

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SNMA ANTI-RACIST TASK FORCE
Report to the SNMA Board of Directors
14 February 2021

INTRODUCTION

Stonewall National Museum & Archives (SNMA) aspires to be a voice recognized nationally as authoritative and influential in the collection, preservation, and accessibility of American LGBTQ culture and history. To do so, SNMA's leadership understands their obligation to explore whether Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pasific Islander communities -- referred to in this document as Black, Indigenous and People of Color, or BIPOC -- are equally served by SNMA's "business-as-usual" perspectives, as well as whether its current institutional voice is fully inclusive of the diverse LGBTQ experience in the United States.

SNMA's beginnings centered around white, cisgender gay men and likewise, the growth in its collections, holdings, leadership and programs has mostly followed. The founders and supporters were visionaries who dreamed big. Today, an even bigger dream must be realized. SNMA leadership understands that all individuals and organizations can be limited by their own biases, and that we all have the capacity to keep learning and doing better. That is what SNMA is doing now. SNMA acknowledges that its own history does not fulfill its mission "that inspires and promotes understanding through collecting, preserving and sharing the proud culture of lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer people of all stories, and their significant role in American society." Up to this point, BIPOC, LGBTQ voices, culture and history were not fully included. SNMA is ready to live more authentically and comprehensively into its mission and meet the necessity of examining how SNMA can be more intentional in its goals to be anti-racist in its people (leadership, staff, and audiences), its collections and holdings, and in its programming.

Black Lives Matter. They always have. Yet, it was the momentum of the modern-day civil rights movement, catalyzed in 2020 by the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Tony McDade, among others, that inspired SNMA to take action at this particular time. Aligned in its desire to be a progressive voice for change in the museum and LGBTQ communities, the SNMA Board of Directors created the SNMA Anti-Racism Task Force. The Task Force was charged with helping the board, patrons, staff, and volunteers learn and understand how past actions (intentional or otherwise) advanced white supremacy and racism within the organization. The Task Force also was charged with recommending actions to rectify shortcomings and operate as an anti-racist LGBTQ organization. Starting with its first meetings in September 2020, the Task Force embraced a mission to outline a set of deeply rooted, intentional directions that would create an organizational culture of racial/ethnic and gender inclusion, be sustainable, and shift all policies and practices of SNMA toward an anti-racist agenda.

The Task Force did not shy away from recommending measures that affect bold change. It strove to propose more opportunities for a broader range of people to participate in SNMA's offerings, even as this requires SNMA and its board to take risks which move some members, donors, and staff beyond their comfort zones. Diversification of holdings, people and programs would be purpose-driven rather than passive. Task Force recommendations adopted by the board must arise out of conscious intention to understand, incorporate and lift up the contributions of BIPOC

LGBTQ people in queer culture and history, its own BIPOC members and the BIPOC communities beyond SNMA. Regardless of any content SNMA puts on the web or its exhibition walls, however well-intentioned, SNMA cannot simply expect these BIPOC LGBTQ communities to engage with us without building authentic, meaningful and reciprocal relationships.

The results of the Task Force meetings are the broad recommendations and suggested, specific actions that follow. The Task Force asks the Board to seriously consider them, augment them with its own, and develop a board-driven and board-owned plan of action that the staff will implement. The Task Force is confident that the result will not only preserve LGBTQ culture and history, but positively expand the public's understanding of it to include stories by and about BIPOC LGBTQ people.

The Task Force is deeply grateful that the SNMA Board of Directors sought its expertise in advance of SNMA's revisions to its strategic plan. In return, the Task Force asks that the Board demonstrate a bona fide desire to address institutional racism and its connection to white supremacy, by allocating resources sufficient to put the recommendations into action. The Task Force would welcome an invitation back to review and hopefully affirm that SNMA has taken to heart the Task Force's aspirations, time, and effort expended to develop these recommendations that might give equal voice to all SNMA's diverse audiences and constituents.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

- Jacki Bennett: SNMA Board Chair
- Diana Bruce: SNMA Board member
- Imma Duverger: SNMA Program Coordinator, Task Force Secretary
- Justin Estoque: Co-Chair, SNMA National Advisory Council, Task Force Chair
- Kezia Gilyard: LGBTQ+ Coordinator, Broward County Public Schools
- Ernest (EJ) Harrison: Choral arts artistic director and member, board of directors for Choirclusive, an organization that focuses on inclusivity in the choral classroom
- Hunter O'Hanian: SNMA Executive Director
- Damian Pardo: SNMA Board Member
- Wesley Thomas: Program Manager, LGBTQ and Sexual Health, District of Columbia Public Schools

BACKGROUND AND MEETINGS

In 2020, the Board formed an Anti-Racism Task Force, and held the first Task Force meeting in September. At that meeting, members decided that the Task Force needed to include BIPOC members beyond the SNMA inner circle. Additional members with SNMA program connections were recruited, and since September 2020, the full committee met seven times over seven months to share ideas on the three categories described by the Board in its creation of the Task Force: people, holdings, and programs. As SNMA begins implementing the recommendations, the Task Force would welcome an opportunity to review and comment on the progress of actions taken within the first year, and to regularly engage with SNMA to ensure priority, urgency and accountability.

TASK FORCE GOAL

This final report provides the SNMA Board of Directors with broad recommendations and examples of specific actions that the Board should take. SNMA seeks meaningful and measurable recommendations to identify and remove the vestiges of white supremacy and barriers to racial/ethnic and gender inclusion in our board, staff, educational outreach, exhibitions, holdings, and other programs. It is the Task Force's expectation that SNMA's board and staff implement these actions and others of their own, consistent with the recommendations and with specifics regarding timeline and responsible party.¹ The Board Chair and Executive Director will ensure that the recommendations inform SNMA's upcoming strategic planning.

During development of the SNMA strategic plan, the Task Force recommends that the Board develop and include goals for each action item that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound (SMART). The Task Force welcomes the invitation to review and provide feedback on the SMART goals, within the next six months.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Anti-Racism Task Force offers recommendations falling within three broad areas:

- People - What actions must be taken to ensure SNMA's human resource and governance policies and procedures are anti-racist in nature and intent?
- Holdings - What actions must be taken to ensure SNMA's holdings reflect the gender and racial/ethnic diversity of our society?
- Programs - What actions must be taken so that SNMA's exhibitions, public programs, and educational programs are inclusive, accurate, welcoming, reflective, and informative?

PEOPLE

People include board members, donor base, paid staff, volunteers, visitors, and institutional partners.

The Task Force offers the following broad recommendations. Listed under each recommendation are specific action items and examples suggested by the Task Force.

- 1. Review and revise SNMA internal policies to promote equity and inclusion.**
 - a. Assess and promote racial, ethnic and gender equity in employment, including recruitment, retention, employee policies and employee benefits.
 - i. Within six months, produce a report for the Board and Task Force review that analyzes the recruitment, retention and length of employment of the staff within the last 5 years.
 - ii. Develop and implement a comprehensive system for ensuring diversity in hiring and retention practices.
 - iii. Develop and implement employee policies and benefits that are anti-racist and equitable support the diverse needs of a diverse staff.

¹ SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based.

- iv. Create a culture of financial transparency in regard to staff salary, board contributions, etc. by including salary ranges in job descriptions to establish a community of trust and promote pay equity.
 - b. Assess and promote racial, ethnic and gender equity for board members and volunteers, including recruitment, retention and volunteer policies.
 - i. Within six months, produce a report for the Board and Task Force review that analyzes the recruitment, retention and length of employment of the board and volunteers within the last 5 years.
 - ii. Develop and implement a comprehensive system for ensuring diversity in board recruitment and retention practices. Revise organizational bylaws and board responsibilities to reflect this.
 - c. Register the voluntary submission of gender, racial, ethnic and sexual orientation and identity of board, staff and volunteers to create a baseline statistic from which we can begin to accurately measure the diversity within the office.
 - i. Within six months, produce a report containing all aforementioned information of board, staff, and volunteers for board and Task Force Review.
 - d. Create and implement a disciplinary policy on acts of transphobia, homophobia, sexism, xenophobia and racism committed by board, staff, guests, and volunteers within SNMA space, or at SNMA sponsored events.
 - e. Assess the accessibility of our institutional voice (language in SNMA announcements, social media, newsletter, exhibitions and programming)
 - i. Offer translations of the website, and in-person/online events in Haitian Kreyol (2% of FL households speak at home- 5% in Miami) and Spanish (20% of FL households speak at home - 70% in Miami) (reflecting the ethnic diversity of South Florida)
 - ii. Implement a regular anti-racism training with outside, trusted and vetted facilitators to guide all staff, board members, and volunteers.
 - iii. Conduct a comprehensive review of the organization's policies, literature, documents, signage, etc. to ensure the use of gender-neutral language to create an inclusive and gender diverse atmosphere.
- 2. **Renew our community focus and invite local and national historically marginalized communities to collaborate with us in inclusive and reciprocal processes.**
 - a. Review potential financial barriers to programming (i.e. membership price, events, clubs, etc.) which might impede engagement.
 - i. Conduct a survey among BIPOC led-orgs audience/staff/ to gauge their thoughts on the accessibility of SNMA membership pricing, events, etc. Produce a report within a month after the survey for board and Task Force review.
 - b. Explore tiered pricing for membership and events, based on self-declared access to financial means.
 - c. Offer clubs sponsored by Stonewall that are free of charge or for a nominal fee (as opposed to requiring membership in order to participate).
 - d. Sponsor a membership registration event in Broward and Miami-Dade K-12 schools and universities (especially those which are more racially and ethnically diverse).

- e. Develop collaborations with community organizations that engage and support BIPOC elders.
 - f. Regularly employ surveys of participants in SNMA exhibitions and programming to gauge audience participation by BIPOC individuals and partner organizations.
 - g. Develop strategic marketing and communication plans geared towards diverse communities and organizations.
 - h. Create up-to-date lists of local and national organizations (i.e., HBCUs, cultural orgs, business/entertainment, etc.) with diverse audiences. Host/boost events, etc., organize membership drives with these organizations.
 - i. Measurables: Contact xx# of Organizations per Q and track results
 - ii. Establish continuing partnership with interested organizations including HBCUs, business/entertainment companies, cultural arts organizations, etc.
 - 1. Invite them to guest curator positions, critique programs in development, host/boost events, etc., organize membership drives with these organizations.
 - 2. Measurables: Increase # guest curated exhibitions by 25% in the first year.
 - iii. Establish a formal community board with interested partner organizations to measure and contribute to the implementation of the SNMA's Task Force recommendations.
 - 1. Measurables: Host first meeting of board by 2nd Q
 - iv. Demonstrate our support to for BIPOC led community organizations by encouraging our primary audience of white cisgender men to *directly* support queer and trans BIPOC community and advocacy organizations.
 - 1. Encourage support by sharing fundraisers, GoFund Me pages on SNMA's social media platforms and encourage followers to donate.
 - 2. Offer SNMA's physical space to host activities and events of partner BIPOC-focused LGBTQ+ organizations.
 - 3. Co-host events with BIPOC-led/BIPOC-focused organizations.
 - 4. Encourage SNMA audience to participate in/promote events held by the aforementioned organizations.
- 3. Provide ongoing training, enrichment and opportunities for staff and leadership to create and sustain a culture of equity and inclusion.**
- a. Develop strategic marketing and communication plans geared towards diverse communities and organizations who are currently undertaking the crucial work of combating white supremacy and anti-Blackness
 - i. Utilize the aforementioned community board to assist in reviewing marketing materials to ensure inclusivity of racial and gender minorities.
 - b. Implement mandatory sexual orientation, racial, ethnicity and gender sensitivity trainings for all board, staff, and volunteers to build competencies.
 - i. Ideally, the training will be conducted within the first month of employment and at the start of each year, and include a post survey to gauge what participants have learned, where training can be improved, etc.

A report summarizing the results of the survey and gauging the efficacy of the training will be produced at the same frequency of these trainings.

- c. Share readings and host learning/sharing sessions for board, staff and volunteers surrounding issues of transphobia, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny etc. (monthly, weekly, etc.)
- d. Establish internship/fellowship programs with BIPOC partner organizations to increase staff/volunteer diversity
 - i. Historically Black institutions, Black trans advocacy and cultural groups.
 - ii. Ensure XX% of interns, fellows are BIPOC individuals

HOLDINGS

The Task Force offers the following broad recommendations. Listed under each recommendation are specific action items and examples suggested by the Task Force.

Holdings include library, archival, and object collections; electronic holdings such as video and audio files and other virtual holdings; public relations documents.

1. Review and diversify current holdings

- a. Maintain a comprehensive list categorizing the library, archival, and museum holdings by BIPOC (individuals/groups).
- b. Critically evaluate library and archival holdings to understand deficiencies with regard to race and gender.
- c. Develop a collecting plan with goals and strategies for diversifying current holdings.
- d. Consult BIPOC canon lists and recommendations in order to add to our library to fill in any gaps in our collection. Here are some examples:
 - i. [Queer Theory \(Brown University\)](#), [Zora Neal Hurston Canon](#), [Queer Indigenous Literature](#), [8 Books Featuring Asian and Queer Women](#), [10 South Asian LGBTQ+ Books that Changed My Life](#)
- e. Require XX% of BIPOC-produced works to the Collections Committee when making suggestions for new accessions.

2. Invite BIPOC community to take cultural and historical ownership of their share of SNMA holdings.

- a. Promote collection and sharing of oral histories with BIPOC elders and youth.
 - i. Establish a new club with vetted participants for pen pals, invite elders to speak of lived experience to youth groups, etc.
- b. Assemble informed groups of volunteers who can identify and recommend specific items which would make the holdings more diverse and inclusive.

3. Continue to grow holdings to include important museum and archival objects representing current culture and history

- a. Create and implement a collecting plan for items reflecting current events (i.e., BLM, recently elected LGBTQ political officials, etc.)

4. Fund opportunities for diversification of holdings.

- a. Create fundraising strategies to raise funding supporting accessions that diversify holdings.

- b. Include specific lines in the operating budget to support diversification of holdings.

PROGRAMS

Programs include SNMA’s interpretive programs such as exhibitions and public programs; educational programs; and other community engagement programs.

The Task Force offers the following broad recommendations. Listed under each recommendation are specific action items and examples suggested by the Task Force.

1. Renew organization’s goal to diversify exhibitions and public programs to include BIPOC content, perspectives, and collections material.

- a. Create safe physical and virtual spaces for intersectional communication and interaction (i.e., age, race, gender, orientation, class, education, inter-generational, multi-racial and multi-ethnic interactions, especially for trans and non-binary youth)—where everyone feels comfortable.
 - i. Implement mandatory closed captioning for ALL virtual events
 - 1. Employ a trained professional to transcribe
 - ii. Implement quarterly training of all staff/volunteers to ensure institutional voice in all programming and exhibitions adheres to the Diverse Style Guide, GLAAD Media Reference Guide, etc (i.e capitalization of Black, avoidance of defamatory language unless in direct quotation, etc.)
- b. Amplify existing BIPOC exhibition narratives by inviting additional contributions from Black and Brown content experts.
 - i. Require 50% of guest speakers in SNMA virtual series be BIPOC.
 - ii. Require that 50% of yearly exhibitions center materials produced by BIPOC folks (art, publications, etc.).
- c. Employ surveys following exhibitions and programming to gauge audience participation (mostly among the including BIPOC partner organizations).

1. Ensure that in our exhibitions, public programs, collecting plans, the originating voices of gay people of color themselves are bona fide, authoritative, and active in the telling. It is not enough for an anonymous curatorial voice to talk about BIPOC history and culture.

- a. Invite BIPOC guest curators and program participants to participant and critique programs.
 - i. Require 50% of ALL guest curators for SNMA exhibitions be BIPOC
- b. Offer story-telling activities and exhibitions that center on BIPOC people.
- c. Promote collection and sharing of oral histories with BIPOC elders and youth.
 - i. Collect one local history quarterly from BIPOC elders and youth to expand on holdings and remain available for future exhibitions and programming

2. In SNMA’s interpretive and programmatic practice, empower the narrative of gay BIPOC communities as contemporary, diverse, politically active, and artistically productive.

- a. Encourage an active collection of objects from ongoing BIPOC LGBTQ events (BLM, Rainbow wave of recently elected LGBTQ+ political officials, etc.)
- b. Create a program or exhibit that invites the community to contribute photos with short descriptions and personal stories.
- c. Adjust outward-facing language (i.e., mailings, brochures, social media, web, etc.) to signal dedication to greater inclusivity. Consider offering translations in additional languages relevant to South Florida such as: Haitian Kreyol, Spanish, etc.

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2020/the-mets-plans-for-anti-racism>

<https://www.wearebeloved.org/blog/2020/5/29/white-supremacy-amp-anti-blackness-a-covert-amp-overt-beast>

<https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2020/08/what-should-a-museum-look-like-in-2020>

[Chicago History Museum DEI Strategic Plan](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/25/arts/design/philip-guston-exhibition-delayed-criticism.html>

[The White Supremacy Elephant in the Room](#)

[Queer Theory \(Brown University\), Zora Neal Hurston Canon, Queer Indigenous Literature, 8 Books Featuring Asian and Queer Women, 10 South Asian LGBTQ+ Books that Changed My Life](#)

Steve Locke article in Art Forum