

Open Letter from the Department of Education

June 11, 2020

ATTN: Glenn Lowry

CC: Odessa Matsubara, Sarah Suzuki, Peter Reed, James Gara, Tunji Adeniji, Ramona Bannayan, Todd Bishop, Ronnie Heyman and Paula Crown, and all Education Department staff

Dear Glenn:

Thank you for speaking with us last week, providing space for reflection, and inviting us to share our ideas and concerns.

We are writing to you as members of the Education Department, who know we must commit to examining and ending structural racism and white supremacy in our programs, hiring practices, and workplace culture. We recognize that our department has a great deal of work to do internally to counter all forms of racism, which are amplified across sex, gender identity, disability, religion, economic status, education, citizenship, language, and many other factors.

Countering structural racism, specifically anti-Blackness, is critical to our department's values and the Museum's mission. Despite the Museum's unprecedented financial crisis, this work is urgent and overdue. Resources, including time and funding, must be allocated towards addressing it.

We call for the following concrete actions and commitments that should be taken now and in the coming weeks by staff, leadership, and the Board to demonstrate solidarity with Black colleagues, artists, and audiences:

- 1. Immediately convene a cross-departmental Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) task force with representatives from all levels of the organization. The task force should develop a strategic plan that addresses anti-Black racism and other forms of discrimination against marginalized groups.** This plan should include measurable goals and outcomes and be responsive to concerns identified by the communities most impacted. The plan should guide decision-making throughout the Museum, including decisions by leadership and Trustees.
- 2. Immediately hire a consultant or consulting agency to perform an audit of our current practices and conditions as they relate to anti-Blackness and structural racism and to effectively guide our Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) efforts.** The process for hiring consultants should be transparent and directed by the DEAI task force, prioritizing perspectives from staff at all levels who are most impacted by issues of racism within the institution. Consultants should aid in the creation of safe forums for staff to share experiences and ideas, including but not limited to the administration of an anonymous all staff survey about structural racism and inequality at MoMA. The aggregated results should be shared with the entire staff, with care towards the privacy and protection of individuals. The consultant and DEAI task force should

work together to determine the priorities and direction of anti-racist and anti-discrimination efforts at MoMA.

3. **Commit to mandatory anti-racist education facilitated by outside consultants for all staff and for all members of the Board of Trustees to begin this summer and required on an ongoing basis.**
4. **Immediately conduct a transparent review of MoMA's hiring of off-duty NYPD officers and contracting of T&M Protection Resources, LLC.** The review should critically consider whether our current relationships with the NYPD and T&M align with our values as an institution and commit to a plan that frames the safety of our staff and visitors within the understanding that we live in a militarized and anti-Black society. This review and any alternative approaches developed should involve collaboration with front-line staff in Security, Visitor Engagement, Retail, Operations, Education, and other staff who directly engage with the public to ensure they are safe and supported in their vital roles.
5. **Commit to paying all artists, scholars, and outside collaborators fair and consistent honoraria across the Museum.** Relying on those who are willing and able to work without an honorarium is an inequitable practice. We therefore ask that the Museum commit to consistent pay rates to ensure that the Museum is engaging racially and economically diverse creative voices.
6. **Hire, support, mentor, and promote Black staff and staff who represent the diversity of New York City at all levels including leadership.** We ask the Museum to commit to a clear, transparent hiring plan with measurable outcomes, led by the consultant in partnership with Human Resources and with accountability from all departments. This should include trauma-informed support, resources for professional development, and opportunities for mentorship and growth, such as allocation of funds for conference attendance and access to training within and outside of the institution, particularly for non-managerial positions. Pay equity, union representation, and funded professional development should be put in place for interns, fellows and temporary staff, many of whom are Black staff and staff of color.
7. **Commit to a clear timeline for rehiring Educators and Facilitators with a reformed employment structure.** Educators and Facilitators performed mission-critical work, per the Museum's educational charter. When their contracts were terminated in March 2020, MoMA lost some of our most diverse colleagues in terms of race, class, gender, and disability. These valued colleagues have deep ties to schools and community partners. Their termination has resulted in a widespread negative impact on the teaching artists themselves, along with some of our most diverse New York City audiences.
8. **Create a transparent and cross-departmental review and evaluation of exhibitions, programs, acquisitions, and other initiatives to assess impact on DEAI goals.** Clearly define audience goals for exhibitions and programs and include a structure for DEAI assessment beforehand and evaluation after. Set up channels that invite critical feedback from our audiences and staff to help the Museum learn and adapt.

9. **Begin a process to revise the [MoMA Mission Statement](#) with staff input.** Explicitly affirm the Museum's commitment to cultivate a more diverse audience reflective of New York City and better serve them. Remove ideas that promote a white, colonizing perspective, including those that prioritize the care of objects over people. Provide a Land Acknowledgement that recognizes the Museum sits on Lenape land and use it online, at the Museum, and in programming.

10. **Put forward a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to commit to increasing the number and influence of Board members marginalized along lines of race, class, gender, and disability.** This should not only include the appointment of more Black members with voting power, but also a thorough review of the broader appointment process and union involvement.

11. **Present a public statement to our community with the steps the Museum will take to address anti-Blackness and inequity in our institution.** This statement should include specific actions that the Museum plans to take as a mechanism for transparency and accountability.

We know our department is not the only one engaged in these urgent conversations. We are eager to move forward together with our colleagues to fulfill the Mission Statement's directive for the Museum to "periodically reevaluate itself, responding to new ideas and initiatives with insight, imagination, and intelligence" as well as encourage "openness and a willingness to evolve and change."

We are sharing this open letter with our colleagues in an effort to break down communication barriers across departments and contribute to a truly Museum-wide conversation on racial justice. We welcome you to make this available to the entire staff.

Sincerely,

The Education Department