

NYCMER's Statement on Racial Violence and Discrimination

The history of museums is fraught. Though some serve as vital community centers, many were founded and continue to be funded by the white and wealthy, with that wealth derived from a history of slavery, colonialism, exploitation, and violence. It is impossible for institutions to remain uninfluenced by systematic bias, including the deeply embedded anti-Black racism that caused the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and many before them. **The New York City Museum Educators Roundtable mourns their deaths and stands with the waves of protestors and activists working toward change across the country.**

Black lives matter. As museum educators, we serve as community advocates and we know that to lift up Black lives is to lift us all up. To best serve our communities, we must engage with anti-racist practices personally and professionally. While many museums remain closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, our work as educators never stops.

As we call on museums, museum leaders, board members, and educators to address systematic bias, we highlight the following actions. Additionally, we have listed resources on our website, compiled by the [Board of the Museum Education Roundtable](#), which we have expanded upon, that approach various aspects of support.

- Analyze your collections to reveal throughlines of racial injustice in history, art, anthropology, science, and museology, and bring those to light. If the stories of underrepresented communities are missing, reflect on why those are lacking in your collections and work to display those stories.
- Consider existing structures of racism that keep our workplaces largely [racially segregated](#) by job type and status, take steps to dismantle the barriers you can control, and advocate for broader change beyond your walls. Black communities are among those most deeply affected by COVID-19 – both the virus and the economic fallout – and we must confront the extent to which decisions around museum staffing, layoffs, and furloughs during this crisis have mirrored this.
- Amplify the voices of and listen to Black artists, scientists, curators, researchers, educators, and others. Pay fair wages.
- Challenge yourself and your audiences by asking difficult questions about racial identity, racism, and how it impacts the space museums exist in.

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In February, NYCMER hosted “Unpacking Identity: Museums, Race, and Education,” a workshop by Keonna Hendrick and Marit Dewhurst. We wish to share their words again:

“Silence, in the face of racism and injustice, is complicity. While some may want to believe that museums are neutral spaces, they are far from that. It is our responsibility—as educators committed to creating more just and equitable societies—to understand how our daily practices might actually enable White supremacist (and heteronormative, patriarchal) thinking. And while the work that must be done can feel overwhelming at times, we just cannot be afraid to start.”

- Dewhurst, M. & K. Hendrick. (2016) [“Dismantling Racism in Museum Education.” *Journal of Folklore and Education*, \(3\). 25–30.](#)

Challenging and addressing systematic roadblocks involves long-term work. We are committed to advocating for diversity and equity in the field, and our broader communities. We know that NYCMER has work to do. In particular, we thank our Peer Groups for engaging members with issues of injustice and inherent bias. We invite your input, and you are welcome to email us at president@nycmer.org.

We stand with, support, and thank those working to challenge and change systems of oppression. Especially during a time of overlapping crises.

In solidarity,

The New York City Museum Educators Roundtable Board of Trustees