

# Addressing Barriers to Participation:

Making the Museums of the Future Equitable, Inclusive, and Accessible

ASTC 2019

# Agenda

- Who We Are
- Why This Topic Matters
- Session Expectations
- Common Barriers

# Who We Are

- **Nichelle O’Saurus**

Volunteer Coordinator  
Natural History Museum of Utah  
*GP: she/her*

- **Dee W. Perry**

Floor Manager  
Lawrence Hall of Science  
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- **Raquel Stewart**

Jr. Inclusion and Engagement Specialist  
Oregon Museum of Science and Industry  
*GP: she/her*

Shout-out to **Sandra Bonnici**, who helped with this presentation and couldn’t be here today!

# Why This Topic Matters

- US minority population is growing, while the percentage of museum visitors in a minority population remains significantly low:



Source: Reach Advisors analysis of census data and survey data.

# Why This Topic Matters

- The population of minority visitors in museums today reflects less than the minority population in the US prior to the 1970's...



Source: Reach Advisors analysis of census data and survey data.

# Why This Topic Matters

Science  
Education

SCIENCE LEARNING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

## “Not Designed for Us”: How Science Museums and Science Centers Socially Exclude Low-Income, Minority Ethnic Groups

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*Received 31 October 2013; accepted 1 July 2014*

*DOI 10.1002/sce.21133*

*Published online 11 September 2014 in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com).*

**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores how people from low-income, minority ethnic groups perceive and experience exclusion from informal science education (ISE) institutions, such as museums and science centers. Drawing on qualitative data from four focus groups, 32 interviews, four accompanied visits to ISE institutions, and field notes, this paper presents an analysis of exclusion from science learning opportunities during visits alongside participants' attitudes, expectations, and conclusions about participation in ISE. Participants came from four community groups in central London: a Sierra Leonean group ( $n = 21$ ), a Latin American group ( $n = 18$ ), a Somali group ( $n = 6$ ), and an Asian group ( $n = 13$ ). Using a theoretical framework based on the work of Bourdieu, the analysis suggests ISE practices were grounded in expectations about visitors' scientific knowledge, language skills, and finances in ways that were problematic for participants and excluded them from science learning opportunities. It is argued that ISE practices reinforced participants' preexisting sense that museums and science centers were “not for us.” The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings in relation to previous research on participation in ISE and the potential for developing more inclusive informal science learning opportunities. © 2014 The Authors *Science Education* Published by Wiley Periodicals, Inc. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. *Sci Ed* 98:981–1008, 2014

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Contract grant sponsor: United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council.  
Contract grant number: ES/G018448/1.

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# Why This Topic Matters

“Disability is an experience. It is the result of an actual or perceived impairment. My impairment is that I am deaf. My experience as a result of that is that I face discrimination, oppression, and barriers. Those are things that are disabling.”

- Emmanuel von Schack, 9/11 Memorial Museum

# Session Expectations

- There are no easy answers; today may not bring closure.
- We are all in different places in our journey; be kind and humble.
- Barriers overlap; make connections.

**YOU can make an impact!**

# Common Barriers

- Language
- Accessibility
- Time
- Hours of Operation
- Cost
- Transportation
- Not seeing yourself reflected in the museum
- The value of the museum is not a value to the audience
- Feeling judged for not being able to decode expected behavior
- Having to use or report low income status

# Addressing Barriers to Participation

- “Parking lots” on the wall for most common challenges:
  - Language
  - Accessibility
  - Time
  - Hours of Operation
  - Cost
  - Transportation

# Addressing Barriers to Participation

- “Parking lots” on the wall for most common challenges
- Group discussion for more complex barriers

# Addressing Barriers to Participation

- “Parking lots” on the wall for most common challenges
- Group discussion for more complex barriers
- **ORID Focused Conversation**
  - **O**bjective (“what”)
  - **R**eflective (“gut”)
  - **I**nterpretive (“so what”)
  - **D**ecisional (“now what”)

# Common Barriers

- Not seeing yourself reflected in the museum.
- The value of the museum is not a value to the audience.
- Not understanding what is expected, and feeling judged for not being able to decode expected behavior.
- Having to use or report low income status (especially in front of children).

# Thank You!

- **Nichelle O’Saurus** – [nosaurus@nhmu.utah.edu](mailto:nosaurus@nhmu.utah.edu)  
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## Barriers to Participation and Inclusion

Created by Sandra Bonnici, Senior Diversity Fellow AAM  
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- **Not seeing yourself, your family or your values reflected in the staff, activities or values of the organization.**
- **The value of the museum is not a value to the audience.**
- **Not understanding what is expected and feeling judged for not being able to decode what is the expected behavior and the expectation is reflective of a narrow perspective.**
- **Having to use or report low income status especially in front of children**
- **Language:** navigating interactions if you are a limited English speaker or must rely on your children to interpret limits the amount of places families will go or they will choose places that have significant staffing, visitation, and engagement in their native languages.
- **Physical or Cognitive Ability:** the wide array of different physical and cognitive needs provides both a barrier and a rich opportunity to work with agencies to assess the needs of the community, understand and adapt (as needed) the exhibits and experiences within the museum.
- **Time:** our most valuable and finite resource is time. Families that are working multiple jobs, single parent households, families living in crisis and poverty have even less time to devote to play and extra experiences. Families not in crisis are faced with competing activities and overburdened schedules.

- **Hours of Operation:** For many families especially if they have children in school, it is difficult to come during the week and even on weekends.
- **Cost:** if you do not wish to report or use access, the fee can be prohibitive especially if you are not sure of the value you are getting for the price in context of a city that provides many opportunities for free (zoo, library, etc)
- **Transportation:** for families with unstable or no personal vehicle, transportation to attend to life essentials becomes a full-time endeavor. Though buses can be used to transport families from agencies or centers individual independence is still a significant barrier.

**Barrier:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Objective: Facts, Data, Senses**

What is this barrier about? What event from the past year in your institution has exemplified/magnified this barrier?

**Reflective: Reactions, Heart, Feelings**

How does this make you feel? How do you think the affected communities feel?

**Interpretive: So What?**

How has your institution created or perpetuated this barrier? What are you and/or your institution doing right now to address this barrier or work with this community?

**Decision: Now What?**

How has this conversation changed your thinking about this barrier or this community? What can you do differently going forward to address this barrier?

**\*\*Thinking strategically, how might these barriers and the strategies to minimize them be part of the overall strategic plan for your institution? Look for ways to connect to fundraising, marketing, etc. This approach helps broaden who is involved in the process, and deepens it as an institutional strategy, instead of a personal initiative or activity.**

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## **Addressing Barriers to Participation: Making the Museums of the Future Equitable, Inclusive, and Accessible**

ASTC Conference: September 2019, Toronto, Canada

### **Resources for Addressing Barriers to Participation**

ASTC Advocates for Diversity Community of Practice: A place for diversity & inclusion advocates in science centers and museums to share strategies and provide support for driving organizational diversity efforts.

MASS Action (Museums As Sites for Social Action): This comprehensive guide outlines the theory and tools for practice towards creating greater equity within the museum field.

<https://www.museumaction.org/resources>

iPAGE: Dedicated to supporting diversity, promoting inclusion, increasing access, and achieving equity in the ISI sector, iPAGE is designed to help leaders bring about meaningful and lasting institutional change. <https://www.smm.org/ipage>

CCLI (Cultural Competence Learning Institute): CCLI helps museum leaders catalyze diversity and inclusion efforts in their institution by embracing organizational change to meaningfully connect with new and diverse audiences.

<https://community.astc.org/ccli/home>

The Inluseum: The Inluseum advances new ways of being a museum through dialogue, community building and collaborative practice related to inclusion in museums.

<https://inluseum.com/resource-list/>

ASTC 2019 Addressing Barriers to Participation: Making the Museum of the Future Equitable, Inclusive, and Accessible | Additional Resources

Diversity Resources: A collection of online trainings, videos, activities, etc. Note: some cost \$\$  
<https://www.diversityresources.com/>

Equity, Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Social Justice Resources:  
<http://edchange.org/>

Disability Etiquette:  
<https://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf>

Transgender Employment Policy Resource:  
<http://transgenderlawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/model-workplace-employment-policy-Updated1.pdf>

LGBTQIA+ Employee Resources:  
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-employee-resources>

### **Presenter Contact Info:**

Please reach out to any of us with questions about this work!

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