender, Sexuality, Disability, Age — All at Once!

## **Building Diversity in Small Museums**

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# What is DEIA?

Diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility have emerged as top priorities in the museum world over the last several years. And the incredible range of diversities that need to be addressed can seem overwhelming. Seeing how our nation's largest institutions struggle with these issues, with all their money and resources, may make small- and mid-size museums without the budget, staff, or educational resources of their larger peers wonder how they can even begin to address all this in their exhibitions, community outreach, and employment practices. Drawing on over a decade of work in representing diverse stories, employing diverse staff, and connecting with a diverse community, this presentation offers ways to begin to think about and address DEIA issues without a large budget or large staff.



# What is DEIA?

- Diversity
- Equity
- Accessibility
- Inclusion

At root, the ability of your museum to serve its entire community fairly







# Types of diversity

- Age
- Class
- Disability
- Gender
- Language
- Nationality/Citizenship
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sexuality

# What are your challenges?

## Knowledge

- What needs to be done
- How to do it
- What resources are available
- Who can help

## Expense

- Consultants can be expensive
- Hiring and training are expensive
- No budget for new acquisitions, exhibitions, and programs

## Available Resources

- Staff
- Outside partnerships
- Collection material
- Physical space
- Local community

# What are your goals?

- Mission
- Attendance
- Partnership
- Communication
- Staff





# DEIA is not a goal

DEIA is a process and a way of thinking



# Getting Started: Self-Evaluation



ACCESSIBILITY  
AUDIT



INTERNAL  
RESOURCES



EXTERNAL  
RESOURCES



# Accessibility Audit (physical space)

- What is on display? What isn't?
- What is your physical space like?
- How visible is your signage?
- What language(s) are your displays in? Other signage?
- How are your bathrooms gendered?

# Accessibility Audit (organizational)

- Who is your audience?
- Who is your community?
- What is in your collection? What are the gaps?
- What are your programs?
- What is the demographic makeup of your staff?  
Leadership? Board?
- What are your hiring policies and pay scale?



# Internal Resources

## **Policies and procedures**

- Hiring and managing staff
- Interpretation
- Outreach

## **Buy-In**

- Staff
- Leadership
- Board
- Donors/Supporters
- Community

## **Representation**

- Collection
- Exhibitions
- Social Media
  - Themed months/days
  - Take-overs
- Marketing





# External Resources

- Advisory Committees/Councils
- Outside Experts
- Community Curators
- Case Studies
- Consultants

# Four D's

- invite DIFFERENCE
  - reject DEHUMANIZATION
  - combat DISINFORMATION
  - defend DEMOCRACY
- (from Minal Bopaiah & Jakob Wolf-Barnett, "Advancing DEAI in a Polarized World," May 19, 2023: <https://www.aam-us.org/2023/05/19/advancing-deai-in-a-polarized-world/>)



# Passive and Active Inclusion

Both opening more doors *and* attracting more people to those doors

## Passive

- Adding more inclusive exhibition content
- Offering discounts/free admission to under-represented groups
- Non-discriminatory hiring practices

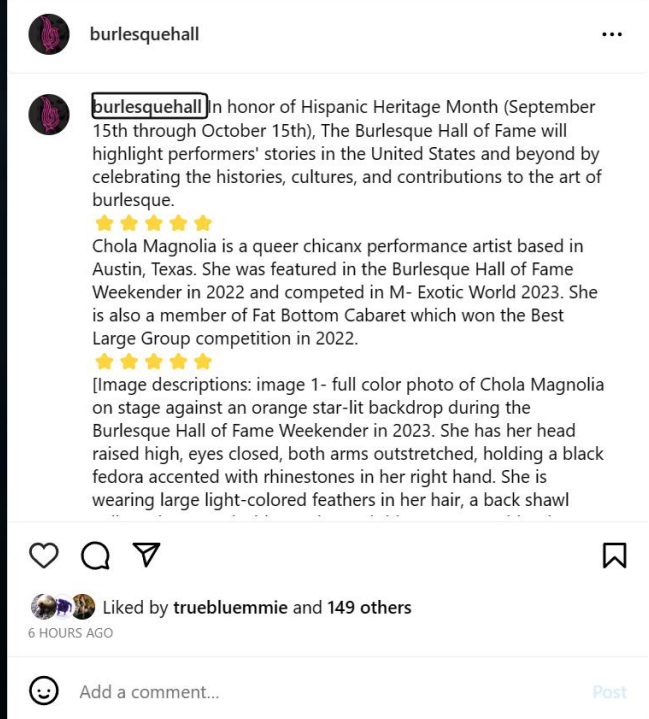
## Active

- Promoting exhibitions and events to diverse audiences
- Partnering with diverse groups/institutions to assemble, promote, and interpret exhibitions
- Outreach to under-represented groups
- Cultivating talent from under-represented communities



# Small Starts

- Image Descriptions
- Large type labels
- 68" clearance
- Invite diversity in job applications
- Unisex bathrooms
- Spanish-language gallery guide
  - Large-print guides
  - Audio guides
- Join Museums 4 All



# Bigger Starts

- Assemble a diversity council
- Consult members of marginalized groups about exhibitions that represent them
  - Hire subject matter experts/curators from those groups
- Write a DEIA plan
- Audit and re-write policies and procedure with inclusion in mind
- Hire ASL translators for events
- Community curation



# Non-Starters

- Assuming your open-minded and well-intentioned staff and board couldn't possibly be prejudiced
- Tokenism
- Issuing performative statements/actions
  - E.g. empty land acknowledgments
- Declaring your DEIA project "finished"
- Appointing DEIA only to staff from marginalized groups
  - Or add DEIA on top of already full job descriptions
- Replacing action with good intentions



# Resources

- [Facing Change: Insights from the AAM's Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group](#)
- [Resources for BIPOC Professionals in DEAI Positions](#)
- [Beholding and Curating With Care](#)
- [Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#)
- Internet Accessibility: [Access Guide](#)
- [Inclusive Language Guidelines: Gender Identity](#)
- [Museums for All](#)

Download this presentation (with active links) at [bhof.link/2023DEIA](https://bhof.link/2023DEIA)

# Thank you!

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