



## Office Hours with the Commissioner Disability and the Cultural Plan

03/31/2017

- **EQUITY, ACCESS, INCLUSION RE: DISABILITY AND DISABILITY ARTS**

- » How are DCLA and the cultural plan process defining diversity? It is used in many different studies and contexts without consistent definition.

- >>**Recommendation:** Define **Diversity** and ensure that it is explicitly inclusive of disability. The data upon which DCLA relies (SIAP and Diversity Study) are inadequate. Any funding decisions made from these data, studies will be exclusionary to the disability community.

- » What is the place of disability and disability arts in the cultural plan? We seek both an explicit call out of disability as a category (stand-alone issue area) as well as infused throughout the plan.

- » What have you done about addressing disability in DCLA, in the cultural plan, and in the diversity survey / initiative?

- » I live in fear of being a problem – someone helping me advocate and them committing to learning so each time it's easier until everyone knows what to do and how to be educators equipped for artists and cultural participants with disabilities.

- >>**Recommendation:** Want to see art by PWD on walls, invest in new work by disabled artists:

- Museum Access Consortium accompanied by paid internships (CUNY Cultural Corps)
    - Autism program re: cultural institutions physical and programmatic design upgrades should also be included in the plan.

- >>**Recommendation:** City needs to get better at dealing with disability issues beyond only wheelchairs, such as service dogs for blind people. Who will take on that challenge? DCLA needs to recognize that if accessibility accommodations and training are not provided to museum staff, I cannot have a cultural experience at that institution. Cultural institution staff (ALL – especially front of house service staff) need training on how to address accommodation, accessible space and technology.

- >>**Recommendation:** Accommodation should not be a choice. Need accommodations of space, staff knowledge, skills, infrastructure, audio/visual access in cultural spaces.

- **TASK FORCE:** grant funds to establish a PWD Arts Task Force to facilitate PWD participation in cultural activities across the city. Fundamentally changes how artists with disabilities get around

the city, built in communities and networks, buddy system, travel, stimulate creativity and artistry in PWD.

**>>Recommendation:** Provide staff disability and diversity training, compulsory for all DCLA grantees – regarding both inclusion and representation of disabled artists/disability arts and patron, audience access.

- Access is relational, use justice as lens for trainings
- ADA compliance is the lowest bar for inclusion

**>>Recommendation:** Community Board 1 – Queens: The City’s capital priorities are toward minorities – the Plan should mirror this.

**>>Recommendation:** Precedent models [Australia Council for the Arts Disability Action Plan 2014-2016](#) – NYC needs more encompassing policy infrastructure from the government to lead this kind of social change.

- » Define disability arts and make explicit, this is one part of disability artistry. Will DCLA recognize this and a priority in grant portfolio?

- **AFFORDABILITY**

- » Availability of affordable studio and performance space is terrible. There are many spaces that are intentionally underutilized (HUD housing spaces used for storage rather than computer tech center, sharable studio space, etc.
- » Many PDW live in supportive housing, build on this and incorporate artwork in buildings by PWD who are artists and/or PWD who live in building with a funding resource.
- » Many do not understand the value of arts for PWD – we need a major awareness building / raising campaign to overcome the very real costs of full, inclusive design standards.
  - CART, induction/infra-red hearing loop, other technology or design elements (tactile, lighting, ramps) that inhibit inclusion and a complete experience for PWD. Institutions will not do this on their own – undue financial hardship – they need to be incentivized or mandated to do so.

**>>Recommendation:** DCLA has a long reach, use it to facilitate / require accessibility inclusion at all cultural programs and spaces. Everything should be ASL friendly. Everything should be ADA compliant (fundamental misunderstanding of undue financial hardship). 26 years after the passing of ADA, there have been no repercussions, and no change, for non-compliance. This can’t be a checkbox, there needs to be leadership on this to feel like we (PWD) matter. Minimum standard of ADA compliance – ideally

working toward full compliance with MOPD inclusive design standards – should be a requirement for qualification of funding from DCLA.

>>**Recommendation:** Formation of a Cultural Access Fund to offset costs of meeting at least minimum compliance. This will incentivize disability access and put the burden on the City where it belongs.

- **EDUCATION**

- » All children need to be able to thrive. Arts subjects need to be funded and included in criteria for excellence. All external events should be free.

- » How will the cultural plan reach children, specifically K-8?

- >>**Recommendation:** PWD youth to see themselves in their arts teachers. Invest in, develop, support the pipeline to get artists, educators certified.

- >>**Recommendation:** Kennedy Center Research on educators with disabilities for children with disabilities shows improved transition from HS to University.

- » CUNY Disabilities Studies program is an excellent precedent!

- >>**Recommendation:** Find ways for current students, alumni, and faculty to be involved in Cultural Affairs, grantees, etc. – Connect more with existing programs and build from strength.

- » Always encourage multiple access points and artists expression to all kinds of learning

- >>**Recommendation:** Actively enforce Universal Design Standards

- >>**Recommendation:** All educators need to be prepared for all learners, teachers should only have one license, certification