



# Opening The Museum

History and Strategies

Toward a More Inclusive Institution

The Children's Museum, Boston

Patricia A. Steuert with Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi

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# OPENING the Museum

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History and Strategies  
Toward a More Inclusive Institution

Patricia A. Steuert  
with Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi

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The Children's Museum in  
Jamaica Plain until 1979

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History and Strategies Toward a More Inclusive Institution

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with Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi  
The Children's Museum, Boston

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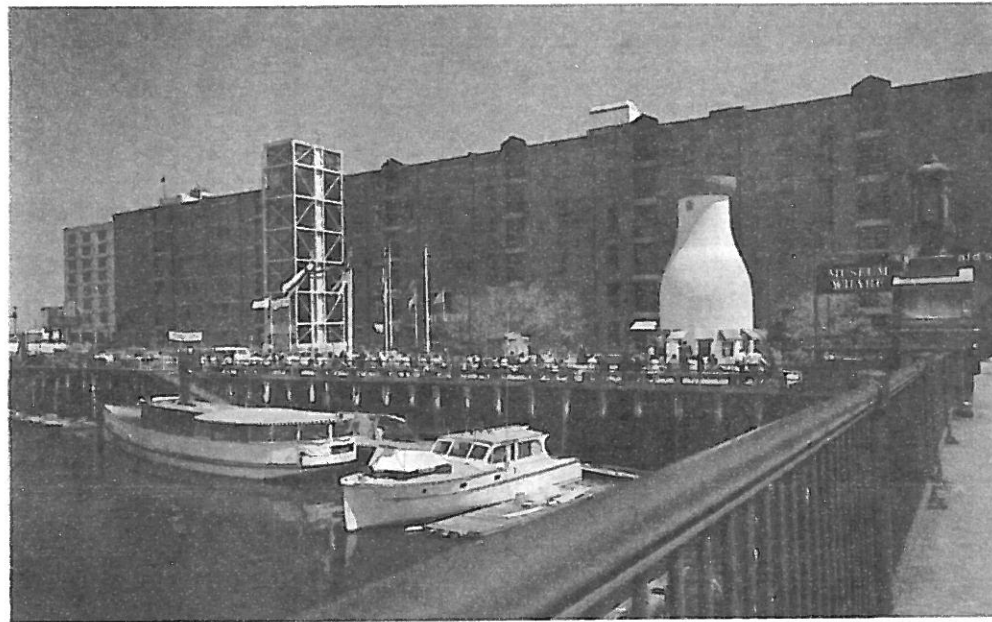


Photo: Steve Rosenthal

Museum Wharf, Boston, present location  
of The Children's Museum

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Patricia A. Steuert, *l. to r.*  
Joanne Jones-Rizzi,  
Aylette Jenness



Photo: Max Belcher

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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WE WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE WORK OF PAST AND PRESENT STAFF MEMBERS AND ALL THE COLLABORATORS WHO HAVE worked with The Children's Museum in Boston (TCM) over the past three decades. We wish we could name everyone who was part of this effort. Past staff, under the direction of Mike Spock including Dorothy Clark, Binda Colebrook, Cynthia Cole, Elaine Heumann Gurian, Jim and Karen Zien, Janet Kamien, Judy Battat, Alan Bell, Sonnet Takahisa, Klare Shaw, Nancy Sato and too many others to name, greatly influenced the direction of the museum. All of their efforts laid the foundation for what the museum is doing today.

The photo of the current staff with director Ken Brecher was taken in May 1992 and is included to emphasize that diversity is part of the work of everyone in the museum today: the staff in the shop, the curators, the people in the business office, at the front desk, on the exhibit floor and behind the scenes. The photos of specific departments introduce you to some of the current staff who have worked, many of them for over a decade, on the issues addressed in this book. What we describe in this publication is the result of the commitment of many people. Policies, plans and programs are created by people and it is people who bring about change.

Exhibitions and publications at the museum are a joint effort of developers and designers, and we have Dan Spock, Design Director, and Masa Sato, Designer, to thank for expanding these ideas visually. Many of the photos in the book were taken by Max Belcher, the photographer who also took *The Kids Bridge* photos.

We are grateful to the foundations, corporations, government agencies and individuals who have supported our cultural, community and multicultural

programs throughout the years. They have enabled us to research, develop, try out and revise the ideas presented in this book. Their courage to fund new ideas has created a dynamic and changing institution and the ripples are visible beyond our walls in institutions across the country. We are especially indebted to the Rockefeller Foundation for the opportunity to share our experiences with other museums through this publication.

We want to acknowledge the contributions of Mike Spock, (Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago), Bonnie Pitman (University Art Museum, Berkeley), Kenneth Brecher and Laurie Zwicky (The Children's Museum, Boston) who critiqued drafts and made useful suggestions. Finally, a special thanks to Beth Perdue who managed all phases of this publication, created the bibliography, gathered text from many staff and edited it with intelligence and sensitivity, a truly multicultural accomplishment.

Pat Steuert  
Aylette Jenness  
Joanne Jones-Rizzi



# P R E F A C E

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FRIDAY EVENINGS ARE WHEN I FIND IT MOST EXHILARATING TO BE THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM. WE ARE OPEN UNTIL 9:00 PM; admission is only \$1.00; and two hundred members of the public, from youth groups and families, sleep overnight at the Museum. The "Friday Night crowd" is visibly excited and energetic.

In Boston, unlike many other urban centers, people come into the heart of the city at night, to go to The Children's Museum. I can count on seeing family groups who have walked over from nearby Chinatown, adolescents from many neighborhoods, scouts with their sleeping bags, college students on dates, many familiar faces from both suburbs and city.

First time visitors often look amazed upon arrival. Could this be the right place? Is this a museum? For many it appears different or new, but somehow it feels safe.

I believe that these people—children and adults—are enjoying in a visible and telling way, the experience of being in a society that has removed the familiar lines of culture, race, age and class. An eminent French sociologist recorded his impressions of our museum as that of "an intentional community, perhaps even utopian in expression, where the public participates and learns in ways that are affirming to families and instructive about how to live in society."

Walking through the museum, I observe people not only actively enjoying our exhibitions and programs, but finding in the visit the context for serious conversation. It is not unusual to see individuals huddled in corners or

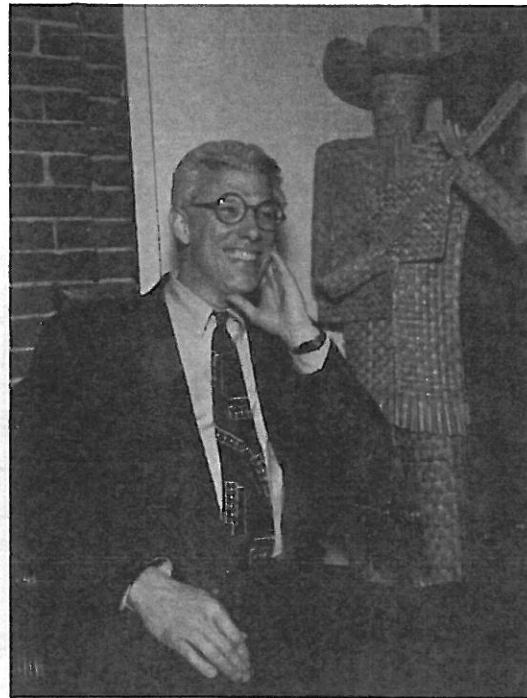


Photo: Max Belcher

wandering from floor to floor, deep in discussion. Often people, frequently parents, who didn't know each other, recognize common issues and feel comfortable enough to think aloud, to exchange ideas.

On Friday evenings, I see demonstrated what our decades of cultural, community and multicultural programs have been working to accomplish. They have been about giving permission to ask questions, to express deeply-held feelings in a public place, and ultimately about building partnerships for social change. I would also like to think they have been about redefining the place of museums in our times.

Our multicultural and multiracial society has a need for institutions that provide dynamic and accessible models for change.

"Opening the Museum" documents one institution's attempt to listen, to frame the questions, to learn from experience, and to grow in encouraging and unexpected ways.

Kenneth S. Brecher, Director

# INTRODUCTION

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THIS PUBLICATION RECORDS THE PROCESS THROUGH WHICH THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM (TCM) IN BOSTON HAS become a more inclusive institution and offers encouragement, strategies and ideas for other museums in their efforts. Elements of our history over the last three decades illustrate changes in direction, educational moments, or new perspectives. Both successes and failures are included describing our efforts to diversify our audience, staff and board; make collections decisions; collaborate with communities; and create exhibitions, public programs, and publications. The final section outlines the next steps for us and resources that we have found helpful.

The Children's Museum is eighty years old this year. Children tell us it's a great place to visit. We see how they enjoy it. They drop balls down fifty foot runways to understand momentum. They map out the Tokyo subway system. They sit down and experience firsthand the limitation and liberation of a wheelchair. They travel *The Kids Bridge* to look at racism in their own environment and themselves.

What visitors don't see are all the in-depth, behind the scenes programs, the important community collaborations, and the ground-breaking research and development projects which have influenced the direction of the museum over the past several decades.

As Deputy Director, I plan and supervise exhibitions and programs. To keep in touch with the audience I often listen to visitors as I walk through the museum.

One day, I overheard a parent talking with her two sons in an exhibit designed to help children understand their bodies. The boys were matching their skin color against a patchwork of colors. After reading the text about melanin and skin color, one of the boys, who was about ten, said, "Why didn't you ever tell us that all skin is the same?" I never knew it myself until today," was the parent's reply.

Another day, I was touring some visitors and I passed by a woman and her daughter using the interactive video on racism in *The Kids Bridge* exhibit. Through this video, the visitor interacts with kids who are telling stories of experiences with racism and are discussing with their friends how they felt and what they did. The woman approached me and asked if I worked at the museum. When I said yes, she said, "If only I had seen that when I was a child."

I feel privileged to work in an institution that keeps trying to help children understand and enjoy the world in which they live. At the museum, we believe that children learn best from direct experience. Because many children growing up in the greater Boston area today live in a diverse world, we have been working for many years to make their experience in the museum a multicultural one.

By the word multicultural, I mean a place where all people are valued and welcomed, where multiple perspectives are encouraged, and where board, staff, audience and program reflect the community in which we live. Looking back, I see that we have made great progress even though much more remains to be done.



In this publication, I document some of what we have experienced over the last two or three decades as the institution has struggled to become more culturally diverse. We do not debate the theoretical issues of cultural representation, but we describe our experiences in attempting to implement them. Our subject matter is more appropriately described as long-term, full-fledged, inside-out institutional change.

Recording our history at this moment has been difficult, because we are in the midst of this process and have a long way to go to reach our goals. We are not experts but we are quite experienced. What we know definitively is that the more we learn, the more there is to know. Some days this is an exciting and challenging prospect, inviting us all to learn to look at the world in new ways. Other days, when we don't have the resources, the energy or the systems to keep moving forward, it is frustrating and discouraging. For some of us the changes are too slow, for others too fast.

This book is not mine alone. It represents the work of many past and present staff and board members who have advocated for an inclusive museum through the years. It has multiple voices and belongs to many people. Staff and colleagues from other museums have contributed ideas, reviewed and critiqued the text.

Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi have provided strong leadership for the museum as co-directors of the Multicultural Program. They have collaborated on this publication and have each written sections.

But it also is my book. I have a personal passion about museums because I believe that at their best they can provide real value in peoples' lives: a connection with the past, moments of beauty and delight, shared family experiences and life-long opportunities for learning.

In the 1960's I was involved in the Civil Rights Movement and saw the legal barriers to integration in the South. As a substitute teacher in the Boston Public Schools, I saw the inequity of resources for children from one neighborhood to another. I began to understand the subtle, structural impediments to full participation by all people in institutions in the North.

In 1967, I sat with a group of people including Mel King, former State Representative, now Director of the Community Fellows Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a diner on Columbus Avenue in Boston. The group was discussing strategies to achieve access to equal education for all Boston school children. Mel King felt strongly that the leadership for change needed to come from the black community. I remember asking if he saw a role for people who were not black but who were also committed to equity. He responded that white people need to change white institutions.

When I interviewed for a job with Mike Spock, the Director of The Children's Museum in 1968, he said he was trying to create a place that worked for all kinds of learners. At the time I was working with children in Boston neighborhoods who had few educational resources. I remember telling him that he had a great idea but only part of the audience. I didn't get that job, but six months later the museum called me back. And for almost 25 years, I, along with an incredible collection of educators, directors, board members, community activists, designers, curators, and other staff, have been "*opening*" the Children's Museum in Boston.

Pat Steuert, *Deputy Director, The Children's Museum, Boston*



# Starting Off

The Children's Museum staff in 1984





# UNDERSTANDING YOUR MOTIVATIONS

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## WHY DIVERSITY?

THE FIRST QUESTION IS WHY. BECOMING MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IS A RADICAL CHANGE FROM THE HISTORY OF MUSEUMS. The process involves learning to think in new ways, sharing power and decision-making, developing a staff with a variety of cultural perspectives as well as professional skills and opinions, developing new skills, and reallocating resources. It is a continuous and often difficult task.

Yet many museums are talking diversity. Most recent conferences have had sessions regarding access and cultural pluralism. Some institutions have begun forming committees and including goals on diversity in their long-range plans. Books and bibliographies on the subject are available.

Why are so many institutions challenging conventional ideas and exploring the philosophy of multiculturalism? The answer is complex and differs from one institution to another. In its most basic form, it involves recognizing the need to make the cultural resources of this nation accessible to people of all cultures, races, ages and economic backgrounds. It means that cultural institutions should represent all the people who form this country. And it means that the leadership and decision-making process of institutions which are representing all cultures should be formed from all cultures. In order to truly be a democratic, egalitarian society, our cultural institutions must include everyone.

## Motivations

To successfully transform your institution, the first task is to understand your motivation. Do you choose to become a more inclusive institution to fulfill your mission, to comply with regulations, to increase visitor attendance, to obtain public support, or to better understand your collections? Will your commitment end with the fulfillment of legal requirements, or will you embrace ideas that move you beyond legality toward institution-imposed goals and standards?

When we were in the midst of long-range planning in the early eighties, Dr. Chester Pierce, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard University, was on our board. He attended most of the evening board and staff sessions which were designed as discussions to determine the goals for the next five years. In his strong, quiet manner he counseled us to consider our course carefully. Did we really want to be inclusive or did we just want to do outreach? Did we want people of color to participate in all aspects of the museum or just in particular special programs and events? He provided us with demographic information about the future population of the country and was clear about the potential he saw for the museum's role. But he said we should consider carefully if this was a short-term goal or a long-range direction.

Your motives are likely to be numerous and complex. The mission of your institution, its management structure and style, and its location may be determining factors. Likewise, there may be motives specific to your institution. In the following pages, we have explored a few motives in greater depth.

## Institutional Mission

The mission of an institution needs to be examined to determine the intended purpose and audience. The more than 6000 museums in this country consist of many disciplines with different missions and levels of

resources. Most museums define their mission by their content - art, science, or history, not primarily by their audiences. Children's museums define themselves by their target audience and often include many content areas. Some museums further define their content as a particular cultural group or location, (e.g. the Museum of Afro American History or the New York Historical Society) but do not seek to limit their audience to African Americans or people from New York. All kinds of museums set multicultural goals but they will be different at each institution.

Our mission at The Children's Museum in Boston - to use the museum's resources "to help children understand and enjoy the world in which they live" - has provided the foundation for our work. Over the years this has meant creating exhibitions and programs to help children observe the natural and built environment, feel comfortable with computers, enjoy the city, and learn about the lives of all kinds of people and the challenges of people with differing abilities.

For more than two decades, multicultural work has been central to the museum's mission. The children who visit TCM are growing up in a diverse world, attending schools with classmates from many cultures. As they grow up, they will work with people from diverse backgrounds and live in a global environment. It would be difficult for us to fulfill our mission to help children understand their world if we did not reflect today's society in all its complexity. For example, if the collections we presented only acknowledged part of Victorian America, or if our Native American Program focused only on the past history of the culture, we could fulfill our obligation to interpret our collection but not our obligation to help children understand their world.

*To fulfill your mission is one reason to diversify.*

### Cultural Collections

Museums are entrusted with the responsibility to collect, preserve and interpret cultural artifacts which become the cultural heritage of the country. How will museums decide what is important to keep?

At TCM, we have an American History collection of beautiful and interesting objects. However, it is skewed to an upper-class white experience. This makes it difficult for the museum to create accurate historical exhibitions from the toys and artifacts in our collection. If the early curators had had a multicultural perspective, the museum would have a broader and more representative collection today.

*To provide future generations with accurate cultural history is one reason for moving toward diversity.*

### Demographics

The demographics of the United States continue to change. What are the projected changes in the geographic area served by your institution? If you intend to be relevant and accessible to your community, you must define community. Who are the cultural groups in your area today? How do they differ from 20 or even 10 years ago? And how are they changing today?

At TCM, we are aware of the growing diversity of our potential audience as documented by government statistics. According to the 1990 Census figures, during the ten years between 1980 and 1990, the Asian population in Massachusetts increased dramatically by 189%, the Hispanic population by 103%, and the black population by 35%. In contrast, the white population grew by only 0.8%.

This growth of diverse groups is predicted to continue into the next century for Massachusetts as well as the entire nation. According to published reports,\* the non-Hispanic white population of Massachusetts is expected to grow by only 6% in the next 25 years, whereas the black and Hispanic populations in 2015 will have expanded by 68% and 98% respectively.

*To have visitors and members in the future is a reason to move toward diversity.*

\*Woods & Poole Economics, Inc., Washington, D.C. 20009

### Professional Standards

Leadership for the museum profession on issues of diversity has come from

many sources including a nation-wide task force composed of museum professionals led by Bonnie Pitman. The result of their work, published as Excellence and Equity in 1992, by the American Association of Museums (AAM), establishes guidelines for all museums. The following statement is taken from this document.

"Museums perform their most fruitful public service by providing an educational experience in the broadest sense: by fostering the ability to live productively in a pluralistic society and to contribute to the resolution of the challenges we face as global citizens. The public educational responsibility of museums has two facets: excellence and equity. In every aspect of their operations and programs, museums must combine a tradition of intellectual rigor with the inclusion of a broader spectrum of our diverse society."

*To support professional standards is a reason to move toward diversity.*

### Funding

Today, museums are dependent on a variety of sources for their funding. Admittedly, foundations', corporations' and government agencies' call for evidence of broad participation can be a strong motivation for change. However, to attempt to achieve diversity solely to meet funding guidelines will probably be unsuccessful both in terms of continued fund-raising and greater diversity.

If the multicultural project is seen as a separate or special program, and is not approached as an integral part of the mission, it may have little impact in terms of institutional change. The special exhibition ends and the audience does not return. The project ends and the new staff has not been integrated into the institution. The result can be disappointment on behalf of the people who feel their invitation to participate was temporary.

At The Children's Museum, fund-raising strategies are developed with an awareness of the larger picture. At the same time that we were implementing grants to work with specific communities, we began fund-raising for a community endowment which would enable us to continue the relationships that we established.

*To increase funding may be a motivation to diversify, but it can backfire if it is not a part of a larger goal.*

### Public Education

Museums have a recognized role to play in educating the public and developing future leaders in the sciences, arts and humanities. The quality of public education varies greatly from one community to another and for many Americans it ends between ages 15 and 18. Museums are places where people can continue to learn throughout their lives and therefore have much to offer to increase the scientific literacy and global understanding of a broad population.

The Children's Museum uses every opportunity through exhibitions, public programs, publishing and seminars to provide learning opportunities for children and adults. Whether the subject is AIDS information in the *Mind Your Own Business* exhibit, parenting seminars as part of the Early Childhood Program, or increasing the public's understanding of science through the *Waves and Vibrations* exhibit, education is core to all of our activities.

*To educate all the public and develop leadership for the future is a reason to diversify.*

The above considerations are just a few of many possible reasons to diversify. Each museum needs to identify its own motives as openly and honestly as possible. A knowledge of the reasons an institution is seeking change will lead to clearer, attainable goals. One way to begin is by examining your institution's current status regarding these goals. Assessing an institution is discussed in the next chapter.

### Words We Use

Clarifying the words that people use is an educational process that is at the core of multicultural understanding. At this museum, the process is both informal - staff defining the terms they use directly with each other, and formal - having procedures for the review of language in print materials, and it has been important to our development as a multicultural institution.

"Word Power", originally from the Council on Interracial Books for Children, has been very helpful to our staff. We have included it in the appendices and encourage you to read it carefully.

# ASSESSING THE INSTITUTION

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AN INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT INVOLVES EXAMINING EACH AREA OF THE MUSEUM AND DETERMINING ITS CURRENT status in terms of diversity. It can be done by museum staff, by staff and board together as part of long-range planning or by an outside consultant trained in assessing institutions.

Using a consultant to assess the institution and help board and staff set goals can be useful. Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman of *New Perspectives*, an organization which consults on issues of diversity, have written a paper called "Assessing Organizational Diversity" which has proven helpful to us and other museums and is included in the appendices. Several of our senior managers have participated in trainings led by *New Perspectives* and their presentation of this material at our Museums 2000 conference in 1991 received strong positive feedback from other museum professionals, some of whom are currently using them as consultants. Because their assessment does not focus specifically on museums, I have developed an assessment tool for museums which consists of a series of questions that may be useful in thinking about your goals. This tool is included in the appendices.

Part of an institutional assessment will be identifying assets and barriers to diversity within the institution. Looking back at our changes over the years, we see several assets that made a difference in our ability to change.

## Leadership from the Top

The continuing presence of advocates for a more inclusive institution on the board and staff provided an on-going commitment to diversity. In the 1960's and 70's board and staff members emphasized diversity primarily in terms of economics. Efforts to be more inclusive focused on enabling children and families with limited financial resources to have access to the museum and its programs. The strategies included reduced prices at designated times, free

admission for school and community groups and various community projects.

It took the combined leadership of individuals on the board, director Mike Spock, and various staff members to create the policies and programs to meet these diversity goals. Substantial progress was made during those years in diversifying group visits and community programs. To quote Mike Spock,

*"The greatest asset has been the champions on the staff and the people who have supported them."*

More recently, under the leadership of director Ken Brecher, we have built on this community involvement to increase diversity of board, staff and visiting public. A multicultural initiative was undertaken to assess every aspect of the museum in terms of diversity. Staff have provided leadership in areas of collections, program and exhibition development, community collaborations and curriculum development.

## The Nature of the Institution

Our status as a "Children's Museum" has made us audience-centered from the beginning. Being as committed to our visitors as we are to our collection and program content is an asset. While we have high standards in the care of our collections and the content of our exhibitions, we do not forget that we also have a responsibility to the public.



Another aspect of the nature of the museum is the learning environment. The museum's educational philosophy is innovative, experimental, and grounded in respect for many ways of learning. This climate fosters an acceptance of multiple points of view and contributes to a staff willingness to learn from each other. The institution's long-term support for research and development encourages new ideas which result in change.

### The Location

The Children's Museum was located in Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood in the city of Boston, from 1913 to 1979. When the museum outgrew this site more than a dozen locations were considered as a new home for the museum. The site selected was a 19th-century wool warehouse located in downtown Boston overlooking the Fort Point Channel.

This present location, along the Fort Point Channel, was selected because of its accessibility from all neighborhoods and its proximity to public transportation; necessary considerations as the museum was striving to reach a larger audience and gas was in short supply. An equally important criterion used by the site selection committee was that the location be seen as "neutral turf" and thus welcoming to every cultural community in and around Boston.

When the selection was made, several trustees argued the importance of the urban, central location despite the difficulty of parking in the immediate area. At the time, this lack of parking, in addition to an underdeveloped surrounding area, made the decision a leap of faith for many board members. The site, however, has since proven to be an asset capable of attracting a large and diverse audience.

### The Times

There were many outside social forces which influenced our commitment to diversify. These included the civil rights movement, desegregation of the Boston Public Schools, the women's movement, accessibility legislation for people with special needs, and the rapidly changing state demographics due to immigration in the 1980's. In addition, the self-examination of the arts community in terms of diversity, which greatly accelerated in the late 1980's and continues today, has supported the museum's direction.

These same influences, however, were present for other cultural organizations yet did not necessarily lead to the development of more diverse institutions. For example, between 1974 and the present, many Boston institutions including TCM, became involved in programs to assist the Boston Public School system during desegregation. Through discussions with colleagues from other institutions, I have found that the long-term effect of these programs on change in the institution was directly related to their staffing strategies. In many institutions, the staff that was hired for the desegregation programs (usually more diverse than existing staff) was not integrated into the institution. Thus, when funds were no longer available to continue the programs, those staff members often left the institution.

At TCM we combined existing staff with new staff by having them work partly on the desegregation programs and partly in other museum programs. Thus, the knowledge and sensitivities that staff people gained by working with diverse populations of parents, children, and teachers also affected the way they developed other programs and services for the institution. In this way, experiences resulting from the desegregation programs shaped many facets of the museum and continue to influence programs today.

While these assets have helped us to become more diverse, there have also been barriers which have impeded our progress.

### Financial Resources

We are an institution dependent on earned income, without a substantial endowment. This is a mixed blessing in terms of diversity. Having to earn our income necessitates that we remain close to our audience and that we pay attention to demographics. However, not having adequate resources and having to depend on grants restricts us from implementing changes as rapidly as we would choose.

We are in the process of increasing our endowments which support cultural and community programs in order to make us less dependent on restricted grants.

### Communication Systems

Communication systems - good or bad - will influence the diversity work that you do. When the institution is undergoing change and people do not feel they have access to information - the rumor mill runs wild.

Every few years as we grew, our systems for sharing information no longer worked and we had to try to invent better ones. While this can be a time-consuming process, it is important because shared information can make change less threatening.

When communication is off, you'll hear comments like "the staff feels left out," or departments think other departments are operating under different policies, or people say "I didn't hear about it until it was too late to comment."

To improve communication we hold cross-departmental meetings to assess staff concerns and then create task forces with staff and managers to solve the problems. These communication problems seem more difficult to solve as we become a larger institution.

When the museum was smaller, regular staff meetings attended by all departments were effective in raising and discussing important issues. Although the larger all-staff meeting is still held once a month, it is no longer effective as a forum for discussing complicated issues and is now generally used to share information about upcoming events and new projects, for outside speakers, or for some forms of staff training. At our present size, we've found that smaller departmental or cross-departmental meetings are more effective for important discussions. Diversity training, discussed later in this publication, has improved staff communication.

### Invisibility and Long-term Nature of Change

Diversity work often involves small incremental changes which are sometimes difficult to perceive. Within the museum, the Community Outreach program, the Native American program, the Desegregation Programs, and the development of the Ethnic Discovery curriculum project have had major, lasting effects on the institution. However, these were subtle, long-term changes and were not always apparent to other staff, board members and the profession. Consequently, each of these multicultural achievements was valued and supported independently but was not broadly recognized as affecting the whole museum. It was not until a museum-wide multicultural initiative in 1987, which included the installation of *The Kids Bridge* exhibit in 1990, that these individual achievements were recognized for their impact on moving the institution toward diversity.

### Staff Turnover

Longevity is a strength as well as a barrier to creating a diverse workforce. An institution needs the highly skilled people who have worked in a diverse environment and participated in diversity training to stay long enough to integrate the concepts into the fabric of their work. On the other hand, if everyone in a heavily white institution stays and it is not possible to expand the workforce, it is difficult to recruit and promote a diverse staff.

While TCM has a normal turnover rate in lower and mid-level positions, our senior developer and manager positions turn over much less frequently. In reviewing the eight major content areas today, three have had the same leadership for over 15 years. Three areas have had leadership which has been in place for 5-10 years and two have had change in leadership in the past five years. Two of these senior curator/educator positions are held by people of color who now make up approximately 20 - 25% of museum staff annually. Change does occur and every opportunity is explored to expand the diversity of the leadership of the museum.

### Size

The size of an institution can be a barrier to diversity. When we moved to Museum Wharf in 1979, our attendance grew from 180,000 during our last year in Jamaica Plain to 450,000 the first year at the Wharf and has ranged from 395,000 to 520,000 annually for the past decade. Our staff and budget continued to grow to serve the increased audience and to support our many national replication projects and major fund-raising activities.

The current size, 125 full time equivalent salaried positions, makes it harder for staff to get to know each other. In past years, friendships were made through informal staff interaction, staff development programs and by working together on projects. Staff people of different backgrounds socialized together and knew each others' families. These personal contacts built an understanding of similarities and differences that served as a foundation for coping with difficult issues. We cannot document it, but some staff feel that electronic mail systems and other technologies which reduce the need for personal conversation also have an adverse effect on staff people of different backgrounds learning how to relate to each other.

To summarize some of the major factors enabling the museum to become more inclusive were *leadership from the board, directors and staff, the mission and educational philosophy of the institution, the new location of the building, and external social forces*. Events and circumstances which impeded our progress included *limited financial resources, problems of growth including ineffective communication systems, and the inherent difficulty of change*. In our endeavor to become a more inclusive institution we have learned that diversity involves every aspect of the museum. The following sections describe issues and experiences that we have encountered in all areas of the museum.

# A d m i n i s t r a t i o n

The Children's Museum staff in 1992



Staff photo: Max Belcher





# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES IN TERMS OF DIVERSITY? OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONSISTING OF 38 Trustees and 114 members of the Corporation, work with the director and staff to periodically review the mission statement of the museum, usually as part of long-range planning. Through their efforts the current mission statement, revised in 1989, articulates the museum's commitment to diversity. The board also approved the long-range plan based on the mission statement.

The process for the museum's current long-range plan included board and staff agreement on the mission statement and commitments. From this agreement, staff generated goals and objectives to fulfill the mission which were discussed and revised with the trustees at several meetings and approved in 1989. While previous goals called for making the museum available to broad audiences, this document clearly stated "The museum needs to be a fully multicultural institution." (See entire mission statement in the appendices.)

Leadership from the board over the past two decades to ensure an economically diverse audience has been evident in the following kinds of decisions.

- Setting affordable admissions policies.
- Supporting reduced admissions times for the general public.  
(Free Friday Nights, Dollar Night)
- Contracting with McDonald's to provide inexpensive food services in the building.
- Seeking state support to sponsor school and community groups.
- Establishment of a Community Endowment in 1982.

Other decisions were essential to our evolution toward a more culturally inclusive institution.

These decisions include:

- Selecting a site for the new facility that was seen as "neutral turf."
- Setting experience with diversity as a criterion for selection in hiring a new director.
- Passing up fund-raising opportunities that were insensitive to various groups or communities.
- Supporting the museum's development of community outreach programs and fund-raising to support them.
- Working to diversify the make-up and leadership of the board in terms of race, cultural background and gender.
- Supporting teaching about other cultures from the perspective of members of those cultures.
- Supporting repatriation through the collections policy.

#### The Children's Museum board members

Nan Bennett Kay, back row, l. to r. Suzanne Pucker, front row, l. to r.  
 Sherif A. Nada, Benaree Wiley  
 Stanley F. Schlozman,

#### Using Fund-raising Events to Broaden the Family

During the 1970's several fund-raising events were conducted by *Museum Associates*, a very dedicated, although homogeneous, group of volunteers. They created the financially successful Haunted House which supported the Community Service Division for several years. When the museum moved to the Wharf there was no facility for the Halloween Haunted House. The Associates disbanded and the fund-raising responsibility remained with the museum board.

A Benefit fund-raising committee, formed in the late-1980's, made major progress in diversifying the supporters of the museum. It adopted the museum's multicultural initiative as the theme for the 1990 annual fund-raising event. At that time a deliberate decision was made to seek out people from the African American community to co-chair committees and to become involved in all aspects of the event. Sharing leadership roles was crucial to getting people involved in the event and in the museum. This was the first time that cultural diversity was articulated as a specific goal in a fund-raising activity.



Photo: Casey McNamara

single fund-raising event in the museum's history. The people working on the Benefit were very diverse and the success of the event was encouraging. However, the working process was not always smooth, a fact which raised the need for better communication and consciousness-raising among the board and supporters of the museum.

Another challenge that arose from this process was a desire to involve the people who became committed to the museum's mission through their Benefit efforts in additional leadership roles in other museum activities. This process was hampered by not having a sufficient committee structure in place to accommodate the expansion. Many people who became involved with the museum through the Benefit have continued to work on museum activities or have since joined the Corporation, which is a source of leadership for the Board of Trustees.

#### Board Diversity Issues

Several questions are raised in most discussions about board diversity. How do you find

people? What if no one wants to participate? Will giving decline?

The Benefit was a great success as a multi-racial social event, not an ordinary occurrence in Boston according to many participants. It was also the largest

The board has used several strategies to broaden the pool of trustees. I have

already described the Benefit which involved many leaders from the African American community who were not previously involved in the museum. The board also consults with other cultural and community organizations and asks staff for recommendations of community leaders. It has been our experience that people from many backgrounds want to participate on committees, on the corporation and as trustees. However, as one trustee put it, "the challenge is to have people feel welcome, not tolerated."

If you are having trouble finding people from diverse backgrounds who want to participate as board members, it may be helpful to set up a focus group or speak directly with several community leaders to better understand the real or perceived barriers.

The question on the possible decline of giving is more difficult to address. It is sometimes a loaded question and you need to examine its underlying

assumptions. If your board is diverse *economically* and not everyone gives equally, you would want the same standards for a *culturally* diverse board. If you look for a minimal level of financial support from all board members, you would have to look for people of different cultural backgrounds capable of giving at the same level.

At The Children's Museum, the board provides leadership in defining the mission, setting policy and assuring the financial stability of the institution. Board members are informed of their obligation to support the institution with their skills, time and resources during solicitation and board orientation sessions, and we have 100% trustee financial support.

Our experience has been that board giving and fund-raising for the institution are more closely related to the economy than to diversity.

## Stereotypes

When we moved into the Wharf a seafood restaurant opened on the first floor opposite the McDonald's at the other end. It did not last and the space was empty for a while, much to the concern of board members who saw the unused space as lost revenue. A new restaurant came along which was part of a chain and therefore had the depth to risk the then-underdeveloped location. The problem was their logo... a gigantic stereotype of a Mexican man which they wanted to

paint on the outside of the building. *What a dilemma!* We needed the cash; they needed the location. We offered to help change their graphic but they were part of a chain and thought their image was fine.

In the end, the board said no. But it was a difficult decision and not everyone agreed that what was on the outside of the building had anything to do with what we were trying to do inside.

From this experience, we learned to provide potential collaborators with all of our criteria in the beginning, including issues of image. It's easy to give mixed messages, and decisions are difficult when they involve financial risk. Having board members who were knowledgeable about and committed to the museum's mission made the difference.

# MANAGEMENT ISSUES

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## VISION

WE HAVE FOUND THAT INCREASING PERSONAL AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSITY ISSUES FOR BOARD and staff members is a strong foundation for institutional growth; however, we have also learned that real institutional change requires a plan and strategies to carry it through.

For many years Mike Spock, (Director, 1962-86), along with Phyllis O'Connell, Elaine Gurian, Jim Zien, Anne Tribble and myself provided the vision for TCM which was supported by the board and implemented through projects and programs. Under Mike Spock's direction, we established a Community Service Division to work with community centers to develop programs appropriate to their needs. We negotiated for state support to sponsor school and community group visits to the museum. We supported the development of cultural programs with involvement of the people of the culture on staff and on advisory boards. We also supported staff to make the museum accessible to families and children with special needs. We worked to fund the Ethnic Discovery Project and were instrumental in the role of many museums in the Boston Public School Desegregation Programs. Mike Spock held the broad vision, but the plan was decentralized, unwritten, communicated individually and carried out by people passionate about the issues.

This informal plan was successful in allowing individual departments and projects the flexibility to try out new ways of working with various constituencies. However, what was learned in one department did not always have a direct influence on other parts of the museum.

Since 1986, Director Ken Brecher and I have worked together to expand the vision and become more explicit about goals and strategies to become a

multicultural institution. Working with the board, we added a statement of commitments as part of the mission statement during long-range planning. And in 1986, the goals of a multicultural initiative evolved from many efforts including previous work by Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi, who became co-directors of the multicultural program. The goals included:

- Diversify our audience to reflect the demographics of the greater Boston area;
- Achieve staff diversity in every department and at every level;
- Diversify the Board of Trustees;
- Create an exhibition for families on cultural diversity;
- Assess all exhibitions and programs in terms of diversity.

## Leadership

In 1987, Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi began to work with staff and board to carry out the initiative's objectives. The decision to have joint leadership of the Multicultural Program was not easy. We had never had a major program at the museum which was co-directed and we worried about how decisions would get made. In the end, we decided that what we were trying to do would benefit from multiple perspectives and shared power. If issues could not be successfully addressed between the leaders of the program, how could they be managed throughout the institution?



## Double Your Pleasure

Partnerships and collaborative work relationships are concepts that can only enhance the multicultural work environment. Our experience of joint leadership of the Multicultural Program has represented an institutional commitment to shared leadership as well as a visible, strong model for "working it out."

As in any partnership, at best we are good together. There is a balance. Where Aylette is cautious, I say let's do it. I am afraid or anxious, she is confident. We continue to learn from one another. We are both "teachers" - teaching about ourselves and "learners" - learning about each other. We have had to adjust our thinking and to try to understand the other's position, taking into account our differences in race, ethnicity, life experiences, approaches and work styles. We have had to "try on" the other's ideas and experiences and to push ourselves and each other to take things on from a perspective that challenges our racial values, personal beliefs and who we each are.

So it is not easy. When things are going well we are able to help one another, to offer new perspectives and to listen to each other's way of thinking. We have become friends in a familiar, comfortable, sometimes uncomfortable way. Over the years we have come to know each other's weak spots, strengths and fears. As in any partnership there are hard times when it is painful, when you wonder, why doesn't she agree or why can't she see things the way I do. When you know you are the one who is "right."

In retrospect I wouldn't do it any other way. Because of our shared leadership and struggles through the hard stuff, we have been able to shape the direction of this major initiative in ways we never imagined.

Joanne Jones-Rizzi

## Where are We Going?

Joanne and I have co-directed the Multicultural Program for five years now, and each year our work has had successes, problems and new learnings. Learning about cultural diversity and racism is an unending and on-going process, as is institutional change.

Seen in this light, shortcomings don't feel like failures, they feel like necessary steps along the way. We look forward to seeing *The Kids Bridge*, replicated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), travel around the United States in the next few years, and we are planning a series of children's books drawn on the exhibit's themes. We will continue to support staff development at The Children's Museum, to build relationships with new communities in our area, to strengthen and improve collaborations with familiar communities, and to work with the museum profession on these issues which engage us so profoundly.

Aylette Jenness

Although Ken and I interviewed candidates from outside the institution, we were fortunate to be able to hire from existing staff for these positions. Joanne Jones-Rizzi had previously been the director of the Community Outreach program, and Aylette Jenness had been a developer of cultural exhibits and programs. Their jobs required working with other curators, exhibit and program developers, community consultants and at times the whole staff. It helped that they were familiar with the museum and experienced in many aspects of museum work. If we had hired a "diversity expert" without museum experience, we would have needed additional training time.

The skills of the co-directors complement each other and have allowed them to accomplish a great deal in the past five years. They began by assessing the whole museum for areas that needed changing. They planned and involved over 80 staff members in diversity training. They have created the very successful "Kids Bridge" exhibit, now touring the country. They gave

conference presentations at the New England Museum Association (NEMA) and AAM, consulted within the museum and with many outside organizations, conducted a conference for other museums and contributed to the writing of this publication. Many of these accomplishments were achieved with the help of the Multicultural Advisory Board, discussed further in the chapter on cultural exhibitions.

But it has not been easy and at times each of them has felt discouraged, angry or impatient. They have experienced the complexity of joint leadership and the need for problem solving strategies. Most issues they are able to resolve directly with each other. When they come to an impasse, I meet with them individually to clarify the issues and to suggest ways to resolve them together. If this fails we seek help from the museum's diversity consultant. Both are truly committed to issues of equity and developing programs for a broad audience.

## Diversity Plans

The elements in creating an institutional plan include an assessment of the current status of your institution, a description of what you want to accomplish, a profile of the leadership and resources you will need and a projected time frame and monitoring system.

We all agree that it is important to have a plan to provide direction and to use it to monitor progress. We review our progress on the Multicultural Initiative annually and make mid-course changes based on our experiences. We cannot emphasize enough the need to be flexible in this process.

We have accomplished some of the goals that we set five years ago, in other areas, we have only just begun. We are currently in the process of revising the next phase of our multicultural plan.

### Remember:

- Don't be afraid to get help. There are very experienced consultants who have done this before with institutions.
- Assess where you are today.
- Set goals in areas that you want to change.
- Create a plan appropriate to your institution, mission and community.

- Build your diversity goals into your long-range and strategic planning.
- Monitor your goals regularly.
- Communicate your goals to all staff and, however appropriate, to the people you want to include.
- Allocate annual resources based on your goals.
- Don't give up when you make mistakes; this is hard work and it takes a long time.
- Take time to recognize and support your staff and celebrate your achievements.

# AUDIENCE ACCESSIBILITY

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IN THE MUSEUM'S MISSION STATEMENT, WE DEFINE OUR COMMITMENT TO "A CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY diverse audience." As we have struggled to increase accessibility to TCM, we have needed to examine admissions costs and membership policies from an economic perspective.

It is important to remember that cultural representation and economic access are different issues. *Economic access* means developing strategies to ensure that people of all levels of resources can participate. *Cultural representation* encourages participation by persons of all cultural backgrounds. When museums are not clear about this difference, they look for cultural diversity only through strategies of bringing in low-income groups such as school and community groups. This can send the not-so-subtle message that the museum is interested in "doing good work" but not in sharing the power.

As the cost of admission at TCM gradually increased over the years, we began to examine alternative options for families and groups for whom the cost was a barrier. Programs such as low-cost memberships, coupons for reduced admissions, selected hours with reduced prices, and state and corporate sponsorships were explored.

School and community groups were formerly sponsored free of charge through subsidies by the museum and the state. For many years, the museum had a state budget line item to assure equal access for all Massachusetts children. This line item was placed under the Massachusetts Council for Arts and Humanities, but when the the Arts Council budget was severely reduced, we lost our ability to offer subsidies to many Massachusetts children. We have replaced some of the subsidies, but today we are able to sponsor far fewer children than need assistance.

In addition to providing reasonable admissions costs and offering sponsorship to groups, the museum trained lobby staff to recognize and be sensitive to difficult financial situations. These staff members often notice families who are forced to turn around after seeing the admission price and offer them a face-saving way to pay what they can. Memberships also offer a cost-effective way for people who want to visit often, and we developed ways to help parents earn a membership by helping on the floor, assisting a staff person with a program, or contributing a special skill to the museum. We also established FREE FRIDAY NIGHTS from 5-9 pm to ensure accessibility at a time when working parents could visit the museum with their children.

In 1987, at the beginning of what became several years of state cutbacks in support for reduced admissions, management and the board began to re-examine all reduced admissions policies carefully. There was an institutional commitment to continue to be accessible to an economically diverse audience; however, we were forced to reduce the number of sponsored school and community group visits and change the Free Friday Night program to Dollar Night. Friday Night is still seen as a bargain by our visitors and continues to serve our target audience.

A few years ago we began to re-examine some of the discounts that we offered to visitors. We decided to limit discounts that were used mainly by upper income families. We chose to keep those discount programs



targeted to families with fewer resources, such as coupons available in selected neighborhood papers. These decisions are reviewed periodically to determine how successful they continue to be in increasing accessibility for specific populations.

An economic issue closely related to admissions costs concerns a visitor's ability to enjoy the museum without feeling pressured to spend money in addition to admissions costs. While we want visitors to buy in our shop, we know it is also important for families to be able to exit the museum without passing through it. As museums get more and more dependent on earned income, the temptation to sell at every opportunity increases. Institutions need to find the appropriate balance between their mission and their financial needs and understand the pressure felt by people with fewer resources and its impact on their visit.

Affordable food service is also important to many families. When we moved to the Wharf in 1979 we contracted with McDonald's to open six months before the museum did. The decision to affiliate with McDonald's was deliberate, although some board and staff thought we should have a more nutritious operation at the museum. The rationale behind selecting McDonald's, however, involved providing our audience with an affordable and familiar alternative. We also hoped that we could influence them about nutrition. This particular McDonald's did open as one of the first in the country with a salad bar. Being accessible to an economically diverse audience means evaluating admissions, memberships, shops, food services, and special events and finding ways for people with all levels of resources to participate in the museum.

## Reaching Out to a New Audience

Our commitment to serving special needs audiences in a structured way began in 1972 when Elaine Gurian, Director of the Exhibit Center, decided to offer a modified school program for schools and institutions serving handicapped kids. The program was based on an observed need. We could see that the few special needs groups and individuals coming to the museum were not always having a good visit...

Therefore, a program was devised in which:

- Special needs groups were invited to the museum for field trips.
- One-to-one staffing by museum interpreters and volunteers was provided.
- The museum was closed to other school groups for this program one morning each week.
- Museum staff were supervised on the floor and participated in a training and support meeting every week after the children had left...

We learned by doing. We found out that the things we feared didn't necessarily happen, and if they did, that we could handle and survive them, if we were only brave enough to take the initial risk. We also found that there was a lot of satisfaction in overcoming our hesitation and reaching out to a new audience. And finally we learned that experience with all kinds of visitors made us better educators and exhibitors in general.

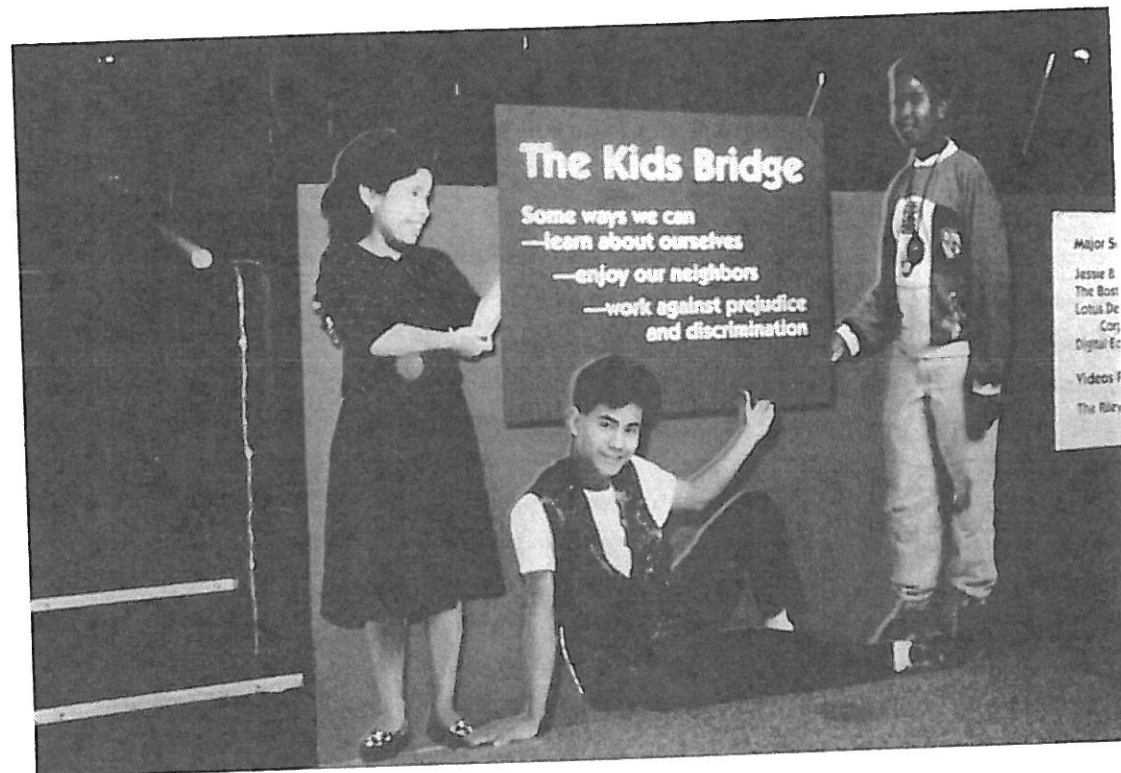
Janet Kamien, Amy Goldbas, Susan Porter  
*Is There Life After 504? 1980*



# ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND FUNDING

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AN INSTITUTION NEEDS TO DETERMINE HOW MUCH IT IS WILLING TO INVEST IN MOVING TOWARD DIVERSITY BECAUSE the process will affect the allocation of its resources. For example, you cannot collaborate with communities without allocating staff time for that purpose. Placing ads in more than one newspaper can add costs or necessitate the redistribution of resources. Even if you plan to fund-raise for specific programs or projects, you may find that funders want an institutional commitment in terms of matching funds.



Over the years The Children's Museum has included funding for community outreach in our operating budget, and this has been supplemented with federal, state, foundation, and corporation support for specific projects. The funding for our original Community Service Division in Jamaica Plain was the result of the "Haunted House," a special event held annually for this purpose. We were invited by the state to expand our community activities in the mid-1980's. This support enabled us to work with over fifty agencies in 15 cities and towns including many neighborhoods of Boston. (See *Working with Communities* chapter.)

In 1984, in order to make community programs less susceptible to economic downturns, we established an endowment for them through a challenge grant from The Boston Foundation. The income from this endowment, now called the Michael Spock Fund, is allocated annually toward programs which strengthen community involvement in the museum. Over the coming years, we need to increase this endowment substantially to meet the demand for community involvement.

Sometimes all or part of the funding for community collaborations and specific projects will go to the community collaborator rather than the museum. For example, a Southeast Asian festival held in 1989, brought us new visitors, but most of the grant funds went directly to the community performers and organizers. It was important for us to learn to share the resources as well as the decision-making in collaborations.

Changing an institution almost always requires some level of staff development and training. In many institutions staff development funding is located

within departmental budgets and allocated by the department head. In order to make sure that all departments were encouraged to participate in diversity training, we allocated the resources from a central budget not in competition with other departmental needs. We were successful in raising funds to support this training but the funders required a commitment from the museum as well. Allocating funds in the operating budget over a period of years for staff development is more effective to this process than one-year, one-time funds. We have spent as little as \$500 and as much as \$12,000 for staff diversity development per year, depending on the agenda.

Finally, as museums we need to help funders understand the importance of continuity in the funding of both community collaborations and staff development. Multiple-year grants are essential for real change, although many foundations are only willing to fund "start up" or seed money.

When we developed the changing community gallery as part of *The Kids Bridge* exhibit, we knew it would take on-going funding to make changes and continue the community collaborations for new exhibits. As communities come forward with the desire to exhibit their culture through the gallery, we need to have funds to be responsive to their needs. Institutions with large endowments may be able to assume those on-going expenses in the operating budget. But for smaller museums it can mean a disproportionate amount of time spent fund-raising.

Funding programs which provide seed money to develop programs and renewable grants to be matched by the institution, would support both new ideas and continuity - particularly important in community collaborations.

# IMAGE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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BETWEEN 1962 AND 1986, MIKE SPOCK SET VERY HIGH STANDARDS AND HELD DEFINITE OPINIONS ABOUT LOOK, design, type face, color, vocabulary and the quality of print materials produced by the museum. Under his leadership, time and money was spent in developing a professional, high quality image in our newsletters, curriculum materials, capital campaign materials, and other printed information.

Most of the museum's early publications reflect a homogeneous audience. Materials directly related to existing cultural programs such as the Native American and Japan Exhibits and the Netsilik Eskimos Kit show cultural artifacts and illustrations or photos of people of the culture. The Ethnic Discovery Project in 1976, which explored multiple cultures, produced materials that were diverse by nature.

In preparation for the move to the Wharf in 1979, text and photographs were more closely examined to ensure that the images for all museum publications embodied the diversity of the desired audience. Although theoretically simple, this plan frequently proved difficult to execute because of the homogeneity of our visitors. Staff often volunteered to import members of their own families for photos, and we used photos of school and community center programs which were more diverse than general admissions visitors.

These concerns for image were part of an effort to produce materials reflecting the audience that we hoped to attract at the new site. Our argument derived from the belief that if the images in your publications, membership materials and advertisements show only one type of family participating, it is difficult for other families to feel welcome.

Over the past six years Ken Brecher has provided strong leadership promoting the multicultural mission of the institution. Through fund-raising and community events, conference presentations, the newsletter and other print materials, he never misses an opportunity to speak about his vision of a truly multicultural museum. This effort, combined with installation of *The Kids Bridge* exhibit, increased public awareness of the museum's goals and contributed to the success in diversifying the board, staff and audience.

Promoting diversity requires an understanding of the multicultural priorities of the institution by all staff including the public relations and marketing staff. Success may require changing the image of the institution. It will involve learning how racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Latino, Hispanic, and Puerto Rican) prefer to be identified. It will obligate staff to read copy with more than a Eurocentric view, or to ask colleagues or advisory board members to read it for diversity of perspective. It will also require advertising and placing stories in local community-based newspapers or perhaps exploring other modes of communication such as community bulletin boards, local radio stations (in the appropriate language), and church newsletters. These methods have proven to be effective for us.

In the past we encountered difficulties when:

- We used outside *pro bono* agencies who didn't share our "multicultural" perspective.
- We wrote our press releases carefully but they got printed or reported differently.
- We rushed to meet a deadline without checking text with the appropriate people.

Our Public Relations Department says what makes it work today is:

- Staff members in all departments have close community connections.
- We have a diverse audience, so we don't have to import children for photo opportunities.
- The diversity commitment is long-term, so it is reinforced in succeeding publications.
- People are willing to spend the extra time it takes.
- We repeat the multicultural message that the museum is for all children in as many formats as possible.

## Brad White

If you say "Brad White" to some staff, you'll get a knowing smile. When we moved to the Wharf, we wanted to devise a way that museum members would not have to stand in line for admission...lines were one of our biggest problems during the last years in Jamaica Plain. A campaign called "Kid's Express" was created. The idea was that children who were members would get a "card" that could go through a card reader and allow them to enter as well as record their number of visits, etc.

Our design and production department was swamped with new exhibits, so the campaign was sent out to a high-quality firm that had offered some *pro bono* work. The graphics that were produced showed a young white boy in a suit and tie with a brief case to use the "American Express" idea. The boy who was the model for the campaign was named Brad White. Some staff, who had not seen the campaign in process, reacted negatively. Many thought this image of "member" would work against the audience we wanted to

come to the museum and there were many difficult meetings. The campaign videotape went on the air for a brief time, but the print materials were revised.

The lesson we learned from the "Brad White" campaign was to take time to communicate your vision and goals with outside agencies and try out new marketing concepts with a wide cross section of your staff before becoming invested in a campaign.



# STAFF ISSUES

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IN THE EARLY 1960's, THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM WAS PRIMARILY A WHITE INSTITUTION IN TERMS OF AUDIENCE, BOARD and staff. In the later half of the decade and into the early 1970's, a more diverse staff was hired for such programs as the Community Service Division, the Ethnic Discovery Project, the Native American Internship Program and the Boston Desegregation Programs. While new staff were often hired for specific programs, many of them subsequently moved into on-going positions within the museum.

Although the number of people of color on the staff continued to increase in the 1970's and 80's, specific plans for achieving museum-wide staff diversity began with the Multicultural Initiative. In 1987, Joanne Jones-Rizzi and Aylette Jenness began establishing objectives in terms of staff diversity. Discussions on this topic focused on meeting three goals. The first was achieving diversity among staff at all levels of the museum. The second was maintaining and promoting a diverse staff, and the third was creating a work environment where every staff member would feel respected and valued.

## Hiring Procedures and Strategies

These diversity goals have been furthered through the availability of the Multicultural Program staff who serve as resources for our staff and as community contacts for positions within the museum. Originally, each department posted job openings wherever they chose - at other museums, universities, and in various newspapers. Because this did not result in a diverse pool of applicants, the policy was changed in the early 1980's to mandate that positions be listed in the Boston Globe, a newspaper which reached a broad Boston audience. Since that time, a revised policy encourages staff to also post positions in a number of community-based newspapers. This serves a dual purpose. Not only does it say to the community "We recognize you and know you're out there," it also says "We value you and want you and others like you to be part of our staff."

While we have made positive inroads in raising the consciousness of the staff to the necessity and benefit of diversity, low salaries in entry level positions as well as infrequent availability of management and curatorial positions have been the major obstacles in maintaining and promoting a diverse staff. Having people of color and with differing perspectives at every level in the institution remains a top priority and a challenge. Our experience is that, particularly in the beginning, when there are few people of color on the staff, the hiring process takes longer. We support staff to take the time to ensure they have a diverse pool of candidates before making a selection. The process is not quick and requires more than placing an ad in the paper. It often means calling community contacts or going to community events to spread the word. In addition, staff who are carrying the work load while the position remains unfilled require acknowledgment and support.

Although we give a strong message to seek diverse applicants in hiring, we also reinforce the importance of selecting the best candidate. In addition, once a person has been hired, we try to provide the support he or she needs to perform well. A new group has recently been formed by staff of color to extend advocacy and support to new staff who are people of color. The goals of the group, called Prism, include assisting staff in linking the individual's responsibilities in the institution, mentoring interested staff and providing a forum for discussion of issues that affect a member's effective functioning in the work place.

Teen workers

Malik Aziz, l. to r.  
Stephanie Silva,

Jennifer Mack,  
David Shearrion

Occasionally, in someone's eagerness to diversify, a staff person will be hired who is inappropriate for the position. This is difficult for all concerned - but it does happen. When it occurs, we try to address it directly by finding an appropriate position within the museum, or if this is impossible, assisting the individual to move on to another position.

Interpreters Program

Every fall and summer a fresh group of 15-20 interpreters joins the museum staff for a ten-month period to receive training and work on the floor with the public. Some years this program has run in two five-month programs plus the two-month summer program.

Interpreters trained in this program have gone on to many other museums. (Some are now directors.) And a few each year move into permanent staff positions. For this and other reasons, it has been a goal to have a diverse interpreter staff. We had little success over the early years, although we experimented with many ways of attracting and recruiting. The basic problem was that the short-term/low-paying positions were in great demand by people who knew the museum and wanted experience working here, but they were not in demand by an unfamiliar audience.

Over the years our Teen Work Program, begun as Kids at Risk by Suzanne LeBlanc and now run by Pat Stahl, has been one of the most diverse programs in the museum. The Kids at Risk program placed young teens who hung out

at the museum or were referred by their schools or the courts in roles with increasing levels of responsibility. The successful program has evolved into the Teen Work program which now includes teens from many backgrounds. Until recently there was little relationship between the Teen Work and the Interpreter Programs. This year a new program is being piloted which uses a combination of Teen Workers, Adult Interpreters, and Volunteers to staff the exhibits. They are all called Interpreters and the group is quite diverse.

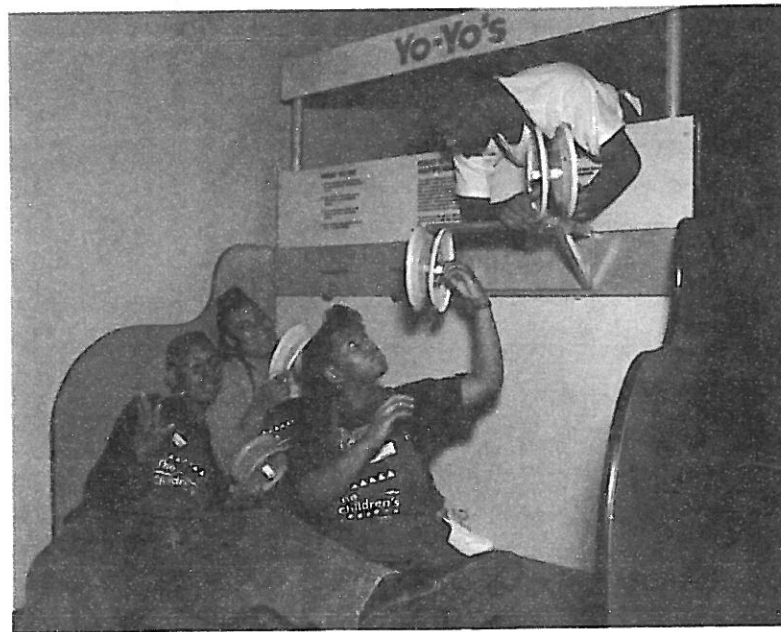


Photo: Max Belcher

Informal Staff Development

Throughout the years, exhibits and projects that focused on cultural subjects gradually increased staff awareness on issues of diversity. The Ethnic Discovery Curriculum Project, developed in the late 1970's, gave a group of staff a chance to explore multicultural issues personally through an eight-week training program.

What began as a curriculum development project soon spread outward in ripple-like fashion to include individuals from several distinct departments. Participants shared special celebrations, stories, objects, food, and music from their own heritage with co-workers. The effect of the try-outs was to

give staff members a glimpse into the cultural backgrounds of their colleagues and a chance to see beyond cultural stereotypes. Moreover, the activities served to create a framework for open discussion and dialogue on race and culture and a chance to share with friends and colleagues the importance of culture in one's life. Many years later staff participants recall this training as pivotal to their understanding of multicultural issues.

Throughout TCM's history, all of the programs (whether they contain specific cultural content or not) which have been developed and implemented collaboratively with a variety of cultural groups have benefited museum staff as much or more than the artists and people from the many communities with whom we have worked. The exposure to multiple cultures and perspectives slowly permeates the inner workings of the museum. But this kind of staff development happens only if it is built into the program core by creating teams of people, fostering good communication, and creating opportunities for individuals to know and learn from each other.

#### Exhibit Try-outs as Staff Development

The development of *The Kids Bridge*, an exhibit on cultural diversity which opened in 1990, serves as a tangible manifestation of the goals of the multicultural program. It communicates to staff as well as visitors the institutional commitment to diversity. In addition, through its development, the exhibition inadvertently served as a potent source of staff training.

#### Strategies that we have learned about hiring:

- Post notices in community papers.
- Develop relationships with community agency placement staff.
- Network through boards and advisors.
- Write Equal Opportunity Employer on advertisements and job descriptions.
- Distribute job descriptions to existing staff people who are connected to communities of color.
- Speak openly about the desire to increase staff diversity.
- Allow sufficient time to attract a diverse pool of candidates.
- Be willing to interview after hours.
- Look at resumes in terms of community and diversity skills in addition to other experiences.
- Select the best candidate.

In the early stages of the exhibit, developers wanted to determine the level of comfort that the visiting public had on issues of race and ethnicity. Consequently, exhibition try-outs were staged. A series of questions was placed in the exhibit center to gauge visitor responses to the subject matter. Questions were addressed to both young and older visitors including: "What would you like to know about people who are different from you?" "What would you like others to know about your own racial and ethnic group?" Staff members were also invited to comment on the issues or to ask questions.

The response was both overwhelming and positive. Children and adults made remarkable statements and asked insightful and poignant questions such as "Are there blue-eyed blond Chinese people?"; "Do Black people have red blood?"; "Are all Jewish people white?"; "Are all white people tall?"; and "Do white people ever wish they were black?"

Reading the statements and questions on our try-out boards became as interesting to many staff members as it was to the multicultural program team. Through this process staff members began thinking and talking about the multicultural program and future exhibit.

Another way in which we involved the full staff was in a late afternoon get-together to brainstorm possible names for the exhibit. All staff who attended needed to understand the goals of the exhibit in order to brainstorm possible names.

During the final staff meeting before the exhibit opened, staff were divided into small discussion groups where each person was asked to think of a public place or institution where they had been uncomfortable and consider the reasons for their discomfort. Group facilitators prompted staff to think about their experiences and to relate them to how new visitors to the museum might feel. Many staff were involved and excited by this activity. They felt empowered to discuss difficult topics with other staff members and also felt they were

given new insight into visitor responses and experiences. As the diversity of the staff continued to increase, we wanted to build on these informal opportunities with more formal diversity training.

### Finding the Right Consultant

When the Multicultural Program began, formal staff development was something we wanted to start immediately. It had become apparent that in order to accomplish our goals of becoming an institution relevant to a culturally, racially, ethnically and economically diverse audience, we had to better understand our interactions with each other. Since we were going through efforts to change the racial and ethnic composition of our staff, the museum "culture" was changing and we felt it was imperative to create a forum for open and honest dialogue.

When we began discussing our intentions with groups of staff, many fears were raised. Some of the worries and anxieties that staff felt about the trainings were that they would be reminiscent of the 1960's or too "touchy-feely," and too much like sensitivity trainings where people sat in a circle cross-legged on the floor talking about their innermost feelings. Others felt that we would be

opening up a can of worms, and that people would voice feelings and issues we would not be able to resolve. Questions were numerous including the following: how could we get the staff to buy into the importance of doing these workshops? Should trainings be voluntary? Should staff and senior management have the same trainings? Should the board participate? Planning meetings and discussions were filled with endless concerns and anxieties.

Interviewing people and groups involved in organizational development and diversity training in the greater Boston area was our first step. From this process we learned that although we had a sense of what we wanted people to learn from the trainings, we had little idea about their form or the logistics of how it would happen. We did not possess the vocabulary to describe what we wanted. We later came to know the difference between anti-bias training, anti-racism workshops, consciousness raising, diversity awareness workshops, managing diversity training, and the list goes on. In retrospect, arriving at answers to our questions was a process through which we were guided by the consultants we interviewed. However, we were possessed with a strong need to have the answers before we started, despite consultants' assurances that we would learn them along the way.

### Renta

"Renta" is a name Joanne Jones-Rizzi has given herself whenever she has felt she has been rented or inappropriately called upon to diversify or add multicultural validity to a meeting or event. She says:

"Coping with adversity by using humor is a mechanism people of color have used for hundreds of years and I continue to carry on this tradition as a way to deal with the stress of being a person of color in these changing times when museums all

over the country are pushing themselves and being pushed to accept and shift the power to include not only our cultures and perspectives but us.

Needless to say this has raised the full swing of emotions for me ranging from resignation and anger to comic relief. I feel fortunate and don't take it for granted that I am in a position where I have been able to be open and to laugh along with my white colleagues about the condition of being a "renta." How I feel about it has allowed others to

think about their own behaviors without feeling defensive and to make efforts to change.

Even though I can intellectualize my experiences to a certain extent, I still have internalized them. I live with an irrational fear that the only reason I'm involved in the projects I work on is because I fit the color profile. I struggle with this a lot and through our staff development work have begun to examine and analyze my own internalized oppression within the context of my work at the museum."



• The Visitor Services staff

• Clarence Cummins, l. to r.

• Eleanor Chin,

• Linda Melone

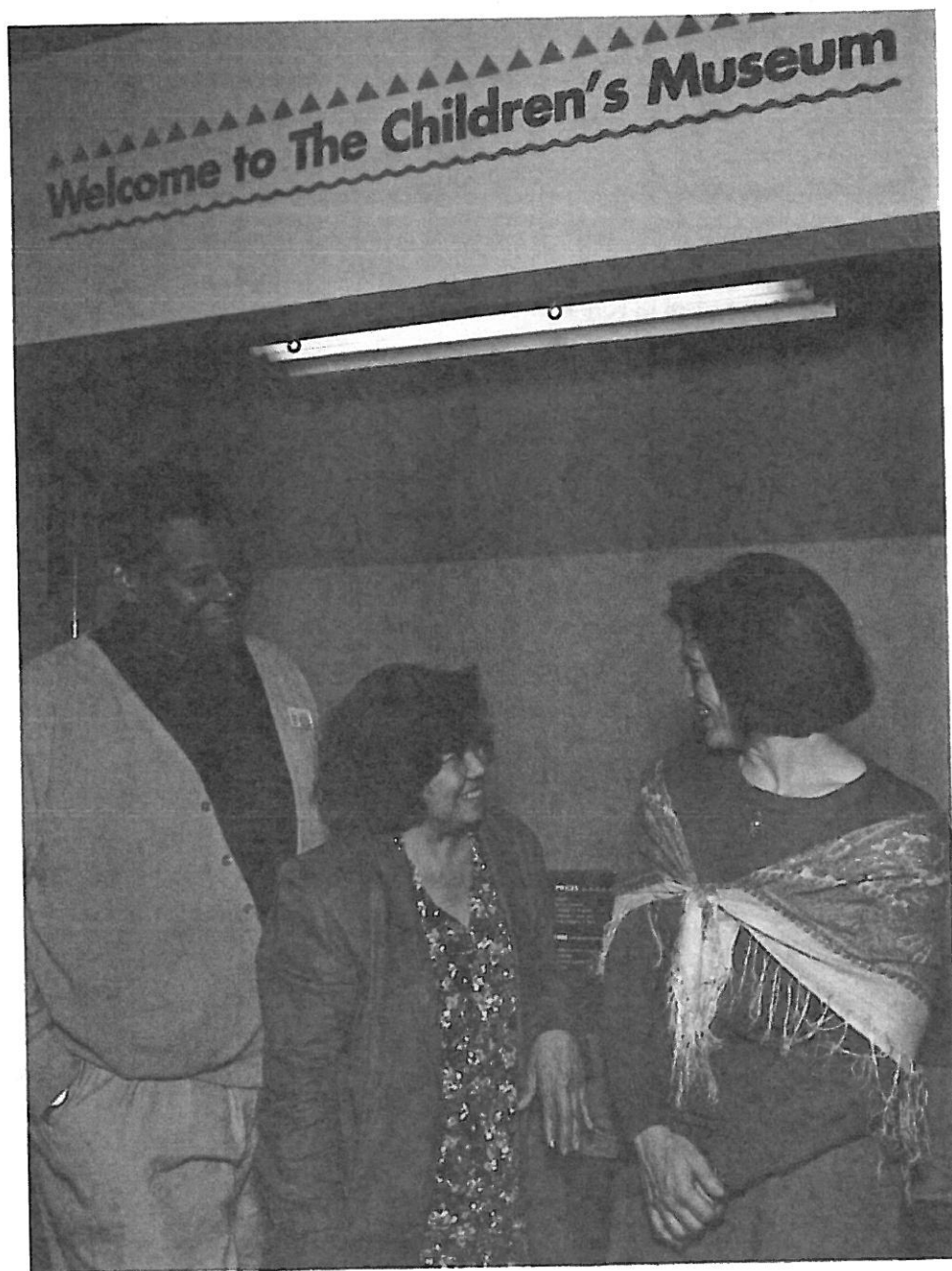


Photo: Max Belcher

The process for identifying the outside consulting organization was far from easy. The search for "just the right process" helped us to clarify what we needed. What we tell others involved in this process is to give it time. Keep looking until you find the right fit for your institution. Ask colleagues for suggestions and get references.

During the time we were looking for and interviewing consultants for staff development, we were undergoing other changes at TCM. Mike Spock had moved to become a vice-president at the Field Museum in Chicago and was followed by Ken Brecher from the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Many other staff changes occurred at this natural transition period, including the departure of some people in leadership positions. New people were hired and all of the anxieties about where the museum was headed, was its mission

changing, old versus new, were experienced. It was a tough time at the TCM corral.

Those of us directly involved in setting up the diversity training were concerned that the discomfort that staff were experiencing with all the changes would be focused on the diversity training sessions, so we decided to put staff effort into addressing some of the institutional change issues before compounding it with diversity issues. In retrospect, we think it was the way to do it - even though it delayed our formal diversity training for two years.

By the time we met Althea Smith from VISIONS, Inc., a consultant group which focuses on issues of achieving multicultural environments, we had been talking about the need for formal staff development for years. When Althea

### **Aylette Jenness Speaks for Several Staff who Have Created Cultural Programs for the Museum:**

"In institutions like ours, which are seeking a diverse staff, and which value having people speak for their own race or culture in the development of exhibits and programs, some complicated issues arise.

What is the role and responsibility of the staff person who is not of the race/culture being represented in a particular program, but who has professional expertise in the subject matter? And what is the role of the person of the culture/race regarding a program or subject which may not fall within his/her professional responsibility?

As a white person with more than thirty years experience in working with both local cultural

groups and those as far away as Alaska Natives and West Africans, to produce books, photographs, curricula, exhibits and public programs, I have undergone profound changes in my sense of my role. I see myself now much more as a facilitator of others' desired expression of themselves and their culture, and I believe I do this fairly well.

Yet in my work at The Children's Museum, I sometimes feel that I am overlooked in favor of staff people who are members of the culture under consideration, when at least including me would have been appropriate and useful to the project.

At The Children's Museum we are working slowly but determinedly toward a situation where

programmatic responsibilities are sometimes shared and unique contributions recognized:

—where cultural representatives (both museum professionals and others) are valued for their unique experience, knowledge and orientation gained through being of the culture, for their advocacy of their own group, and for their particular skills and expertise.

—where the museum professionals outside of the culture are valued for their representation of and advocacy for the needs, knowledge and interests of their own group as audience, and for their expertise in their chosen field of professional studies."

came to TCM for the first meeting with the co-directors of the Multicultural Program, it felt as if things were finally coming together. We were able to speak very openly and honestly with her about our hopes for diversity awareness workshops with museum staff. We felt comfortable with her and with the VISIONS style and strategy, which she called “a personal approach to multiculturalism.” What we had been hoping for with all of the other organizations that we interviewed was the comfort, connection and compatibility we felt with Althea and VISIONS. What we did not anticipate was that by instituting workshops for the entire staff, we were on our way to taking TCM to a new and different place, a place we could not know about until we began the journey of getting there.

The first step in working with VISIONS, Inc., involved creating and implementing a formal needs assessment. Over 100 TCM staff ranging from clerical to senior management contributed. A series of questions were presented about the work environment, multiculturalism at TCM, and interpersonal relationships and experiences around difference. Focus groups were held and based on feedback from the staff, recommendations for content and a workshop model were made. Invitations were then

extended to all interested staff to participate in a two-day workshop offered several times over a period of four months. To facilitate participation, the sessions were limited to 20 people at a time and were offered during normal museum hours.

The training sessions included basic information on definitions, historical context of racism in America as well as information on recognizing human behaviors. The content for the workshops also focused on personal experience, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and values and their impact on us as individuals and on our professional work lives. Nearly 80 staff members including senior managers took part in these workshops culminating in what appears to be a new and increased level of awareness and a commitment to continue to work on some of the harder, still unresolved challenges we face. Some of the museum board will be undertaking similar diversity training in the coming year.

The Multicultural Initiative’s greatest impact is felt in the philosophical reorientation which many staff are internalizing and integrating into their daily work. This approach is perceptible through changes in program

structure, public programming, exhibition, collaborations, curriculum development, museum board development, operations, collections and staffing. Because of the Multicultural Program and the increased number of people of color on staff, there is an openness to the exchange of ideas, a richness of new ideas, and support for diverse perspectives which did not exist previously. Also, as a result of TCM’s long-term focus on diversity, many staff members have begun a process of understanding their own values, behaviors and feelings about differences.

### Meeting After the Meeting

For many years when there were issues that were too difficult to discuss or staff people felt it was not safe to say what they were thinking, there were “meetings after the meeting.” These were real meetings, late night phone calls, or small group caucuses where thoughts were shared but only with some people on the staff.

We consider it a healthy sign when the discussion can happen “in” the meeting with all parties or

individually between the people directly involved. Our diversity training gave many staff the support and language to begin to do this. But this is very difficult and the phones still ring at night.

We learned the importance of helping staff learn new ways to communicate and supporting their efforts to solve problems together.

However, it is important to remember that multiculturalism is an evolving process and that individual staff people will need different kinds of support. At our institution we have become aware of the difficulties in working with people who are at varying degrees of understanding and awareness. Currently there are departments that have embraced the goals of the initiative by hiring a diverse staff, showing full participation in the diversity workshops, and discussing and working through the difficult and painful situations as they arise. We also have departments that still have largely white homogeneous staffs and have changed little over the years.

Supporting people to move at their own pace can be excruciating. When people get behind multiculturalism it can be with a vengeance. They want to convert everyone around them. Their excitement and energy can be contagious but not everyone catches it at the same time or to the same degree. Not everyone is going to take this on as their life's work. Be prepared for that. But do offer staff a variety of realistic approaches and strategies for becoming involved.

Colleagues from other institutions have acknowledged our progress in the area of multiculturalism. They say our museum "feels different" from other museums. Our hopes for the museum are that we will be able to find adequate resources to continue the work already begun with staff on these issues, and that years from now, when words like multicultural and diversity have been replaced with new buzz words, we at The Children's Museum will still be plugging along. There will be many struggles ahead, but the true challenge will be to keep at it. Remaining committed to the process and continuing to grow within ourselves to better respond to the culture within the museum and the changing Boston community are our hopes for the future.

### **Some Issues We are Struggling with:**

- How to address discomfort when staff or audience differences arise.
- How to acquire the skills and techniques to deal directly with the subtle dynamics that underscore racism.
- Who should deal with staff issues - consultants, task force, Multicultural Program team, personnel officer?
- How to continue to hire a diverse workforce and ensure plans for advancement.
- How to balance leadership for cultural exhibitions and programs.
- How to make the museum comfortable for visitors when staff are not fluent in all the languages of the people who visit.



*What does it feel like to be working in an institution in the process of change?  
Listen to some of the current staff.*

"Personally, I am beginning to open out more without as much fear of the process. It looks both easier (I trust the process more) and harder (people feel freer to be angry and not every supervisor is comfortable with that.) I see more clearly how much there is to do."

"Some staff need to lighten up and not take their missions so seriously. Art, music and science are for everybody, and different people appreciate these things differently."

"I see both positive and negative. I hear words that tell me people are thinking about changes of all types that would make us more inclusive - but I still see decisions that are completely opposite. We are all afraid of confrontation leading to quicker change."

"What I have sensed is that there is a good consciousness about racial/cultural issues at the museum, but it is very tender and elusive. The museum's commitment to cultural diversity seems to lend itself, at times, to hypersensitivity about issues of racial/cultural difference, and we are

all left a little tongue-tied....Because of my position, I feel a lot of pressure to lay down a good impression to every visitor so that they will want to return. What I find, at times, is that I become so concerned with the internal politics of the staff that I am not as effective in dealing with the public as I could be. I find that I am particularly sensitive when issues of racial/cultural difference are lurking in the murky background. There have been days when I have even believed myself to be racist because of my feelings of discomfort, and I have had to check myself and realize that my discomfort came from an ill-defined sense that I had to prove some sort of multicultural magnanimity to an ill-defined audience. In essence, I have moments of being hyper-aware of my whiteness and let it get in the way. I have decided that these are healthy feelings in some way, growing pains..."



"Sometimes it's difficult being a white male on the staff. I feel a responsibility to be as open as possible, but sometimes feel unable to express my views or to have my background validated."

"There is more conversation and awareness, more permission for people of color to talk about real issues involving being a minority in a white institution. But it used to be easier in many ways before we set up expectations of equality."



Photo: Bob Kramer

P r o g r a m

a n d

E x h i b i t i o n

**MY IDEAS**

you don't know  
what its like  
until you meet  
them

Jaime



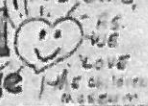
The Kids Bridge

**MY IDEAS**

THIS WAS A VERY VERY  
GOOD LEARNING EXPERIENCE  
ABOUT RACISM + DISCRIMINATION  
MY SON + I TALKED ABOUT  
WHAT THE CHILDREN IN THE  
STORIES HAD TO SAY ABOUT  
THEIR FEELINGS + THE WAY THEY  
LEARNED TO HANDLE THEIR PROBLEMS.  
Eddie's Mom!



The Kids Bridge



**MY IDEAS**

Hi! I came from  
Cambodia & the  
first day I came  
everybody make  
fun me.

MONY



The Kids Bridge

Visitor responses from the  
TALKBACK Board in  
The Kids Bridge exhibit



# WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

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AS CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS ARE HARD PRESSED TO BROADEN THEIR AUDIENCE, MANY MUSEUMS ARE CREATING “outreach” programs as a way to extend their programs to low-income people and communities of color. At TCM, we began by adopting the assumption that in order to fulfill our mission, the institution must be relevant to every visitor. We wanted to avoid the trap of separating outreach programs from other educational programs and to integrate people from the communities into the on-going program of the museum. Working definitions for “outreach” and “community” were developed and are still evolving. They will continue to grow and be refined until we reach a higher level of understanding, acceptance and value for everyone coming through our doors.

We define “outreach” to be the process of developing relationships with people in schools, community organizations, churches and other cultural institutions with shared goals and audiences. Through these relationships, organizations and institutions collaborate on program and exhibition development, curriculum development, program teaching and fund-raising.

We define “community” as people from neighborhoods near the institution and around the city. This includes individuals from these neighborhoods regardless of their status as visitors to the museum or not.

The language used by museums in describing “community” is often filled with superiority and privilege. Words such as serve, under-privileged, disadvantaged, and non-traditional reek with missionary superiority even though that is usually not the intention.

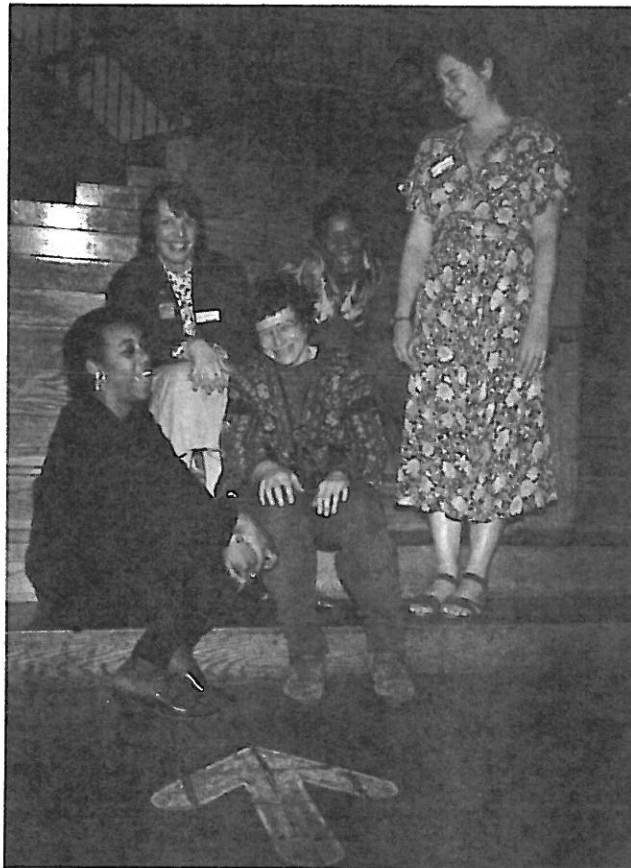


Photo: Max Belcher

Similarly, many museums use the label “community” when referring to low-income people or people of color only. There is an implied assumption about “community” and who “they” are. Often there is an “us and them” mentality as if we (the museum) are offering and they (the community) are taking.

In our experience, the value and rewards of working with people from a variety of racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds stem from the process of honest collaborations over time, and from using shared resources towards mutually beneficial goals.

Measures of success will vary for each institution. Due to restrictions and pressures from funding sources as well as institutional priorities and commitments, there is often a finite amount of money and time devoted to the “outreach” process. Strong programs require adequate time and support to be effective and to allow staff to jointly plan and evaluate programs on an on-going basis.

### The Community Outreach Department

Dolores Calaf, back row, l. to r.  
Cynthia Hymes-Bell,

Ditra Edwards, front row, l. to r.  
Diane Willow,  
Patricia Pittore

### The Science Program

Peggy Monahan, l. to r.  
Paul Evans,

Bernie Zubrowski,  
Dottie Merrill

The evolution of community programming at TCM over a 20-year period has helped us to understand the needs of our own institution and to continue the process of learning and responding to the needs of neighboring communities. In our earlier location in Jamaica Plain in the early 1970's, a Community Service Division was created within the museum. Staff were hired to work with community agencies almost exclusively at community sites to develop arts, science and early childhood activities. People were hired with both content background and community experience. Three people in senior positions at the museum today (Dorothy Merrill, Jeri Robinson, and Bernie Zubrowski) were hired as part of that original community service division 20 years ago.

In the mid-1980's the state of Massachusetts, aware of our extensive work with neighboring communities, offered us an opportunity to expand into ten low-income neighborhoods working with over fifty agencies and their staff. We worked with them to develop activities for on-site multi-session workshops, offer materials based trainings for community agency staff, and provide transportation to the museum for families on "Community Nights." In addition, we involved museum staff in neighborhood festivals and events,

and we hired artists to work on a regular basis at community agencies. We also supplied community agencies with vouchers for arts, crafts and science materials from RECYCLE, a museum shop that recycles what industry throws away. We also purchased library passes to enable individual families to visit the museum on their own. After a period of years, people from these

communities began to feel part of the museum.

In 1984 with a challenge grant from The Boston Foundation, major efforts went into raising funds for a Community Program Endowment to enable a base-line level of community activity to exist in years when additional funds were not available. This was an important commitment to on-going community involvement in the museum. The endowment has helped us through years when state funds have been severely cut. However, it needs to be much larger to support the increased needs and interest of communities today.



Photo: Max Belcher

In the past ten years, we have come to know staff and kids from over 200 community agencies. These relationships have been crucial to our process of understanding how collaborations work. For example, through a series of discussions to evaluate the program, we became aware that some community



## The Early Childhood Program

Kim Gulino, back row, l. to r.  
Jeri Robinson,  
Amy Nolan, center row, l. to r.

Kathryn Jones,  
Marion Darlington-Hope,  
Barbara Goldfinger front row

groups were not visiting the museum despite free admission offers. We also learned that community staff felt that because our programming was subsidized by the state and TCM, and was therefore free to them, raising issues and problems might result in a loss of funding. In subsequent discussions, community agency staff spoke very openly about their discomfort while visiting TCM. They discussed some instances of feeling unwelcome and "like charity cases." Disturbed by what we had learned, we continued to hold meetings at TCM and in the communities to present problems, ideas and possible budgetary changes. We asked for ideas and feedback on which program aspects we should continue



Photo: Max Belcher

and which we could eliminate. Because of budget cutbacks which impacted TCM and community agency programs, museum staff and community advisors were pushed to their utmost creative potential to develop a program that not only met the needs of everyone involved but pushed the museum community collaborative model forward.

Through this difficult process of program evaluation and

assessment, everyone involved became invested in the process and therefore invested in the program. When we began to think together about changes

## Twenty years later

Bernie Zubrowski continues to work with kids at community sites to develop new materials and activities and has been instrumental in influencing other science institutions to understand the importance of working with community centers.

Dorothy Merrill currently leads research and development at the museum and brings her multicultural perspective to every exhibition and publication project in which she is involved.

And Jeri Robinson, Director of the Early Childhood Program, is known for her **PLAYSPACE** exhibit which has been replicated in museums across the country. For twenty years she has also made a strong commitment to keep the museum moving toward diversity in spite of the pain and frustration of being one of the few people of color for so many years.

in the museum experience for our afterschool audience, we created a new program. The AfterSchool Program offers special interest Clubs where kids and community agency staff work with TCM staff using museum resources to meet agency goals. This program requires collaborative planning and teaching by museum and agency staff and full participation from kids who are also part of the development process.

The collaborative model has several equally important components, all of which flow naturally from the needs of our growing afterschool audience. Museum community program staff first visit the collaborating agency where everyone gets to know each other and questions and expectations are shared. When kids and staff arrive at TCM they are welcomed and greeted by the same staff who visited them at their center. In doing this staff and kids connect with one another, so when the museum program begins, agency staff and kids feel welcomed, cared about and comfortable. There are perceptible changes in other TCM staff attitudes towards kids and staff visiting the museum for Clubs. Groups of kids once referred to as “community kids,” “outreach kids” and “afterschool kids” are now referred to as kids. Through consistent communication, education and involvement, TCM staff now have an understanding of what is expected of them and what to expect from kids visiting for the Club program.

For TCM staff involved in developing community programs, the process for creating collaborative programs may feel alternately overwhelming, frustrating, challenging and invigorating. Some on-going strategies that have been helpful to us in developing effective community collaborations are to:

*“Frequently, at the start, some of the programs that make sense to the agency staff are only marginally related to the institution’s content or goals.”*

*“You need to acknowledge how unglamorous and even invisible these programs are in terms of establishing the importance of the institution in the larger community. Eventually it is appreciated, but it can’t be pushed or promoted.”*

*Mike Spock*

- Understand your motivation. (Ours is full participation by the community in the life of the museum.)
- Find ways to ask the right questions of collaborators in order to fully understand their goals and experiences.
- Hire staff who are comfortable working with economically, racially, and ethnically diverse groups of people.
- Take cues from the community.
- Let people know what you are thinking and planning and be willing to shift gears if people object or suggest an alternative.
- Learn to ask the right questions of your collaborators and listen. Be willing to try something new and don’t become too heavily invested in your program ideas.
- Don’t separate or isolate community programs from what happens within the rest of the museum.
- Go to the communities and neighborhoods. Visit people in their homes. Go to schools and community events.
- Hold regular meetings in communities and neighborhoods to discuss and assess program successes and problems.
- Remind yourselves who the program is for and what their needs are.
- Be clear about how you want to work with communities. (Our program has a strong commitment to collaboration.)
- Create long-term funding plans.

# COLLECTIONS

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THE LATEST REVISION OF THE MUSEUM'S MISSION STATEMENT AFFIRMS THE EVOCATIVE POWER OF OBJECTS AND ACKNOWLEDGES the museum's commitment to both protect and provide learning experiences with museum objects. "We are committed to...creating exhibition and program which provide thought-provoking interactions with real objects in the areas of cultural understanding and maintaining our cultural collections to the highest possible standards and making them accessible to a broad public."

The philosophical direction of the collections program was set by Joan Lester, former Curator of Collections, who states:

"We have a collection and continue to collect because objects have the potential, if properly interpreted, to connect museum visitors of every age with peoples from other cultures, times and places. As interpreters of these objects, museum staff, when successful, can create the bridge that allows visitors to see the object as a symbol or metaphor for ideas and perspectives from other worlds. Objects also connect visitors to aspects of their own lives. When people find their cultures and the things they value accurately and sensitively represented in an exhibit, they feel personally welcomed and their identity respected."

The museum maintains a natural science collection of 20,000 objects and a permanent cultural collection of 35,000 objects which represents peoples and cultures from around the world. Over the past decades we have understood the importance of preserving our collection for future generations, and we value conservation as well as interpretation. Conceptually, we divide the cultural collection into Focus and World-wide collections. The World-wide collection contains artifacts brought back to New England from every corner of the globe.

The regions represented include Africa, Asia, the Arctic, Europe, Russia, Mexico, Central and South America, Middle East and Oceania. The objects are primarily used in cross-cultural and thematic exhibits.

The Focus collections are part of and support two comprehensive Exhibit and Program areas: Native American, and Japan. The museum collects actively,

systematically and in-depth in both of these Focus areas. The Focus collections reflect the specific goals and messages of their Comprehensive Exhibit and Program areas. The present American History Collection has concentrated on objects which help describe the evolution of everyday life in the United States over the past three centuries. The Native American Collection includes objects from across Indian America, but the major focus is on the Northeast, with both old and new examples of the same tradition. The Japanese Collection contains objects that help describe daily life as it has evolved from an earlier day to the present. It includes the *Kyo no machiya*, a complete 14th-

generation silk merchant's home from Kyoto and the only example of domestic middle class Japanese architecture in the U.S., as well as artifacts which help depict customs (e.g., tea ceremony), festivals such as Children's Day and folk traditions.



Photo: Steve Rosenthal

Shortly after World War I, the museum began a relationship with Kyoto, Japan, which started with the receipt of our first Japanese cultural objects. Increased international travel resulted in more interest in cultures and the objects used by various people and also brought new objects into our collections. Collections are enhanced by an array of exhibits, festivals, courses, workshops, kits, publications and activities developed and presented in collaboration with

members of various area communities. Groups with whom we work closely in the area of both programs and collections include Northeast Native Americans (Iroquois, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Wampanoag, Narragansett), Chinese and Chinese Americans, Japanese and Japanese Americans, African Americans, Latinos (Dominican, Puerto Rican and Cuban) and Southeast Asians. The cultural collections serve to show the continuation of a culture through generations (especially in the Northeast Native American objects), to provide scholars and artisans with authentic examples, and to provide community members with opportunities to pass along family and cultural history and traditions to their children.

Since 1976 the Native American program, led by Joan Lester, has made a commitment to collect contemporary work in order to demonstrate the

continuum of Native American culture and the on-going nature of New England culture. For the Native American Program, this contemporary focus serves two real museum needs: it makes visible to non-natives the contemporary vitality of Northeast cultures, and it lets native people know that the museum recognizes and respects their culture.



Photo: Max Belcher

Since 1980, the Northeast Native American collection has been installed in a Study Storage system, created by Joan Lester, and replicated in many museums today. Visitors can look through a large window wall and see the range of the collection. They can also enter the area with a staff member and be offered significantly increased access to individual objects. All the objects are packaged so that they can be closely examined without being handled directly. The catalyst for Study Storage was advisory board and native staff frustration with the inaccessibility of Native American collections in many museums, and the inequality of

treatment accorded to non-Indian scholars versus Native Americans seeking access to their cultural artifacts. All visitors have equal access to Study Storage objects and documentation at designated hours. For more information on the Native American Collection, see the catalog by Joan Lester, "We're Still Here," listed in the bibliography.



Our philosophy of acceptance and respect for Native American cultural values is expressed by Study Storage. The Grand Council of the Hodenosaunee has stated, "The public exhibition of medicine masks by museums is forbidden...there is no proper way for a museum to explain, interpret or present their significance." The medicine masks held by the museum are hung and covered as they would be in an Iroquois home. They are not available for viewing or study by anyone who is not a member of the Longhouse. A sign, on the curtain in front of them says, "Sacred property. Please do not view. Please respect this culture." As requested by the Grand Council, no catalogue card information is available. Preliminary discussions about their return have begun with the Faithkeeper, Oren Lyons.

In Study Storage, we also try to suggest an object's cultural context, again to create connections with people. Hats are stored on heads; bracelets, knee rattles, belts and armbands wrap around the human form, etc. Study Storage, like the *We're Still Here* exhibit, also presents the message of the continuity of culture. We do this by storing contemporary objects together with similar but older objects from the same tradition. Catalogue cards created since 1976 focus on the person who made the object as well as the object itself, thus allowing objects to serve as connectors to people. Our Japan collection has also been installed in a similar Study Storage system since 1984 and is opened to the public by staff and volunteers.

We are currently embarking on "New Directions," an important and innovative element of our on-going efforts to increase access and representation in our collections. TCM staff has been working with communities of Greater Boston for many years through programs and exhibitions, and the time has come to make our collections reflect more fully the diverse population of the area. New Directions, under the leadership of Janet Chriswell, Curator of Collections, is actively involving members of communities in deciding what objects should be collected and how those objects should be interpreted.

Our long-range New Directions project has the goal of collecting and documenting the major cultural communities that represent contemporary Boston and its metropolitan area. We are basing our work toward that goal on the following assumptions as outlined by Joan Lester, former Curator of Collections and now Curator, Native American Collection:

1. All cultures are of value. The cultures that have been disregarded in the past need to be collected.
2. The present, as well as the past, needs to be collected. If we do not collect the present, the past will be undocumented in the future.
3. People of the culture have knowledge, insights, and expertise about their own culture that are of critical importance to the interpretation of that culture. They need to be equal partners in collecting and interpreting for general museums.
4. All audiences need to feel acknowledged and welcomed by a museum.

We decided to concentrate New Directions first on the Latino, African American, and Southeast Asian communities because they are not strongly represented in the museum's existing American collection, yet there is substantial history of their presence in Boston. Furthermore, we are creating a new system of involving scholars and people of the community as curators who, with our curators, will share in decisions on collections for TCM. With their help, we have already examined our U.S. and related cultural collections. We have identified and re-interpreted objects in the existing collection that carry specific cultural meaning for local community people. We are developing a model for identifying and adding key objects not yet included in the collection. We are asking the community curators to interpret objects from their own perspective. They will have a real voice in what is collected, how it will be interpreted for the museum audience, and what of their history is to be preserved.

# CULTURAL EXHIBITIONS

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THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTIONS OF SEVERAL CULTURAL PROGRAMS AT THE MUSEUM ILLUSTRATE CHANGES OVER THE YEARS that reflect the museum's developing multicultural awareness.

In the 1930's, TCM exhibited, from its collections, a series of elegant, intricate, large-scale Victorian and early 20th-century doll houses, donated to the museum by middle class and wealthy white Boston area residents, many of whom represented the supporters and the audience of The Children's Museum at the time. In 1992, some doll houses from the collections are still on exhibit, but they have been joined by a detailed and accurate replica of a Native American pueblo, installed by a joint team of Native American and non-Native American staff members. In a way, this addition mirrors some of the changes in exhibition philosophy that have occurred over the past 60 years. Though the big doll houses still exert their magic - their capacity to enable visitors, young and old, to project themselves into another imagined time and place, they no longer make the implied statement that this picture of affluence is what is most valuable. And this change in exhibit exemplifies in microcosm the changes that have taken place in the intervening years throughout the museum - in collections policy (who donates, what they donate, what we seek to acquire) - and in staff (who develops exhibits) - and in our audience (who's coming to the museum, and can they, diverse as they now are, find themselves in museum exhibits?).

By looking at four long-term cultural program areas, we can trace some of the major trends in exhibits over the years at The Children's Museum in our effort to develop cultural exhibits that are accurate and respectful, that have multiple perspectives, and that are appropriate and valuable to a culturally, racially and economically diverse audience.

## The Native American Exhibit and Program

From the 1930's to the 1960's, the Native American exhibits ( at the time called Indian exhibits) consisted of cased traditional artifacts from Indian groups across the United States. In school programs these were handled by students under the direction of an Anglo museum staff person. Though the objects were treated respectfully, and often had great appeal to students, the message about Native Americans was that their culture existed only in the past, that there was a single Native American culture, and that "it" could be explained by a non-Native. In addition, some of the objects being exhibited, handled, and 'explained' were, unbeknownst to staff, sacred objects, which are now no longer available to non-Indian visitors.

In 1970, under the influence of the museum's experiential learning environments and interactive programs, a full-scale wigwam was erected, and museum interpreters led children in activities such as grinding paints, cracking nuts, making arrow heads, drilling beads, and trying on replicas of traditional clothing, to do things as Indian people did. Algonquin culture was studied, and the environment was rich and active. But Native American visitors from the nearby Boston Indian Council questioned the appropriateness of some of the activities and the emphasis on the past. Joan Lester, the developer of the program, began to work actively with Native Americans in the area and to deeply question all the museum's Indian programs and their basic assumptions and orientation.

## : The Native American Program

: Linda Coombs, l. to r.

: Paulla Jennings,

: Joan Lester

In 1973 a Native American advisory board was formed to advise museum staff on all aspects of the Native American program. This board has power of veto over issues of cultural appropriateness, and continues with some of the same members to the present. Having understood from that board that Native Americans had little or no access to museum jobs, the museum sought and received funding for

a two-year Native American internship (1974-1976) that would ultimately prepare seven Native Americans for museum careers. During the first year, 1974, the interns developed an exhibit entitled, *We're Still Here*, which for the very first time presented a Native perspective in a public exhibition at TCM. While visitors enjoyed using the artifacts in the exhibit, many missed important themes which the Native American audience recognized and were comfortable with but which were not familiar

to the non-native audience. The incorporation of Native American staff into the program in the late 70's involved a reassessment of everything we'd ever done. There was excitement, pain, struggle, success and failure.

In 1979, a larger Native American exhibit was opened, titled again, *We're Still Here*. The exhibit demonstrated the continuity of native culture in New

England by connecting 17th-century culture (a wigwam) with 20th-century native culture (a contemporary home). Developed by Joan Lester, it built on previous work by Linda Coombs and Helen Attaquin, museum staff. In 1992, the contemporary home was replaced with a replica of the kitchen of Joan Tavares, Mashpee, Wampanoag. It is accompanied by a system of

Study Storage facilitated by Paulla Jennings, through whose glass walls visitors can view the entire Native American collections, and at specified times, Native Americans and other visitors have access to study objects. Since 1980, Native American and non-native staff have worked as colleagues in the Native American Program. (Study Storage is described further under Collections.)

In 1992, a temporary exhibition describing the effect on the

indigenous people of the Americas of the voyages of Columbus was installed. The exhibit is signed and the text presents the point of view of the advisory board and the Native American program staff with parallel text which interprets for the non-native audience. This strategy of using parallel text is new and is currently under evaluation.



Photo: Max Belcher

It is important here to acknowledge the influence of the Native American Program and the Native American people on the board, staff and advisory board of the museum. The evolution of the program over the past two decades has provided much of the vision of how to achieve culturally appropriate exhibitions and programs and has influenced every other cultural program within the museum.

*The Native American Program Developers say:*

*"What we wish to communicate is:*

*Indians are people.*

*There are 400 different Indian nations in the continental U.S., each with its own unique history and culture.*

*This exhibit is about those Native Americans who live in Southern New England: Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.*

*Native people were the original inhabitants of Southern New England.*

*They have been here for at least 12,000 years.*

*Until Europeans arrived, native people lived in balance with the earth. Everything they used came from the earth. Although the Europeans called them "uncivilized savages," economically, socially and spiritually, they lived full and satisfying lives. Europeans tried to eradicate Native American cultures and remake Indian people in their own image.*

*They didn't succeed.*

*Today, Native Americans live in two worlds.*

*They are Indian and have their own culture."*

*Linda Coombs, Nancy Eldridge, Paulla Jennings, Joan Lester  
- Native American Program Staff*

### The Japan Exhibits and Program

While its permanent collection included Japanese artifacts acquired from the 1920's, the museum did not establish a formal Japanese program until the early 1960's. A ten-tatami-mat "tea pavilion" from Kyoto, rescued from a karate academy, was designated the *Japanese Home* exhibit. This authentic, if culturally misappropriated, setting was the center of an innovative effort to teach American children about Japanese daily life through direct experience with a Japanese environment, objects, and teaching materials.

In 1980 the *Kyo no machiya*, a two-story Kyoto townhouse, was installed in The Children's Museum's new site as the cornerstone of a new comprehensive Japan program area under the leadership of Karen Zien. A gift from Kyoto, Boston's sister city, the house was reconstructed by Japanese craftsmen and exhibit components were designed to introduce Americans to the architecture and way of life of one of Japan's oldest neighborhoods. The only example of vernacular, middle class Japanese architecture in this country, it exemplified a traditional aesthetic and was initially treated more as a cultural artifact than a living environment.

In addition to the House, the program area included Japan Study Storage, a reading/resources area, a classroom, introductory exhibit area and office space. This configuration implemented the museum's belief that a cluster of content-related resources and teaching strategies (internally called plum pudding) would encourage visitors to "bridge" or make cognitive connections from one kind of learning experience to another. The challenges inherent in teaching about a culture fundamentally different from that of the United States to an overwhelmingly non-Japanese audience have become more apparent as the program, the Japanese community and Japan's place in the world have changed. Although over the years the staff has included a number of Japanese as well as Japanese-Americans, the leadership has been American and the original perspective clearly that of the outsider trying to "explain" Japan. The inclusion of Japanese staff under program director Leslie Bedford was critical to the program's evolution. As Japan rapidly modernized, the Kyoto House became more of an anachronism with visitors from Japan questioning why we presented such an outdated image of their country. At the same time, local Japanese resisted plans to tamper with the pure aesthetic of the house. Despite efforts to update the house, it presents too narrow an introduction to Japanese daily life.

In 1991 we opened a new major multi-media exhibit on Japan called "Teen Tokyo" which represents a change in program direction. "Teen Tokyo" is designed to teach youngsters about cultural similarities through the shared



.....  
The Japan Program  
.....

Ryoko Tokunaga, l. to r.  
Laura Miyamura,  
.....

Yoshi Miki,  
Leslie Bedford

world of international popular youth culture. For the first time, an international team of museum staff, consultants, and volunteers were engaged in a long-term effort to determine common goals and identify themes which could speak to an American audience in authentically Japanese ways. Topics such as school and family life, music, fashion, sports and animation illustrate similarities and differences as well as the universal concerns of growing up in the late 20th century.

The unique voices of individual Japanese youth coexist with an explicit comparative voice. Rather than using direct translation, Japanese and English text were composed separately to address the two groups.

*Japanese Program staff say:*

*"The major challenge for the future of the Japan Program is establishing support for the diverse staffing and resources the program requires and integrating its mission better into that of the multicultural initiative of the museum.*

*How to update the permanent Kyoto house when the Teen Tokyo Exhibit leaves to travel to other museums, how to respond to Boston's growing Japanese and also Japanese-American community while strengthening ties to Japan, and how to relate to and teach about other Asian groups will be at the top of the program agenda for the foreseeable future."*

*Leslie Bedford, Laura Miyamura, Yoshi Miki - Japan Program Staff*

Grandparents' House

The *Grandparents' House* exhibit grew out of two small prior exhibits of early 20th-century household artifacts, *Grandfather's Cellar* and *Grandmother's Attic*. In 1979, under the direction of Sylvia Sawin, curator of the American History collection, it became a three story turn-of-the-century house complete with parlor, kitchen, bedroom, cellar and attic.

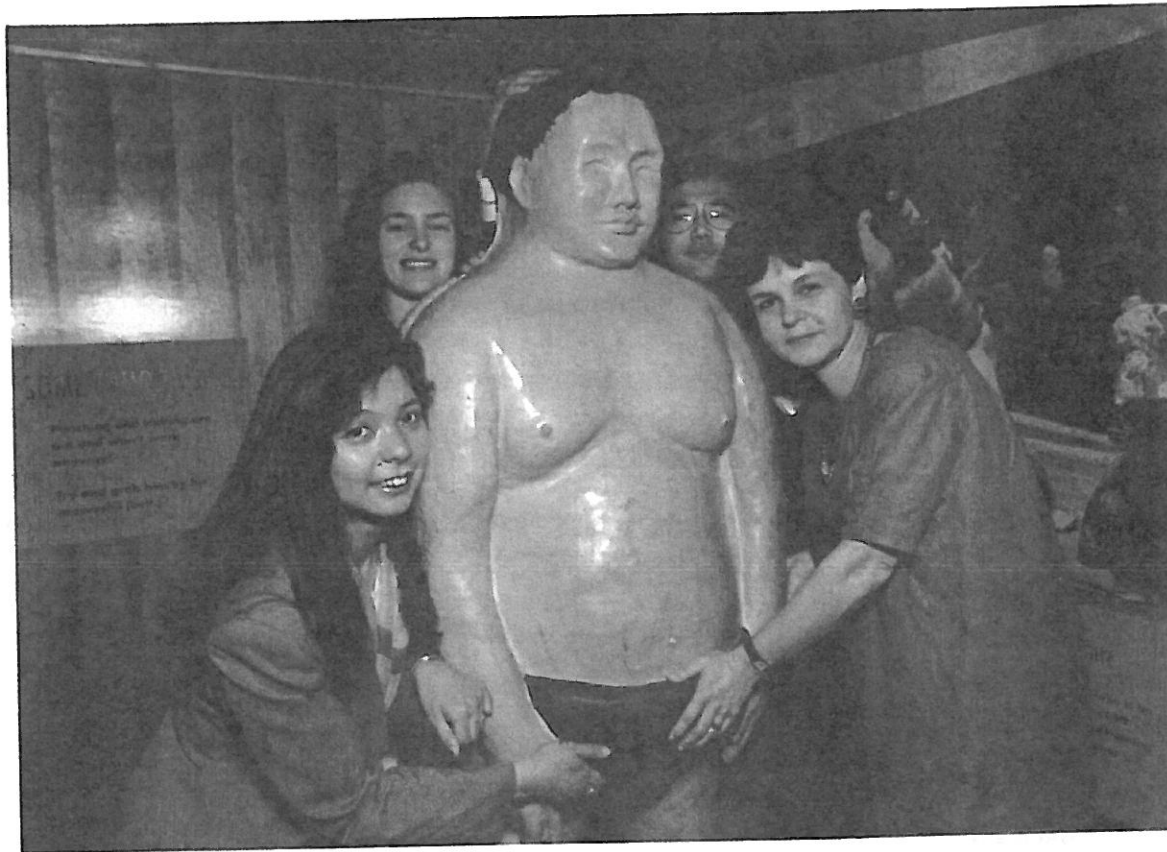


Photo: Max Belcher

In the early exhibits, older visitors, because of their personal experiences with the old-fashioned artifacts, were the natural interpreters for the younger public, talking about how they used these artifacts, often sharing personal memories and circumstances, and telling long-forgotten family stories whose recall was triggered by the sight of the object itself. This intergenerational communication contributed to both historic and cultural

learning experiences for museum visitors of all ages.

These same experiences continued in the *Grandparents' House* exhibit when it was updated to represent a continuously lived-in home of a working class

family circa 1939/1940, with furnishings of the 1930's and previous decades, as well as many objects handed down in "the family" for several generations. It was not intended to be the house of a specific family, but to be encompassing of a variety of racial and ethnic groups within the context of its time, place, and class.

In furnishing the house there was a deliberate avoidance of items that were very narrowly culture-specific (e.g., we displayed no religious objects). Artifacts chosen were in broad usage during the time period, things that many families of the era might have owned because they were of that time - a carpet beater, a coffee grinder, a washboard, an icebox, a wind-up Victrola, a 1930's radio, etc. We also used many old family, school, and group photographs where a range of cultures was deliberately included so that different ethnic groups could "see themselves" in the exhibit.

Personal identification with artifacts in *Grandparents' House* was widely prevalent among a large number of the museum's adult visitors. When the visiting public was asked on a poll in 1988, "Did you find anything about your culture in the museum?", more people named *Grandparents' House* than any other area.

The house offered new experiences to visitors in 1989 when it was transformed throughout the year into the home of particular families, set in different points in time. The first installation reflected an Irish American family in 1913, followed by a Jewish family in 1939, an African American family in 1963, and a Cambodian family in 1989. These installations provided a way for a number of specific cultural groups to find themselves in the museum, and for others to learn about them. This was very effective and even more so on weekends when actors portrayed family members and invited visitors to participate in role-playing activities. These exhibits were temporary and used borrowed objects because we did not have them in our permanent collection.

The *Grandparents' House* exhibit, which was based on our American History Collection, has recently been de-installed while we reassess those collections through the New Directions project (see Collections Section). The public still calls for the return of the *Grandparents' House*, and we know that for many of our visitors a representation of their culture is missing. We are not sure in what form our expanded American History collections will be exhibited, but we hope that families from many backgrounds will recognize it as their history.

## Hung White

At its first meeting, the Multicultural Advisory Committee was asked by staff to walk through our exhibits and critique them from a multicultural point of view. They found a number of places where parts of exhibits supported stereotypes or gave only part of the story.

The *Families* exhibit was installed in the multipurpose room where dinner was being held. The exhibit consists of large photos of many kinds

of families with text from the voice of one of the children in the family. The exhibit has been successful at the museum and in many other museums and has an award-winning book based on the exhibit.

The advisors made many positive remarks about the importance of the exhibit but one person commented that it was "hung white." She meant it was hung the way museum people (usually white)

mount an exhibit. It led to discussions of other ways to "hang" exhibits. It was a phrase that for many staff became a way of discussing more than one way to interpret material.

This experience taught us that in inviting the opinions of diverse groups you must be willing to accept criticisms of traditional ideas. Decisions need to be made after hearing diverse opinions and will not always favor the traditional way.

### Changing Cultural Exhibits

Knowing that our exhibits left out many groups in the Greater Boston area, a number of exhibits were tried out over the years. These have provided us with useful learnings - some encouraging, some painful.

An exhibition in 1976 drawn from a children's book about the life of a street child in Central America prompted an angry letter in a neighborhood newspaper demanding its removal. The charge was that it presented only the life of a desperately poor person and thus did a disservice to the Latino communities in the Boston area, who had great pride in their cultural heritage.

This reaction had not in fact occurred to museum staff (at that time there were no Latinos on staff.) The portrayal was sympathetic, and the main character was admirable. We posted the letter by the exhibit, with a question, "What do you think?", and supplied paper, pencils and thumbtacks. The response was overwhelming; many diverse opinions were expressed by children and adults, and we sometimes felt that the bulletin board attracted as much interest and thought as the exhibit itself did.

We did not take the exhibit down before its scheduled departure, but we learned a profound lesson about presenting a single view, and about acting without input from the cultural group presented. In retrospect, the bulletin board aired many different perspectives and was probably very useful to the public in raising so many issues. This strategy, called TALKBACK BOARDS, is one we continue to use.

The challenges of developing a multicultural exhibit with extensive community input surfaced in the late seventies in *Meeting Ground*, an exhibition about several local ethnic communities. Community members did not, of course, always agree with each other about exactly what should be shown, and they struggled with how to address the audience of their own culture and the rest of the visiting public. The role of museum staff in this situation continues to be an issue we struggle with: how can we advocate for the general audience? How

### We asked some of the Design team what they think about in creating exhibitions in a multicultural institution:

"On the Teen Tokyo exhibit, we almost gave away control of the exhibit. The question was - should we turn the exhibit over to a Japanese Art Director? We had to reassure ourselves - yes, we are the right people to tell the story because we know our audience. What we went with was a (international) team, soliciting input from many people."

"In international team meetings, the American's style often steamrolled the Japanese contributors. The exhibit developer slowed us down to make sure every voice was heard."

"To design the exhibit, I had to go to Tokyo to experience the sense of space. I remember the Japanese consultant asking, 'Do you want people to be uncomfortable in the space, because that's what it's like in Japan.'"

can we use our experience and skills as museum professionals to facilitate the development of a successful exhibit without imposing an ethnocentric view on the material? The *Meeting Ground* exhibit was a good start in learning how to work as a team with community curators.

In 1987, the newly formed Multicultural Program, under the direction of Aylette Jenness and Joanne Jones-Rizzi, began to work on an exhibit about cultural diversity, prejudice and discrimination. *The Kids Bridge* was developed by a multi-racial, multi-ethnic team. Consultants and vendors were sought who continued this diversity. A multicultural advisory board assisted throughout the process. Local kids worked on the exhibit, in determining content and appearing in photographs, signage and videos. Staff from departments of the museum as diverse as public relations, maintenance, and the business office offered opinions and ideas. This highly collaborative mode of exhibition development was time-consuming and cumbersome, but rewarding. When we began work, we had few models to look to for content. In exhibits, we looked toward those dealing with other equity



Members of the Design and Production Department

Dan Spock, l. to r.  
Signe Hanson,  
John Spalvins

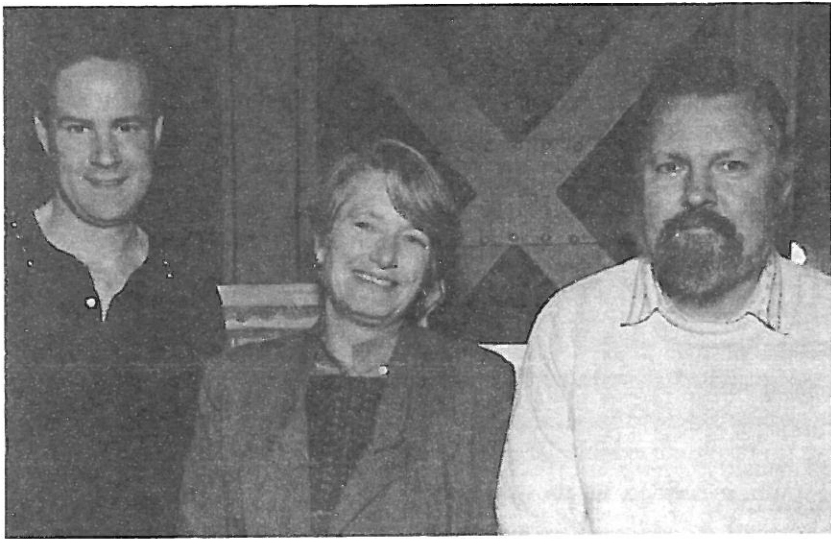


Photo: Max Belcher

*"It's hard to be a spokesman for your own culture, especially in front of your own people. Sometimes people of the culture feel they are held responsible in a way not experienced by others working on the exhibit."*

*"If there is too much collaboration, the idea becomes diffuse before it reaches the designer and the exhibit can lose a strong, clear voice."*

*"Sometimes, earnestness can become a liability and the exhibits become too preachy or too teachy. You can't communicate the importance of the subject to the exclusion of the audience."*

*"Once you start on a cultural roll, you can't stop it. People are starting to line up - 'it's our turn.' There is a tight line between your space and how many mono-cultural exhibits you can have and how big they will be. What's universal?"*

Signe Hanson, Director of Exhibitions  
Dan Spock, Director of Graphic Design

issues, such as disabilities. We studied racism curricula, knowing that the situation of working with a group of students over time was far different from a volitional, brief museum visit. We devised a number of activity stations, both high tech and traditional, to work toward our three goals: to help visitors learn more about themselves in terms of race and ethnicity, to see cultural diversity as an enrichment of their lives, and to begin to talk about and consider some ways to work against racism.

But there were struggles. Should the exhibit be generic, designed to travel, or specific to Boston? Did it feel preachy? We wanted it to be subtle but direct.

Since *The Kids Bridge* opened in 1990, we have learned that it is meeting a perceived need of our audience. It has been used in some unexpected ways: a college communications class studies it to see how diversity can be presented in the media in an unstereotyped way; a school board multicultural committee began their discussions by visiting the exhibit; groups of teachers and our own board and staff use it to explore the issues it raises for themselves.

Community leaders bring groups of students and families, seeing it as a catalyst for talking about tough subjects. Foundations request it as a place to hold after-hour meetings.

*The Community Gallery*, a space for changing exhibitions within *The Kids Bridge* exhibit, is another experiment in cultural representation in the museum. We are inviting cultural groups or organizations, families or individuals to install or collaboratively develop and mount exhibitions on topics which they choose because of the importance to their own lives.

The goals of the gallery are to show exhibits which:

- illuminate the commonalities and diversity of racial and cultural groups in our area,
- foster knowledge about and appreciation of the work of community institutions, organizations, artists and other individuals,
- may travel to other sites to gain a broader audience,
- are presented in the voice of the culture represented.



By this process, we hope to explore multiple strategies for creating exhibits with people, not about them, and to create cross-cultural communication for our visitors.

### Questions To Think About When Creating Exhibits For A Diverse Audience

In addition to specific cultural exhibits, we have been involved in the process of infusing a multicultural perspective throughout all the exhibits in the museum. The following questions may provide a useful checklist:

Is the signage of the institution welcoming to a broad audience? As a children's museum, we have always worked towards a friendly, informal, unintimidating atmosphere. Now we are experimenting with ways to provide signage in languages besides English. We do this for two reasons: to welcome those for whom English is not the first language, and to signal to all visitors that ours is a multilingual society. Strategies we have tried include duplicate

signage in Spanish and English where the exhibit text is brief, complete written translations of signage to be carried around the exhibit, and brief guides to the exhibit in a number of different languages. We have placed banners saying "welcome" in many languages in the lobby. We thought it would be interesting to have the signs "men" and "women" on the bathroom doors in many languages. However, the design format for these was so exuberant that the public couldn't find the bathrooms, so the Visitor Services staff sent us back to the drawing board.

Are our exhibits free from prejudice and stereotyping? Are they sensitive to cultural nuances?

In the multicultural exhibit, *The Kids Bridge*, it was pointed out to us that in using props in a video, we provided a boy with a basketball and for a girl - guess what? A cuddly stuffed animal. In the physical science area using an electric mixer to propel tops allowed both parents to view a kitchen item as a universal tool.

Can we make existing exhibits more relevant to a diverse audience?

A small generic play superette was recast into *El Mercado del Barrio* - a Latino mom and pop store. The use of it remains the same, but the posters overhead, the variety of canned goods, the signage in Spanish all make it welcoming to a particular community and comfortable to a general audience.

In "general" exhibits, does the representation of people reflect the ethnic and racial composition of our local population?

In developing an exhibit called *Families*, a photo exhibit about compositional diversity in U.S. families, we showed Latino, African American, white, Asian, bi-racial and multicultural families. There was not a two-parent, white, middle-class family in the exhibit, prompting a visitor to say, "Hey, where are we? There are a lot of us, you know." We remind ourselves frequently that multicultural does not mean people of color, but everyone in our audience.

### Families

The "Families Exhibit" went out on tour to other museums. It was made up of sixteen photos of all kinds of families including one where a child spoke of what it was like to have a gay parent. When the show traveled we learned that some museums did not hang all the photos but selected the ones they thought appropriate for their audience. So what was meant to help children feel included left them out again.

One lesson gained from the "Families" tour was that we needed to create stronger language in our touring information so that people would understand why it was important to use the full exhibit if they were going to show it.

Is cultural representation adequate for our audience?

Two small exhibits about Africa elicited the questions, "Why are these exhibits so small, when the Japanese house is so big? Why isn't there a comprehensive exhibition area about African Americans?" These questions have resulted in preliminary research toward an African American Initiative in the museum.

Are our representations of cultural events diverse?

Instead of a wreath on the door and a Christmas tree in the lobby, we now have an annual installation called "Winter Celebrations." In addition to multicultural programming, it features small exhibits of Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, Winter Solstice, Nikkomo, Hopi Solstice, Lunar New Year, and Japanese New Year.

Are our cultural exhibits developed with or by people of the culture?

The answer is yes, but in many configurations, sometimes as advisor, sometimes as partner, sometimes as part of a team, and sometimes as leader.

Do our cultural exhibits meet the needs, interests and knowledge of visitors who are of the culture *and* visitors who may know little about the culture represented?

The key to this is in successful teamwork among exhibit developers, plenty of community input, and as much exhibit try-out before final production as possible.

### In Conclusion

One Sunday toward the end of 1991, a Hmong woman, a refugee from Laos recently settled in the Boston area, was demonstrating her craft in an exhibit of her people's work in *The Community*

*Gallery*. A Cambodian couple stopped to watch. The woman said, speaking with some difficulty in English, "We do embroidery too, but I don't know how to do it myself." Pointing to small models of farm tools, she said, "We used these too, for rice and corn." The three talked with interest for some minutes. Here in The Children's Museum, these Southeast Asians, new Americans, found a common bond, and comfortably shared experiences. A small incident, but indicative of the setting we hope to increasingly achieve here. Like everything else about the process of becoming a more inclusive institution, the process is on-going. There's always more work to be done. And what about the white woman who said when looking at the *Families* exhibit, "Hey, where's my family?" She's still around, and we must remember her too.

### The Babar Staff Revolt

When the museum was considering hosting the traveling show of Babar illustrations, the staff became very divided and vocal about some of the images in the show. The issue was how to show an exhibit frozen in time without seeming to give approval to some of the stereotypes of Africans. Some people on staff thought it was a great nostalgia show for parents bringing their kids and people were just "too sensitive"... an early term for politically correct. One small elephant caused a very large commotion.

The director of exhibitions had many meetings with groups of staff and eventually decided not to have the show. This was an unusual case for staff

to have so much input on what was usually decided by curators' prerogative.

In retrospect, I think that we didn't face this kind of dilemma often because most of our exhibits were developed internally with a system of checks and balances, staff feed-back sessions, and advisory boards which dealt with issues along the way.

The lesson we learned was that when staff consciousness is raised, people will have strong opinions about what goes on in the institution and this can cross over areas of responsibility. You have to think about the effect of actions of one department upon the whole museum.

# PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

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CULTURAL PUBLIC EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM ADVANCE OUR GOAL OF BECOMING A MORE PLURALISTIC INSTITUTION IN A NUMBER OF WAYS:

- Public events amplify the programming in major cultural areas to which we are committed through our collections and permanent exhibits.

- They allow us to present material from cultural groups important in our area who are not represented in permanent or even temporary exhibits.

- They are a good way to begin to forge relationships with new communities, and to continue ties with communities with whom we already have a strong relationship.

- They enable community members to show part of their culture to the larger public. Holding events can empower cultural communities to take a leadership role in museum programming, sometimes more easily than they can in an exhibition format, since arts performances are a part of many communities' activities.

- They enable members of a community to show their culture to others in their own community, especially children, as a way of celebrating and preserving their heritage.

- They can educate the general public in a broad and appealing way about cultural groups with whom it may not be familiar — even though these groups may be living close by.

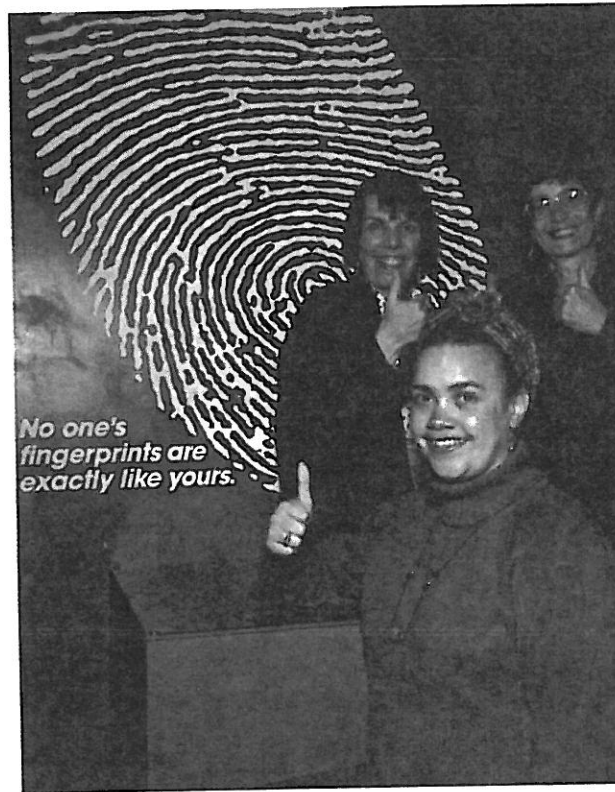


Photo: Max Belcher

Case histories drawn from Children's Museum experience over the last twenty years will illustrate these points.

The annual American Indian Day at the museum started in 1979. It has now become so embedded in the life of American Indians of this part of New England that it is listed as the opening event in their own yearly calendar of regional powwows. The Children's Museum is indeed their place that day; they plan the programming, execute it, and are a large part of the audience as well. This result was achieved by years of intensive work between the Native American communities and the Native American Program staff, by having an advisory board of long standing and by the presence of Native Americans on staff. It was also achieved because American Indian Day is part of a larger program of exhibits and on-going workshops rather than an isolated event, "thank you and now you can go away," and perhaps most importantly, by

giving over a large measure of control of the event to the people themselves.

According to the Native Americans, the museum on that day is a place to meet old friends infrequently seen, to show their cultural achievements to each other, to their children and to outsiders. For the general public, American Indian Day is often an eye-opener. It gets across, as nothing else could,

: The Public Program Department  
 :  
 : Dolores Calaf, back row, l. to r.  
 : Sylvia Sawin,  
 : Amy Yarbrough front row.  
 :

the message of the Native American Program as a whole — “We’re still here.” It provides an opportunity for visitors to talk to Native Americans and to ask questions about music, dance and art work. Visitors see people of different nations in both traditional and street dress — so stereotyping of Native Americans is diminished by seeing the obvious diversity.

On Columbus Day, 1992, the museum collaborated with Native American Communities and Dance Umbrella, a performing arts organization in Boston, to produce a major POWWOW on the Esplanade in Boston. Dancers from many nations as well as the American Indian Dance Theater performed and spoke about their viewpoint on the Columbus event. More than 18,000 Boston area parents and children participated in this multicultural event which was designed to balance the traditional Columbus Day Parade. It was so successful that perhaps American Indian Day will move outside next year.

The celebration of Japanese New Year’s Day at the museum, part of a yearly cycle of Japanese events, has a similar history. On that day about one-third of the visitors in the museum are Japanese; the event is clearly a celebration of New Year’s for the Japanese Americans themselves. It is held on a day which does not interfere with private New Year’s celebrations. At the museum, Japanese families can take part in traditional events and use traditional artifacts like a rice pounder, which are not available in their own homes. The difficulties and successes of staffing this event are illuminating. A local Japanese language school, earlier invited to participate in the day, is now in charge of it to a much larger extent, having gained the necessary experience and having been given the power to run it by the Japanese Program staff.

The celebration of Chinese New Year is an example of a way to keep a smaller cultural program going in the absence of a permanent

exhibit. It too is an annual affair, a day-long festival, which draws an increasingly large number of Chinese Americans from Chinatown and other neighborhoods to an event that is by now familiar and anticipated with pleasure. Again, longevity is a key. The success of this day depends partly upon the length of time it has been held at the museum, and upon the knowledge that it is a regular event.

These events require a lot of time on the part of museum staff - much more so than organizing an event alone. But the very nature of the experience changes for the staff, the collaborators and for the audience. The story of Black History Month programming may be instructive. In the 1970’s there were occasional public events done by African Americans, and fairly extensive resources and teaching materials available for schools. In the 1980’s regular and extensive Black History Month programming began, with at first an emphasis on African roots, and later on, with more attention to African American issues in this country. TCM’s largest audience of the year comes during February school vacation week, so we thought this was a good opportunity to highlight the history and cultural contributions of African Americans. Every year staff wrestled with the dilemma between acknowledging the national celebration of Black History Month and reaching a large audience, and the concern of reinforcing “the Black studies only in February” notion. African American staff members encouraged the Public Program Department to continue Black

### Powwow

One year in the early days of the Powwow at the museum, there was a discussion of all public program and special festivals as part of a larger budget discussion. Whether we could afford to do the Powwow that year was the question under discussion. The assumption from the Native community was that the Powwow was already on the circuit and would therefore happen. This was

an eye-opener for staff who did not yet realize that sharing the celebration also meant sharing the decision-making.

What we learned was that collaborating with cultural communities and sharing celebrations involves sharing real decision-making power with the members of the community.



History Month but to also find a way for a permanent presence. The next step is being explored by a team including many African Americans on staff who would like to see a larger, more permanent, on-going African American presence in the museum, although what form this will take is not yet clear.

Cultural programming has also been the focus of OVERNIGHTS, the sleep-over program for youth groups and families, directed by Sylvia Sawin since its inception in 1986. Overnights participants participate in a series of multicultural experiences during their stay. On Friday evenings they attend a participatory cultural performance, followed by a small-group workshop that focuses on a central theme in a specific culture. Cultural performers are chosen in part for the interactive nature of their performance so that they engage children physically as well as visually and mentally (e.g., dancers have kids up on their feet learning steps). Performers are always “of the culture,” to give the audience a real person whose performance is the culture and whose culture is the performance. In the small group workshops, staff teachers use visual materials, cultural artifacts, discussion and a hands-on activity to teach about the specific cultural topics.

In the Saturday morning video experience, Overnights are involved in exploring issues of racism at a level appropriate to the age of that particular group. Staff help children discuss the issues presented in the videos in both an individual and a group way, and in a protected environment. Because of the several hours of multicultural experiences during the previous evening, and the heightened awareness of general cultural issues, of similarities, differences, connections among and between cultures, Overnights on Saturday morning seem to be open to sharing some of their own personal experiences. They talk about the issues and discuss ideas about going forward with an awareness and openness to situations they might meet in the future.

When planning public programming such as the events described, the following questions may be useful to consider:

*When the program is a collaboration with members of a cultural group, what are the overall issues to consider?*

- What are the roles, rights, and responsibilities of each party?
- What's in it for the community, the performers, the museum?
- What are the long-range goals? How will follow-up be provided?

*What concerns need to be addressed in choosing and preparing public performers?*

- What communities do they represent, and how are they regarded by their communities?
- What is their experience of public performance?
- What do they want to say, and how can the museum facilitate their saying it?

*What do performers need?*

- Do they know who the audience is - what they do and don't know?
- Do they know how to work with the audience? How to present?

*What does the general audience need?*

- background information/overview, context
- ancillary activities, workshops
- information on the performance, resources

*What does the audience of the culture need?*

- validation of their culture
- an event they can feel proud of
- an event they will like and which is culturally appropriate

*How will you evaluate*

- the program
- the relationship with the community
- the experience of the performers
- the experience of the audience

*How will you continue the relationship with the performers, the community?*

- memberships for the performers, visitors
- annual events, other public performances
- museum responding to community needs
- providing information to others about the performers

# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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## RESOURCES AND RESEARCH

THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM HAS DEVELOPED AND CIRCULATED KITS OF MATERIALS TO schools. In fact, the museum was started in 1913 by teachers who created circulating kits - the exhibits came later.

In the 1960's, we began to develop kits that went beyond earlier collections of labeled artifacts and photographs, and offered teaching strategies and explored particular topics in depth. Given the name of MATCH Boxes, an acronym for Materials and Activities for Teachers and Children, these suitcase-size kits employed books, photographs, films, recordings, artifacts, as well as simulation and role-playing techniques to explore social studies and other topics. Several MATCH Boxes had cultural topics, including "The Japanese Family" in 1967 and "The Indians Who Met the Pilgrims" in 1968.

"The Indians Who Met the Pilgrims," which described the life of the people who met the European explorers, has been updated by museum staff several times over the past two decades. This kit was published and sold commercially by American Science and Engineering and later distributed by Delta Education, Inc. We estimate that this one kit alone has reached hundreds of thousands of elementary students nationwide since its creation, presenting a counterbalance to curricula which portrayed American History from only the European perspective.

Since then, new cultural kits have been developed, including *West African Village Life*, *ALEF-BET: Exploring Jewish Tradition*, *Netsilik Eskimos*, *Hopi Culture*, *Japanese Children's Day*, *Multicultural Hopscotch*, *A Puerto Rican Family*, *African Arts*, *Echoes of China* (a series), and *Great Black Americans*. Teachers are currently asking for more multicultural kits and we are looking for ways to develop new ones to meet this need.

In these curriculum development and publication projects, staff were able to research, redefine and try out new ways of learning about cultural similarities and differences. Not all museums are engaged in this type of materials development, but most have research components related to program and exhibit development. Doing this research in collaboration and with immediate feedback from people of all the cultures involved has been beneficial to staff understanding of the issues involved in cultural education. Through this process staff have learned to let people speak for themselves.

One of the first multicultural projects was a curriculum development project called *Ethnic Discovery*. The following excerpt is taken from the introduction to the project and reflects some of the issues with which the museum was wrestling at the time.

*In 1974, the Museum considered...the direction further cultural development should take: should we continue to produce the kind of culture-specific, media rich materials represented by the Loan Exhibits, MATCH Series, and Discovery Boxes, or should we focus on transmitting their implicitly experiential process of cultural learning? Should we collaborate with one or two ethnic groups to develop teaching resources in their areas of concern, or should we conduct a more broadly based effort to create tools that any group might use? Should the "subjects" of development work be specific groups at all, or should we try to deal with the heritage and experience of individuals, who never really fit into ethnic, cultural, or racial classifications anyway?*

**Celebrations Series Book Authors**

Aylette Jenness, *back row, l. to r.*

Leslie Swartz, *front row, l. to r.*

Kathryn Jones,

Linda Coombs,

Paulla Jennings



Photo: Max Belcher

*Resolving these dilemmas in favor of process over content, diversity over particularity, and individuals over groups, the abstract to our [grant] read, in part: "The Museum proposes to collaborate with non-Museum professionals of diverse ethnic heritage...to develop materials and methods for discovering ethnic heritage in any community."*

*Primary development was to be the responsibility of three Museum staff members with diverse backgrounds and professional concerns. Contributing further to the project's diversity of background and experience was a consultant group of Museum and non-Museum participants who would meet regularly to discuss Ethnic Discovery approaches, content, objectives and activities. The group included Chinese, Puerto Rican, Wampanoag, Southern Black, Italian, Jamaican, Yankee, and Texan American.*

*Begun in September, 1974, the Ethnic Discovery project commenced in a highly exploratory fashion. Staff and consultants initiated development by looking into their own backgrounds for foundations on which to build activities for self-discovery. An early effort was made to come to terms with terms: What practical significance did the hard-to-define concepts of ethnic heritage, national origins, cultural experience, race and ethnicity have for the development of a program with a personal rather than a group focus? In an attempt to find out, we invented an activity for confronting the terminology of social science from a personal perspective.*

*"Stuff," as the activity was called, involved thinking of tangible objects and real experiences with personal meanings which could be interpreted as symbols of one's ethnic heritage, national origins, cultural experience, et al...*

*("Project History section of the Ethnic Discovery Project" by Jim Zien, Project Director)*

## Motley School Night

Many staff remember Motley School Night at the museum. Jeri Robinson, Director of the Early Childhood Program, was working with a school that due to white flight had a racially mixed kindergarten, but the rest of the school population was black. All the teachers were white except one, and few parents felt comfortable coming to the school. As part of the program she wanted to hold a night for all the children and their families at the museum. The initial response from the teachers and administrators was that no one would come. We went ahead, got a few parents involved by asking them to provide refreshments and told the museum staff we had invited a whole

school for a Friday night but didn't know if many would show. Over 500 parents, kids, grandparents, aunts and uncles and a few teachers showed up, in buses, cars and taxis.

It was an eye-opener for all of us. We had not prepared the museum floor staff for such a crowd...let alone a crowd they were not used to seeing in the museum. Most of the families were black and in those days most of the museum audience was white. The teachers were pleased but overwhelmed. They tried to talk to all the parents, most of whom they had not met. The parents and kids had a good time in the museum

and it was an overall success, but we all had to deal with the misconceptions that led us, like the school, to anticipate little participation.

School nights at the museum became a regular way for many years for getting parents and kids from different neighborhoods together.

Motley School Night taught us that museum staff may have misconceptions about cultural groups which can affect how programs are designed and their success. Also when collaborating with others you may learn things about the needs of your own staff.



The curriculum was completed in 1979 and the trial copies that we were funded to print were tried out and distributed to schools in the greater Boston area. We attempted to find a commercial publisher but these multicultural materials were a little ahead of their time. We have continued to use the materials for staff development and teacher training. A major discovery from this early multicultural project was that cultural understanding begins with the self.

### Desegregation Programs Curricula

In 1974 Judge Arthur Garrity declared the Boston Public Schools to be practicing *de facto* segregation. Under the leadership of Mike Spock and Anne Hawley, who was Director of the Cultural Education Collaborative, the cultural community organized to support the schools. By creating long-term programs, the resources of the arts community were mobilized to help foster understanding between students who found themselves in integrated classrooms for the first time.

From 1974 to 1984, TCM worked in long-term programs with over twenty schools, hundreds of teachers and thousands of students. Many of the teachers continue to use museum resources today. All of the materials and activities developed as part of the museum's work with the Boston Public School in desegregation programs began with a series of questions. What are the needs of the children? What do they know and respect about their own cultures? And what can they learn about cultures other than their own from the artifacts and resources of the museum? With most of the museum curator/educators participating, many activities using real materials in interactive experiences were developed in these school programs and were integrated into on-going museum programs and exhibitions.

### National Urban League

In the late 1980's the National Urban League contracted with the museum to assist in a project to develop preschool science materials for Urban League

Centers nationwide. Jeri Robinson, Early Childhood Program Director, and Diane Willow, Environmental Science Developer, were hired to develop materials and activities for science-shy preschool teachers. They knew that in order to succeed, it was not enough to create interesting, engaging materials alone.

Throughout the project, the staff collaborated with teachers, many of whom had limited training and little confidence regarding science. Parents at some centers were not comfortable in how to encourage discovery at home as a foundation for learning science. It would have been simple to develop only the activities that we were hired to create, but our staff's experience in developing with specific audiences propelled them to change the format of the materials (shorter, more direct, more visual) and the training process (less formal, more experiential) to lead to greater likelihood of use by teachers and involvement by parents.

### Middle School Curriculum Project

The Physical Science Team of TCM including Bernie Zubrowski, Paul Evans, and Peggy Monahan is currently developing middle school physical science materials on eight topics with funding from the National Science Foundation. These are being targeted for urban school systems with higher populations of students underrepresented in science.

Bernie Zubrowski has developed materials, activities, and exhibits for TCM for over 20 years. His try-out-and-revise method has taken him into many urban classrooms throughout these years. He has learned what engages kids and which activities help them explore the physical science concepts. Interest in his materials seems to cross race and gender lines.

Another component of the middle school physical science project is a pre-engineering program for minority youths under the leadership of The Massachusetts Pre-engineering Program. Women and scientists of color

are brought into the classroom to provide role models for the students and to share their areas of expertise which relate to the topics being studied.

These Middle School materials are being tested in six cities and will be published and distributed nationally by Cuisenaire Corporation of America. An accompanying set of videotapes is being produced by WGBH, a Boston Public Television station. The videos will be useful to teachers and will be used in undergraduate teacher training programs.

#### Multicultural Education Project

Over the past four years, Leslie Swartz and Linda Warner, with Candelaria Silva, Rachel Sing and Maria Cabrera, have developed and conducted 2- or 3-week summer institutes as the focus of the Multicultural Education Project. Each year, a new group of 25-30 educators joins the project in the summer. Although the exact dates and length of the summer institutes vary each year, the basic themes and format for learning about many cultures remain constant.

The Summer Institute in 1992, which ran for three weeks in July, focused on four broad cultural and ethnic groups in the Boston area - Asians, Latinos, African Americans and Arab Americans - and on training for participants in racism awareness. Each year, speakers from colleges and social service agencies provide information on the history of the ethnic group, with emphasis on issues of assimilation and ethnic identity within that group. After this preparation of cultural adaptation, lectures and discussion, teachers visit a representative ethnic neighborhood.

To help participants develop a personal empathy with people of the ethnic group, the staff works through an agency in each neighborhood to prepare young people to talk about their lives growing up and going to school in the U.S., and to act as guides to the neighborhood. This format introduces participants to four neighborhoods: the multi-ethnic Asian neighborhood in Chinatown, a Cambodian neighborhood in Revere, a Latino neighborhood in Jamaica Plain, and the area of Roxbury around Highland Park which is primarily African American. In addition, the group visits a major cultural institution for the community — a Cambodian Buddhist Temple, the cultural center in the housing development of Villa Victoria, and The National Center for Afro American Artists.

#### Raceways, Wheels and Tops

We are currently publishing through William Morrow of New York the thirteenth book in a physical science series by Bernie Zubrowski. From the beginning we wanted the books to show girls and boys of all races on the covers engaged in the science activities.

It was more difficult than we thought because ten years ago almost all science books that were published had only white boys on the covers, and of course we “wanted them to sell, didn’t we?” It was also difficult to find the illustrator, Roy Doty, who was not only precise in the areas that needed

scientific illustration but could also create positive images of children of different races.

Today, if you look at the covers of the series you can almost put them in order of publication. White boys experimenting and white girls watching; then white boys and girls both active; and finally African American, Anglo and Asian children on the cover all doing science. Now we need wheelchairs.

Through our physical science series, we have learned that images do make a difference. Hang tough even if your ideas are a little ahead of the times.

The approach of the Summer Institute is varied. In addition to speakers and neighborhood visits, participants try out cultural activities for the classroom in workshops with artists or museum staff. They have danced and drummed the merengue and plena, made collages in the style of Romare Bearden, and worked on drawing and painting a Chinese landscape mural. On many days they eat lunch typical of the ethnic group which they are learning about.

The project utilizes non-traditional approaches to learning, such as taking field trips, using artifacts, interviewing, small group discussion, and cooperative learning that encourage participants to share what they know and learn from each other. During the Summer Institute 1992, participants read children's fiction from many cultures and shared curriculum ideas around literature. In addition, participants prepared a lesson using artifacts collected from the neighborhoods they visited.

By teaching in the institute, people on our staff who have spent their professional lives learning and teaching about cultures other than their own also have an opportunity to learn directly from experts of the culture and to use their skills in facilitating learning as well as teaching.

### **Multicultural Celebrations Series**

Celebration workshops have been held for many years at TCM to encourage teachers to broaden classroom activities to be more inclusive rather than celebrating only European-based holidays. Leslie Swartz, Director of Teacher Services, worked with Modern Curriculum Press, a division of Simon & Schuster, to develop a celebrations curriculum that would be a non-threatening theme to encourage teachers nationally to broaden classroom traditions. They are currently publishing the museum's series of 18 books (12 published in 1991) and curricula related to celebrations.

Again in this curriculum series, which includes books, audiotapes, posters and teachers' guides on 12 celebrations, all of the authors, illustrators and musicians are people of the culture. Many of them are TCM staff and Summer Institute faculty. This decision was critical to the series' success, but you can imagine the work with 12 authors and 12 illustrators trying to meet deadlines.

We know there are museums where it is difficult enough to collaborate across department lines. And now we are suggesting collaboration with people of the culture on all cultural program, exhibition and materials development. Was this easy for us? No. Some staff are very uncomfortable doing things a new way, especially if they have been successful professionally working by themselves. It takes time, a strong rationale and strong leadership from the Director and Senior managers. And you lose some staff as in all institutional change. But the staff people who have been part of cross-cultural teams are excited by the difference in the materials and exhibitions created jointly and they become the strongest advocates of the collaborative process.





## Next Steps



Teen workers  
David Shearrion, *l. to r.*  
Maritza Gonzalez,  
Malik Aziz,  
Kenny McMullen,  
with planned  
expansion  
project model

Photo: Atlantic Photo



# N E X T   S T E P S

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WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS ON ALL OF THE OBJECTIVES OF OUR MULTICULTURAL INITIATIVES SET IN 1987.

We are in the process of creating a new plan for the next three to five years. It will need to be reviewed by the board and many departments, and specific goals and strategies and timeframes will need to be written.

**VISIONS, our staff development consultants, make these recommendations for next steps:**

- Provide additional training in managing diversity for museum managers,
- Set up a museum-wide multicultural committee to oversee continued staff development and serve as a liaison for issues raised by the staff,
- Create a system for caucus groups or interest groups to meet voluntarily to continue to discuss issues raised at the training workshops,
- Create opportunities for cross-departmental interaction and informal social events for staff,
- Recognize multicultural achievements by staff members,
- Reevaluate leadership criteria in cultural program areas and create a plan regarding future cultural programs.

**Closing.....**

What began many years ago continues.

We have begun a process of fundamental institutional change. We believe it is the course the museum must take if it is to fulfill its mission in the next century. But it has not been easy: change is demanding and slow. Today, many museums are opening and preparing to serve audiences of the twenty-first century. What will our future be?

We see a network of culture-specific museums which exhibit and teach their cultural heritage and play a dynamic role in the lives of the people of the culture. These museums need to receive more support for the role they play in strengthening the cultural life for people in their communities.

We also see multicultural museums, like ours, which serve as meeting grounds where people of many cultures experience art, history, science and culture and together celebrate the diversity of the nation. Why museums? Because we are entrusted with the material culture of the nation's past, and because we choose to play a role in the nation's dynamic multicultural future.

# R e s o u r c e s

## MUSEUM ASSESSMENT

The following questions may serve as guidelines as you assess your museum in terms of diversity. Of course, there are many factors including its history, locale, and affiliations which may affect an institution's direction and goals.

### MISSION

What is the mission of your institution? Does it in any way define your audience? Do you have a statement of operating principles or commitments to expand the mission statement?

### GOVERNANCE

What is the make-up of the Board of Trustees in terms of gender, racial, and ethnic composition, urban/suburban, class and occupation?

Is there a system for board turnover and is it known?

Does your long-range planning include board diversity?

What board composition would help the institution fulfill its mission and meet its financial responsibilities?

Is there anything in the by-laws or informal structure of the organization that unwittingly gives preference to one cultural group over another?

Are there board-sponsored social and or educational events which could involve a broader audience? What would have to happen for this to occur? Do the kinds of board events, time of day, or location favor one group over another?

### COLLECTIONS

What is the nature of the museum's primary collections?

Are there cultural groups which might have insights into interpretation of the objects or have a vested interest in them?

Does your curatorial staff represent the cultures in your collections? If not, what will you do to ensure that your curators broaden their understanding of the objects and their meaning?

Are your acquisition goals reflective of your past, present or future audiences?

Is there any opportunity for public feedback in what you choose to exhibit?

## STAFF/MANAGEMENT

Is there a written commitment to diversity in your staff policies or statement of values?

What is the diversity of your staff in terms of gender, race, ethnic background, class, age, etc?

What is your system for tracking this information? Do you use the information you gather in planning or goal setting?

Is there diversity in management positions - administration, department heads, curators, project directors?

Are there departments in the institution more diverse than others?

Are there known systems for airing differences of opinion or for conflict resolution? Are they used by the staff?

Are people willing to discuss openly their differences of opinion, or do they have the meeting after the meeting?

Do your hiring procedures tend to attract the same applicant pool? Have you developed strategies for broadening the pool and are they known and used by the staff?

Are you competitive in terms of salary with other museums and non-profits in your area? What else do you have to offer people you wish to attract?

Do your volunteers, floor staff, and program staff reflect the audience you desire in terms of diversity? If not, do you have concrete plans for moving toward that diversity?

## AUDIENCE

Who currently visits your museum? Is your goal to have visitors, members, school groups, and program participants reflective of the demographics of your state, city or town? When was the last time you did a survey? Have you identified target audiences who are not using the museum?

Who in your institution is in charge of looking at the make-up of your audience? What process will you use for developing goals and strategies?

## SITE/BUILDING/ENTRANCE

Is your building located in a neighborhood which is comfortable to a variety of visitors? If the location itself is a barrier, what can you do to make it feel safe and welcome?

Is your building accessible in terms of public transportation, services for visitors with special needs, families and seniors?

Does your entrance welcome first-time as well as familiar visitors? Are lobby staff

trained to welcome as well as guide and protect? Do they welcome all visitors in the same way?

Do your admission prices, memberships and discount systems reflect the ability to pay of all the audiences you desire? What happens when someone comes who cannot afford admission?

What is the make-up of your membership? Do you market memberships to neighborhoods you wish to attract? Do your member services meet their needs? How will you find out?

## PROGRAM AND EXHIBITION

Are there different points of view on the teams that make programmatic decisions for the institution?

Do your public programs and exhibitions reflect views appropriate to your community? What resources do you have in terms of collections, staff, scholarship and community resources to broaden the content of your programs and exhibitions?

Is there room in your institution for more than one aesthetic for different styles of public participation?

## ADVOCACY

Change often requires diligent advocacy on the part of staff. Who is and should be leading an effort toward inclusiveness?

How will their work be supported?

Developed by Patricia A. Steuert ©1992.

# Multicultural Organization Development

## ASSESSING ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY

Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman

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### MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT ASSESSING LEVELS AND STAGES:

#### THE MONO-CULTURAL LEVEL

##### *Stage One: The Exclusionary Organization.*

The Exclusionary Organization is openly devoted to maintaining the majority group's dominance and privilege. These values are typically manifested in the organization's mission and membership criteria.

##### Stage Indicators:

1. There are explicit statements made by the leadership that make it clear that social diversity in the workforce is not valued.
2. There are policies and practices that are intended to keep specific social identity groups out.
3. There are skill, style and/or credential requirements that intentionally exclude members of specific social identity groups.
4. The performance appraisal system is intentionally designed and administered in a fashion that discriminates against members of specific social identity groups.
5. Bigoted attitudes are openly expressed and acted on in the workplace without negative consequences.

##### *Stage Two: "The Club".*

The Club describes the organization that stops short of explicitly advocating anything like the "majority" group's supremacy, but does seek to maintain the privileges for those who have traditionally held social power. This is done by developing and maintaining missions, policies, norms and procedures seen as "correct" from their perspective. The Club allows a limited number of people from other social identity groups into the organization provided that they have the "right" perspective and credentials.



#### Stage Indicators:

1. Statements about the organization's values *do not* implicitly or explicitly suggest any interest in including members of diverse social identity groups into the workforce or, interest in attending to the discrimination in the workplace.
2. The personnel profile does not have any significant social diversity, and there are no initiatives in place that are designed to change that profile.
3. The skills, style and credential requirements give advantage to "majority" groups.
4. "Non-majority" group members are allowed access into stereotypic roles as long as they don't "make waves."
5. Bigoted attitudes and behaviors are subtle but visible and generally go unchallenged.

#### THE NON-DISCRIMINATING LEVEL

##### *Stage Three: The Compliance Organization.*

The Compliance Organization is committed to removing some of the discrimination inherent in the "club" by providing access to members of social identity groups that were previously excluded. However, it seeks to accomplish this objective without disturbing the structure, mission and culture of the organization. The organization is careful not to create "too many waves" or to offend or challenge its "majority" employees' or customers' bigoted attitudes or behaviors.

The compliance organization usually attempts to change its social diversity profile by actively recruiting and hiring more "non-majority" people at the bottom of the organization. On occasion, they will hire or promote "tokens" into management positions, usually staff positions. When the exception is made to place a "non-majority" person in a line position it is important that this person be a "team player" and that s/he be a "qualified" applicant. A "qualified team player" does not openly challenge the organization's mission and practices, and is usually 150% competent to do the job.

#### Stage Indicators:

1. The leadership makes explicit statements that indicate a strong commitment to increasing the social diversity in the workforce.
2. While the social diversity is increasing, the increase is often at the bottom of the organization or in support positions.
3. "Non-majority" people are expected to pick-up and adopt the skills and style that are acceptable in the "majority" organization culture.

4. Managers focus on making sure that they have the right number of people from "non-majority" groups in their organizations.
5. There is a prevailing belief that "non-majority" people are being given unfair advantage (reverse discrimination).

##### *Stage Four: The Affirmative Action Organization.*

The Affirmative Action Organization is also committed to eliminating the discriminatory practices and inherent advantage given members of the "majority" group in The Club by actively recruiting and promoting members of those social groups typically denied access to the organization. Moreover, the affirmative action organization takes an active role in supporting the growth and development of these new employees and initiating programs that increase their chances of success and mobility. All employees are encouraged to think and behave in a non-oppressive manner, and the organization may conduct awareness programs toward this end.

#### Stage Indicators:

1. There are explicit statements that indicate a desire for members of all social identity groups to have an opportunity to be full contributors in the existing organization.
2. While there is a significant increase in the social diversity in the organization, the profile has not significantly changed in the "line of business" and "power brokering" positions.
3. There are training and mentoring initiatives designed to ensure the success of members of "non-majority" groups.
4. Managers seek out and are provided with training that will help them handle the unique situations that will arise in a multicultural workforce.
5. The interactions between employees is generally free of overt bigoted attitudes and behaviors.

#### THE MULTICULTURAL LEVEL

##### *Stage Five: The Redefining Organization.*

The Redefining Organization is a system in transition. This organization is not satisfied with just being "non-oppressive." It is committed to working toward an environment that goes beyond "managing diversity" to one that "values and capitalizes on diversity." This organization is committed to finding ways to ensure the full inclusion of all social identity group perspectives as a method of enhancing the growth and success potential of the organization.

The Redefining Organization begins to question the limitations of relying solely on the one cultural perspective as a basis for the organization's mission, operations, and product development. It seeks to explore the significance and potential benefits of a multicultural workforce. This organization actively engages in visioning, planning and problem solving activities directed toward the realization of a multicultural organization.

The Redefining Organization is committed to developing and implementing policies and practices that distribute power among all of the diverse groups in the organization. In summary, the Redefining Organization searches for alternative modes of organizing that guarantee the inclusion, participation and empowerment of all its members.

Stage Indicators:

- 1. There are explicit statements made by the leadership that make it clear that there is a value for working toward the full inclusion of all social identity groups in a multicultural organization.
- 2. There is an active initiative to have full representation of all social identity groups at all levels of the organization.
- 3. The organization is working toward the inclusion of all cultural perspectives and styles of working.
- 4. There are training programs available to provide all managers with the skills to fully capitalize on the resources available in the multicultural workforce.
- 5. The organization initiates and supports programs designed to ensure that members of all social identity groups feel like full citizens in a multicultural organization.

*Stage six: The Multicultural Organization.*

The Multicultural Organization reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service; it acts on a commitment to eradicate social oppression in all forms within the organization; the multicultural organization includes the members of diverse cultural and social groups as full participants, especially in decisions that shape the organization; and it follows through on broader external social responsibilities, including support of efforts to eliminate all forms of social oppression and to educate others in multicultural perspectives.

Stage Indicators:

- 1. The organization has a mission and value statement that expresses a value for the full inclusion of the cultural perspectives of members of all social identity groups.
- 2. There is representation of all social identity groups at all levels of the organization.
- 3. The organization fully incorporates compatible styles of getting work done from various cultures.
- 4. The organization's management practices allow for the full realization of the strengths available in a multicultural workforce.
- 5. All employees feel like full citizens in the organization.

MCOD Assessment Targets

Multicultural Values:

The extent to which the organization has a belief system that is supportive of social justice and social diversity.

Multicultural Personnel Profile:

The extent to which the organization actively engages in activities that ensure that it has a socially diverse workforce.

Multicultural Technology:

The extent to which the skill, style, physiological, and credential requirements allow for the greatest social diversity possible in the workforce.

Multicultural Management Practices:

The extent to which the managers in the organization are skilled at managing the multicultural workforce.

Multicultural Awareness and Climate:

The extent to which the awareness and attitudes in the workplace contribute to a welcoming climate for members of all social identity groups.

# “WORD POWER” (Definitions and Terms)

“Language not only expresses ideas and concepts, but it actually shapes thoughts...” The linguist Benjamin Whorf has pointed out that language is more than a reflection of the communication structure of society. Language is intimately linked to the creation and perception of reality itself. Thus, eliminating biased terminology is one way to change and correct the way we view ourselves and others.

Language, which reflects society, is not static. It is constantly changing and growing. Words are deleted from or added to our language, and their meanings and connotations change continually to reflect the political, social, economic, and technological changes in our society. For example, when we use the male pronoun “he” to mean both sexes, we consciously or unconsciously, are making a value statement. Likewise, the use of outmoded terms like “Negro” or “Oriental”, convey a much different meaning than the terms “African American” or “Asian”. Hence, language has the power to challenge or maintain the status quo.

We offer the following words and definitions to be used as a guide for non-biased terminology, which is a first step in re-structuring society into one that is more just. Keep in mind that some of these definitions include broad generalizations and are, at best, imprecise labels to describe diverse human populations. It is important to always be aware of the terms people use to describe themselves, and to understand their reasons for these choices. When in doubt, and when possible, ask.

## I. CONCEPTS

**PREJUDICE:** Prejudice is an attitude, opinion, or feeling formed without adequate prior knowledge, thought, or reason. Prejudice can be prejudgment for or against any individual, group, or object. Any individual or group can hold prejudice(s) towards another individual, group or object. Moreover, a prejudice cannot be changed simply by presenting new facts or information that contradict those one already has.

**STEREOTYPE:** A stereotype is an untruth, oversimplification, or generalization about the traits and behavior of an entire people. Stereotypes are applied to each member of the group, without regard to each individual’s personal characteristics.

**DISCRIMINATION:** Discrimination is differential treatment that favors one individual, group, or object over another. The source of discrimination is prejudice and the actions are often, but not necessarily, systematized. Discrimination involves the denial or limitation of access to the goods, benefits, rights, and privileges of society.

**RACISM:** Racism is racial prejudice and discrimination—supported by institutional power and authority—used to the advantage of one race and the disadvantage of other race(s). The critical element which differentiates racism from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power and authority to support prejudice and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far-reaching outcomes and effects.

**SEXISM:** Sexism is the same as above but based on prejudice against one gender. Sexism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice—backed up by institutional power—which subordinates people because of their gender.

**CLASSISM:** Same as above but based on class status. Classism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice that subordinates people due to their economic condition.

**AGEISM:** Same as above but based on age. Ageism is any attitude, action or institutional practice-backed up by institutional power-which subordinates people because of their age, usually directed towards older persons.

**HETEROSEXISM:** Same as above but based on sexual orientation. Heterosexism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice-backed up by institutional power-which subordinates people because of their sexual orientation. This includes **HOMOPHOBIA** which is the fear or hatred of gay and lesbian people, fear of being gay or lesbian, and fear of being perceived as gay or lesbian.

**ANTI-SEMITISM:** Same as above but based on one's Jewish heritage. Anti-semitism is any attitude, action, or institutional practice-backed up by institutional power-which is based upon prejudice against Jewish people. The genocide of the Holocaust is an extreme example of this type of oppression.

## II. PEOPLE

**PEOPLE OF COLOR:** A term of solidarity referring to Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Pacific Islanders. This term is preferred to other terms often heard, such as **MINORITY** and **NON-WHITE**. While people of color are a minority in the United States, they are the vast majority—nine-tenths—of the world's population; White people are the distinct minority. Use of the term "minority," therefore, obscures this global reality and, in effect, reinforces racist assumptions. To describe People of Color as "non-white" is to use the White race as the standard against which all other races are

described or as a referent in relation to whom all others are positioned. It is doubtful that White people would appreciate being called "non-black" or men would like being called "non-women." The term **PEOPLE OF COLOR** was born out of an explicitly political statement that signaled a solidarity among progressive African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders. People may choose to identify this way for a variety of factors including race, ethnicity, culture, physical appearance, class, and political perspective.

**MINORITY:** See above

**THIRD WORLD:** The Third World refers to the colonized or formerly colonized countries of the world, including the nations and peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean Islands, who have a shared history of economic exploitation and oppression. The term gained increasing usage after the 1955 Bandung Conference of "non-aligned" nations, which represented a third force outside of the two world superpowers. The "First World" referred to the United States, Western Europe, and its sphere of influence. The "Second World" referred to the Soviet Union and its sphere. The "Third World" represents for the most part, those nations that were, or are, controlled by the "First World". However, many Africans and Asians are reclaiming the term "First World" in recognition of their place in world history as the oldest civilizations.

**AFRICAN AMERICANS:** People of African descent who were born in the United States. The term is preferable to Afro-American because the African heritage is clearly identified and named.

**BLACKS:** An inclusive term referring to people of African descent who may be from or in any part of the world.

**ASIAN AMERICANS:** Refers to people of Asian descent living in the United States, including people of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Vietnamese, and Cambodian heritage. Please note that the term **ORIENTAL** is considered a pejorative word.

**PACIFIC ISLANDERS:** Refers to people from the islands of the Pacific such as the Philippines, Tahiti, and Indonesia. Native Hawaiian Islanders are Pacific Islanders as well as U.S. citizens.

**LATINOS:** Refers to people from Central America, (such as Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador), South America (such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay), and the



Spanish-speaking Caribbean (such as Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba). The term also includes Chicanos (Mexican Americans). The term LATINO refers to a shared cultural heritage (Black, Native American, and Spanish), a history of colonization by Spain, and a common language (Spanish). The term does not refer to people from Spain. In addition, the term HISPANIC is more often heard on the East coast of the United States and LATINO in the West. Those on either coast who prefer to be known as LATINO, however, say that the word was coined to express the common historical and political factors listed above, and that HISPANIC merely reflects popular usage of European-based language.

NATIVE AMERICANS: Refers to the descendants of the original people who inhabited North, South, and Central America prior to their conquest by Europeans. There is still a debate as to whether the term NATIVE AMERICAN or INDIAN is preferred. Many Native Americans do use "Indian" and "tribe" in referring to their own people. However, many other Native Peoples suggest that "Indian," "tribe," and a host of similar words are incorrect and carry derogatory connotations in our society. Recommended usage is to refer to a particular people or nation by name, such as Cherokee, Hopi, and Seminole.

WHITES: An inclusive term referring to people of European descent including the English, Irish, Italian, German, Greek, Dutch, Polish, etc.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: As defined in federal regulations, "individuals with handicaps" refers to any person who either (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially impairs one or more life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. "Persons with disabilities" is the preferred term, not "handicapped". In addition, put people first, not their disability. Say women with arthritis, children who are deaf, people with disabilities. This puts the focus on the individual, not on a particular functional limitation. Because of editorial pressures to be succinct, we know it is not always possible to use preferred style (e.g., to put people first). Consider the following alternatives. Although these suggestions have not been sanctioned by all disability groups, if the portrayal is positive and accurate, you should feel comfortable using the following variations: disabled citizens, nondisabled people, wheelchair-user, deaf girl, brain-damaged women, paralyzed child, and so on. Crippled, deformed, suffers from, victim of, the retarded, etc. are NEVER acceptable under any circumstances. Disability groups also strongly object to using euphemisms to describe disabilities (such as "physically challenged"). - This information comes from "Language and Attitude", a pamphlet published by the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities, June 1988.

WOMEN: Refers to adult human females. Adult females are not "girls" and should not be referred to as such. A good guideline is to only use the term "girl" when you would similarly use the term "boy" to refer to a male. Likewise, "ladies" and "gentlemen" are parallel terms, as are "women" and "men", and "Mr." and "Ms.".

FINAL NOTE: Please remember that the racial and cultural categories and terms are fluid and overlapping. For example, a person from Nigeria, living in the United States, might refer to him/herself as African, Black, Nigerian, or a Person of Color. His/her child, if living in the U.S. for most of his/her life, might choose the term African American, as well as the other options listed above.

It is always best to learn how people refer to themselves. Use your best judgment, however, in situations where you will not be able to speak directly to the person. When conducting research or attempting to gather demographic information in a particular setting, be especially careful of how you classify people because certain designations paint certain pictures. For example, one picture is painted if we simply say that all the clients in an agency are "Latinos," and another if we say, "Puerto Rican," "Chicano," and "Cuban." Likewise, we get different information when we know that all the Black students in a school are exchange students from Nigeria or newly arrived immigrants from Jamaica, but none are African American. Demographic information can often be vague, but it can be made more specific by paying particular attention to race, ethnicity, and nationality. Specificity is necessary to identify trends and patterns in different contexts and institutions.

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# THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM'S MISSION STATEMENT

The Children's Museum in Boston exists to help children understand and enjoy the world in which they live.

As an early museum experience for children, our environment is informal but our purpose is serious. Central to our philosophy is the belief that real objects, direct experiences and enjoyment support learning. To involve all kinds of learners we use a variety of strategies and programs.

Children should grow up feeling secure and self-confident with respect for others and the natural world. The museum encourages imagination, curiosity, questioning and realism; it provides opportunities for new insights, involvement with the world and understanding of human differences.

We are committed to:

- serving a culturally and economically diverse audience; primarily from the Greater Boston area, but also from New England and throughout the country;
- creating exhibitions and programs which provide thought-provoking interactions with real objects in the areas of cultural understanding, science and human development;
- maintaining our cultural and natural history collections at the highest museum standards and making them accessible to a broad public;
- attracting and supporting a diverse staff who share a commitment to children and bring creativity and expertise to the work of the museum;
- providing resources and support for parents;
- working with teachers and community agency staff to extend the museum's philosophy and resources;
- and serving as a national research and development center that explores new methods of informal education, as well as new roles for museums.

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