

Artists of Color Bloc - NYC Cultural Plan Demands

Version 5; Updated: March 6th

“We must not rest until we build a multiracial democracy that embraces the fullness of our spirits and human experience.” - Opal Tometi, Founder, Black Lives Matter

Summary:

We are coming together as a coalition of artists and cultural workers of color to help build equity into all areas within NYC’s first ever Cultural Plan of 2017. Our efforts are not without precedent, as there have been many artists and cultural workers of color who came before us that fought and continue to fight for inclusion in all levels of NYC’s cultural institutions. In this regards and learning from the past, there is still much more work to be done. But ultimately we do believe, that with a strong framework, metrics, and accountability, a cultural plan can be created that will provide true equity for all past, present, and future of artists and cultural workers of color in New York City.

Overarching Goals:

1. **Desegregate:** Creating ways to bring people of color to all levels and positions in the museum. Museum are currently racially segregated in workforce, exhibitions, and public programming. *We want our museums to reflect our vibrant culture and strong work ethic!*
2. **Decolonize:** Liberated and create empowerment platforms within museums and other cultural institutions. Currently much of the framework in museums was built on colonial models of collection display, knowledge and education originating from the colonialist perspective. This framework has to be dismantled and rebuilt from the bottom-up by those historically excluded and marginalize within the American colonial context.
3. **Rebuild/ Reinforce:** Redistribution and/or subsidizing resources for repairing, restoring cultural organizations and cultural histories that have a long history of neglect by NYC.
4. **Communalize:** Restructure museums as places where culture is alive and evolving: created, experienced, and shared by every interested individual in our communities.

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Artists of Color Bloc's

Recommendations for Equity in NYC's Cultural Plan

- I. **Equity in Artists Wages/Fees, Exhibitions/Collections, and Education/Research, within Cultural Institutions:**
- A. **Equitable Wages for Artists of Color:** That artists exhibited, thus artists' fees, reflect the population of the borough in question. Allowing for the equity in artist fees for the current ethnic and cultural makeup of NYC and it's five boroughs. This mandate should be considered for establishing a strong and equitable future of people of color in New York.
 - B. **Creation of an Artists of Color Collections Fund:** Establishment of an artists of color fund that will re-balance the collections to include a demographically balanced number of artists of color in the permanent collection of our cultural institutions. This mandate would support the collection of past and future artists of color. **While museums like the Brooklyn Museum have an African American artist fund, they don't have a Latino or Asian artist fund—this fund would address imbalanced art collections and highlight the cultural production of ethnic groups, that have a long history of neglect in the New York City and across America.*
 - C. **Galleries dedicated the contributions by People of Color:** We encourage the renaming or creation of new exhibition halls or galleries honoring popular leaders of color who have led the struggle for civil, social, and cultural equality.
 - D. **Artists of Color Research and Education Labs:** Research and Educational labs devoted to artists of color should be established in at least the larger cultural institutions of New York. Most art history is taught from a Eurocentric perspective, this education and research lab allows for intensive and extensive study to boost learning of poc artists of color history, criticism, curation, and exhibitions, that will intern promote future scholarship for and by researchers and artists of color.
 - E. **Museum Decolonization Process:** That **Self-Determination Advisory Boards** established to approve and verify exhibitions, catalogs and collection text, educational and public programming and any material relating to artwork, artifacts, narratives relating to native americans, people of color, and histories situated in or parallel/synonymously to colonial socio-political narratives.
 - 1. **Accountability Clause:** *Institutions should be held publicly accountable for not honoring the advisory boards and in case where a ethnicity is misrepresented or disrespected according to their cultural values. A guideline to ethics, accountability, and reconciliation should be established by the DCA.*

II. **Equitable Resource Allocation and Subsidies**

Research shows that very few resources such as studios, grants, and fellowships are being allocated to artists of color in New York. Overall artists of color with and without degrees are economically challenged with rent burden and limited employment opportunities. Therefore an effort must be made to balance the resources of the city to allow for more artists of color by allocating, redistributing or subsidizing resources in all the five boroughs:

- A. Studios:** Allocating or subsidizing more dedicated space for artists of color.
- B. Grants:** To help fund projects by artists of color.
- C. Fellowship & Residencies:** To give time for artists of color to investigate and produce longer in depth projects or themes.

III. **People of Color in the Cultural Workforce**

A. Workers of Color in all levels of Cultural Institution: Our cultural institutions must provide a fair and equal opportunity to the diverse workforce of each neighborhood. The workforce should be reflective and in proportion to the ethnic workforce of each of the five boroughs in which the institution is situated. To make this possible several requirements must be put in place for institutions receiving DCA funding as described below:

1. Cultural institutions must **publicly disclose skill level requirements, salaries** and accompanied with **clearly defined career paths for job advancement**;
2. Cultural institutions must **publicly disclose workforce statistics** regarding cultural workers in respect to ethnicity, gender, and age of all candidates reviewed, subsequently employed, and/or discharged;
3. **Job training programs should subsidized** by the DCA in the case special skills are required to meet these equitable guidelines.

B. Equity in Freelance and Contract Jobs of People of Color

That job contracts for art handling, consulting, staging, catering, and other services be equally distributed to businesses of color reflective of the true population/workforce percentage in each borough.

C. Workers of Centers with a focus on Cultural Workers of Color

That cultural workers of color centers be established within cultural institution to tend to workers of color's career development and advancement, technology job training, and filing of grievances and worker-employer third party negotiations.

D. Strategies to End Worker of Color Discrimination in Cultural Institutions

Recent data shows that our cultural institutions are segregated along racial lines, the DCA must coordinate with the various city departments or commissions, and third-party defense agencies to examine complaints and investigate discrimination cases within cultural institutions that include, but not limited to: Ethnic Preference, Job Segregation, Compensation Disparity, Hostile Work Environment, Retaliation, and Discharge

1. NYC Commission on Human Rights Partnership

DCA should consider a partnership with the Commission on Human Rights to investigate violations of Title VII. Due to the racially segregated workforce in cultural institutions, oversight should be organized by NYC Commissions on Human Rights.

2. City-wide awareness program and help center for employees of color to file discrimination complaints within cultural institutions.

Help centers and awareness programs should be established throughout the city or in partnership with worker centers for workers of color, protecting and offering free legal counseling in regards to possible discrimination cases within cultural institutions. DCA must publicly demonstrate their commitment to fighting cultural worker discrimination cases involving violations of Title VII.

IV. Rebuild, Restore, and Protect Ethnic and Neighborhood Museums

A. Protection and Baseline Support

Small neighborhood museums and ethnic museum receive the smallest bit of support, and often have to apply EVERY year for funds, unlike the CIG group. These small museums also are usually located and or serve communities of color and thus are dealing with many other issues besides just exhibitions and programs but also social and economic hardships of said communities, there for more financial support should be allocated to these small museum and institutions.

B. Rebuild & Reinforce

Special funds should be set aside for the rebuilding, repairing, and restoring of the cultural and legacy of pioneering organizations, art groups, and artist that have had long history of neglect in NYC*. Specifically, these funds would support research, archiving, education, publication, collection inclusion, and exhibition presentation by and for historically underserved communities of color in New York. **Most museums were segregated up until the 1950s, therefore an important item of the DCA budget should be the retroactive inclusion of the cultural history of people of color and other non-european arts and crafts into the canon of what is considered American art*

VI. Media Equity

The DCA perform a media analysis of materials produced by CIG and other city fund recipients to analyze various forms of media discrimination, representation, and misappropriation of funds involving campaigns that exclude and or tokenize People of Color.

A. Customer Discrimination & Ethnic Preference

People of color are the largest ethnic group in New York City, yet media portrayal is still a large percent non-poc. Leaving the conclusion of customer discrimination and or preference for a single type of customer. Analysis should consider the representation or lack thereof that would prevent people of color feel unwelcome in cultural institutions. Media should not be limited to print, online, marketing and promotional materials.

REFERENCES (*in progress*):

[Melting Pot on the Mall? Race, Identity, and the National Museum Complex](#)

By Nicole Reiner. The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum. Common Ground Publishing: Champaign, IL. Vol.5, Issue 2, 2013

[Cool Culture, Museum Magazine](#) (re: Item I,E)

American Alliance of Museums, Jan/Feb 2017, Vol. 96, No. 1, pg.10
Vermont: Lane Press

[Advancing Equity Through Arts and Culture](#) (another article about the above I, E)

Center for the Future of Museum, Thursday, October 13, 2016

[Mayor de Blasio Signs Legislation to Establish Testing Programs for Housing and Employment Discrimination and Increase Transparency for the Human Rights Commission](#)

April 20, 2015. NYC.gov Retrieved March 6, 2017