



Museum Unmuted

Thesis Process book

2021 April

Design for Social Innovation

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Table of Contents

Philosophy

Context

Problem

Research

Thesis statement

Ideation

Intervention

Future

What is museum

A **museum** (/mju:'zi:əm) is an institution that cares for (conserves) a collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance.

The purpose of modern museums is to collect, preserve, interpret, and curate artistic and cultural objects to educate the public.

**Museums Are Economic
Engines**

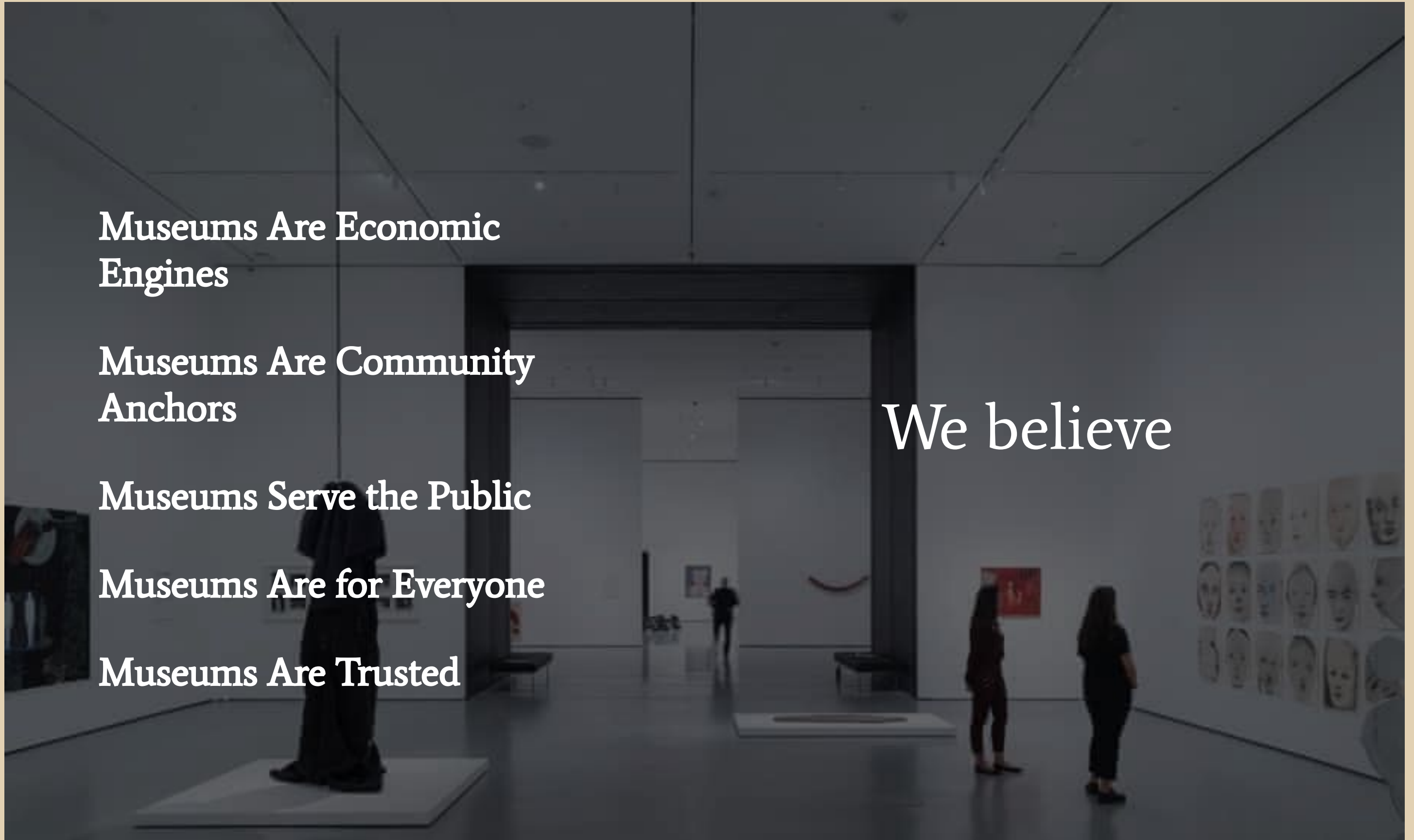
**Museums Are Community
Anchors**


Museums Serve the Public

Museums Are for Everyone

Museums Are Trusted

We believe





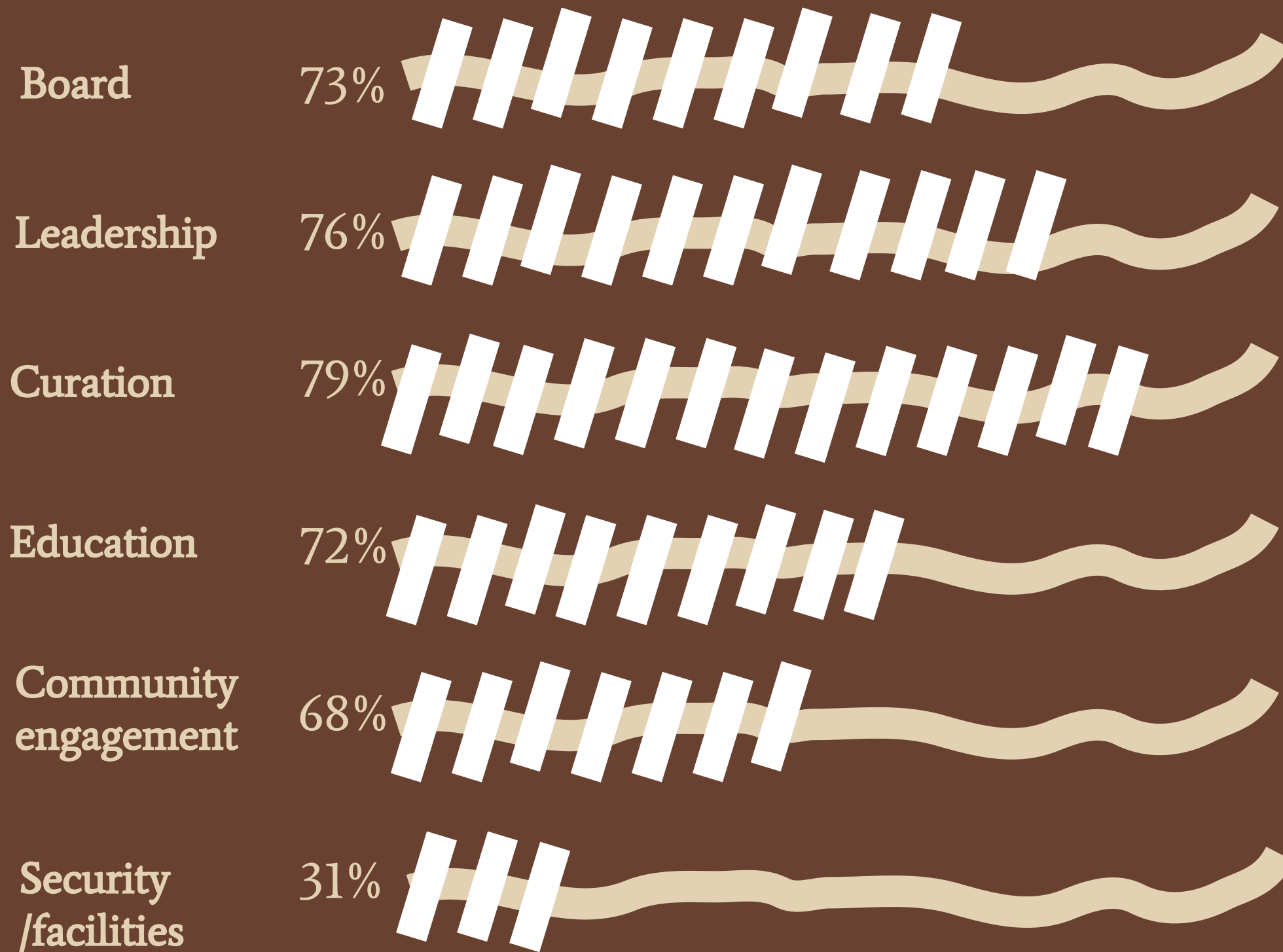
**What does it take to
bring a museum to
life?**

It's people

It's museum staff



Insight



According to a Mellon Foundation study, in the USA, around 70% of non-Hispanic whites dominate the job categories most closely associated with the intellectual and educational mission of museums.

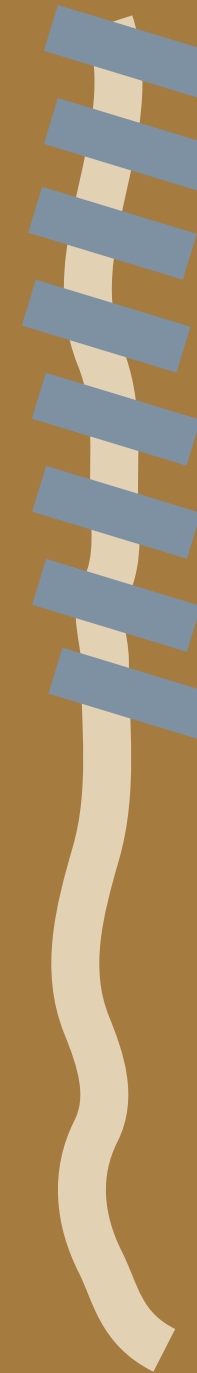
<https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/diversity-in-the-new-york-city-department-of-cultural-affairs-community/>

Insight

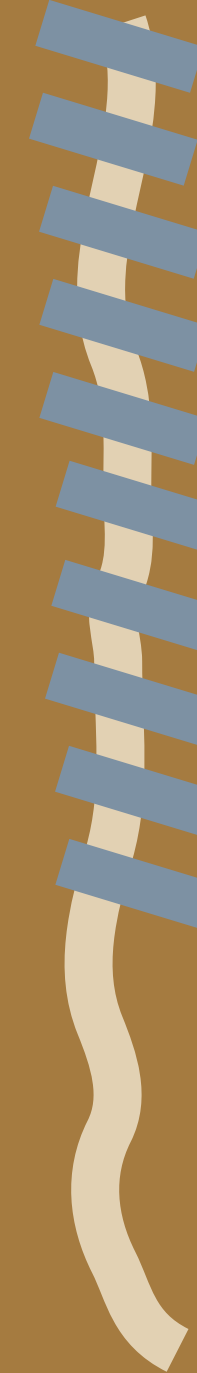
The higher the job position, the fewer the number of Black, Indigenous and People of Color staff. The overwhelming majority of those in the decision-making positions are white.

BIPOC staff are extremely underrepresented in the museum workplace.

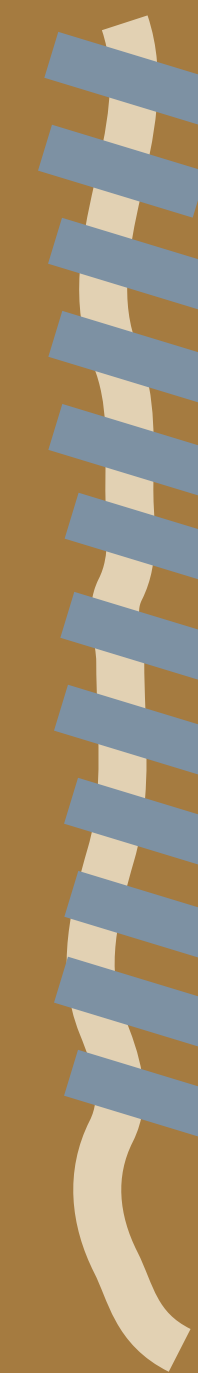
55% junior



68% middle



74% senior



Insight

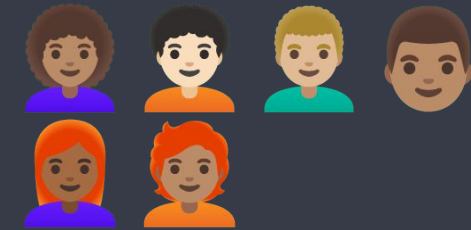
The traditional pathway for staff to report their complain is through the Human Resource (HR) department. The overwhelming lack of BIPOC staff represented in leadership causes a big trust issue between BIPOC staff and the institution. Additionally, museum departments have a demonstrated history of NOT following up on BIPOC staff's issues and addressing the problem. This is the result of department's focus to protect their institution, not the individual. Lastly, BIPOC staff hesitate to speak up out of fear of retribution or backlash from leadership as a result of speaking out.

The principle of the department is to protect the institutions instead of the individual.

Insight

The traditional pathway to bring up problems in the workplace doesn't work for BIPOC staff.

The toxic environment leads BIPOC staff's voices to become muted and invisible when they experience discrimination and unequal treatment.



**Human resource
department**

**Museum
leadership**

“ **Discouragement, hopelessness** discrimination
Discouragement, hopelessness **discrimination**

Unheard unrecognized disappointed,
Unheard **unrecognized disappointed**

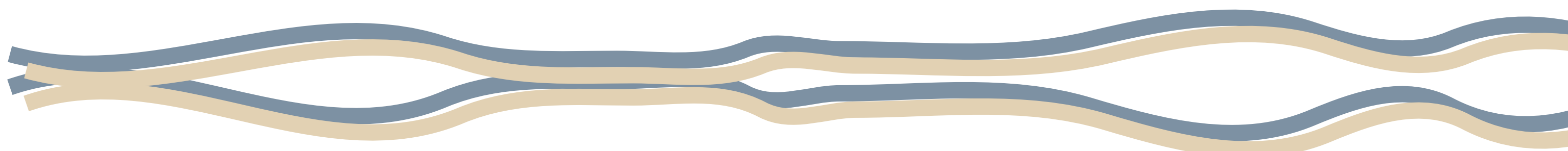
Frustration Gaslighting Passive-aggression
Frustration Gaslighting **Passive-aggression**

Undervalued, frustrated, ignored,
Undervalued, **frustrated, ignored**

Tiring Uncertainty Unfair
Tiring **Uncertainty Unfair**

Daunting emotional comprehensive
Daunting **emotional comprehensive**

Frustrating Heartbreaking Under-valued,
Frustrating **Heartbreaking Under-valued**”

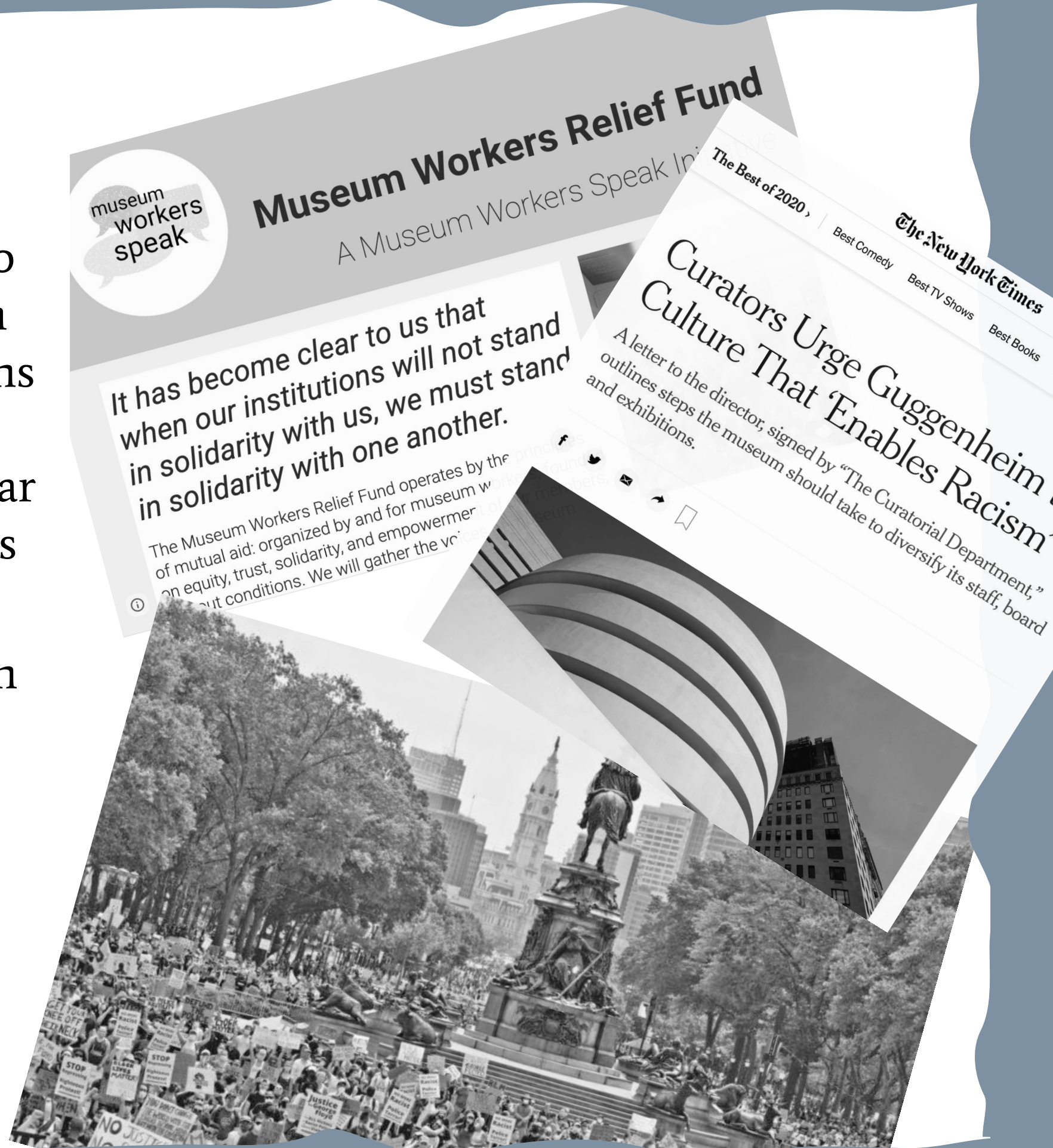


What can we do to make BIPOC staff's voices heard and visible to museum leadership?

Research

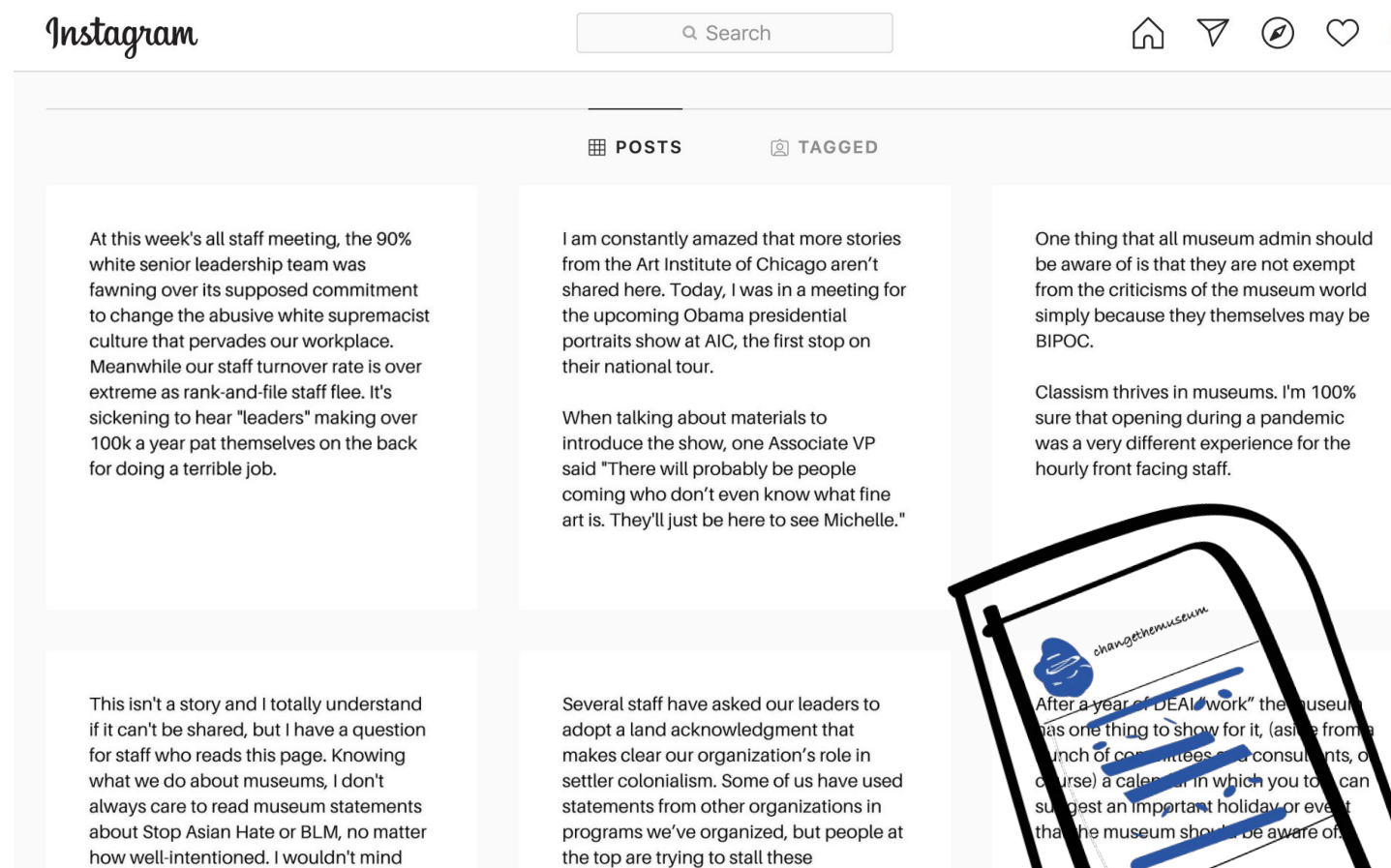
Museums as public institution are committed to service be accountable to the public. Museums are dependent on the public financially through donations and visitation and engagement. So museums have the responsibility to hear from the public and take their opinions seriously.

Research has shown that public opinion plays a significant role influencing the direction and decisions made by museums; outside pressure causes museums to change.



Research on competitive Organizations

#Change the museum



Change the museum is an existing platform that aim to address the problem in a non-traditional way. They share individual bipoc staff stories through an instagram account, and directly inform the targeted museums. Through the past years, they attract around 50,000 followers, post over 700 stories from bipoc staff and ally with other organizations. They shake the conservational approaches of calling out for changes and provide a novel pathway to discuss racism and anti-racism.

But their operations have some limitation:

- All the content are in text.
- They are all real stories and indicated to the museum they work in, which increase the risks to be identified by museums leadership or the people involved in the stories.
- The public can only interact and participate through commenting or forwarding the posts, which limit other potential approaches to engage in the issues.

Visual information can be processed 60,000 times faster than text.

People tend to remember only 20% of what they read, while around 37% of the population are visual learners.

Community Partner



Incluseum is an organization creating a space to build community, connect people, share resources, and elevate the issues of inclusion and justice in museums.

I teamed up with incluseum to co-design new approaches and test out opportunities to raise the voices of BIPOC staff and change museums.

the incluseum
2,543 Tweets

the incluseum
@incluseum

Advancing new ways of being a museum via critical discourse, community building & collaborative practice related to inclusion in museums.

USA incluseum.com Joined July 2012

2,174 Following 7,842 Followers

Followed by Agate Creatives, MASS Action, and 11 others you follow

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

the incluseum @incluseum · Mar 8
Today's post highlights a new project to elevate the experiences of BIPOC museum staff. Thank you to [@shuyu_fang!](#) cc: [@MuseumsandRace](#) [@museumaction](#) [@visitorsofcolor](#) [@EmpatheticMuse](#) [@MuseumWorkers](#) [#MuseumsAreNotNeutral](#)

New project seeks to elevate the experiences of BIPOC museum staff
This week The Incluseum is pleased to share a post about a new


Thesis statement

How might we elevate the voices of museum BIPOC staff to the public in a visual compelling way, so that the public can engage in the issue and take actions to pressure museum leadership?

Website potential

- 
- **Are bipoc staff willing to share their stories?**
—How might they want to share their stories?

- 
- **What is the best way to transform written stories into visual representations?**

- 
- **If visual representations have a strong impact on public opinion and stimulate conversation, how will it turn into actions that put pressure on museum leadership?**

Prototype Insights

- People are willing to share stories using a survey
- Some staff look forward to speaking more after completing the survey
- BIPOC staff appreciate our motivations

“Despite my awful experiences, I love museums and I want to support museum workers. I wish museums could be better. Thank you for doing this work”

“This is wonderful. Thank you for doing this work and research.”

“Thank you for doing this.”

Prototype with Visualizers

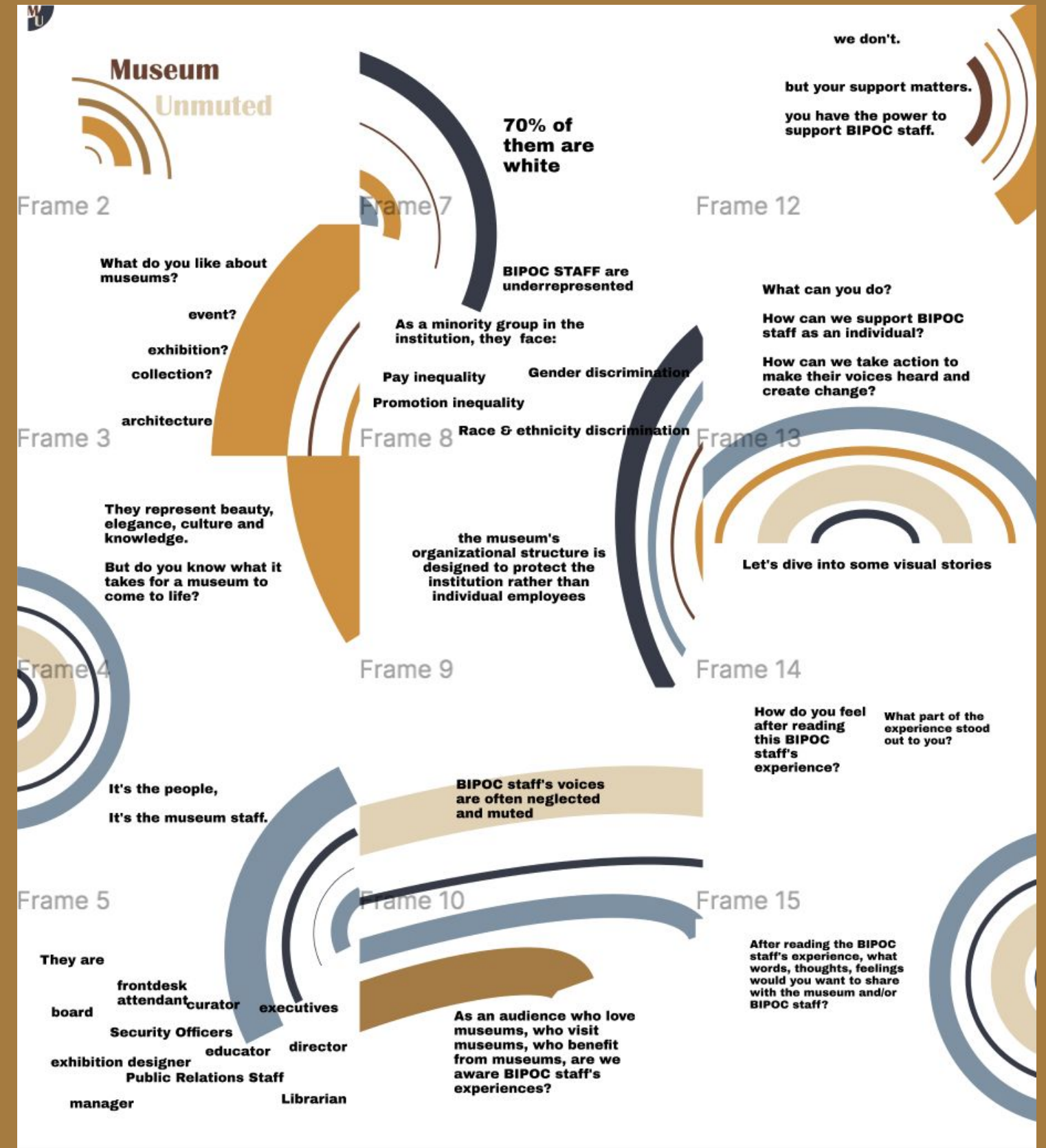
Workshop with visualizers to test out story database UX and workflow

In order to know the best practices to share BIPOC staff's stories and data with visualizers, I wanted to explore the following questions:

- What is the best UX design for visualizers to access and navigate the database?
- How to support the designer's process?

The image displays a collaborative workspace for a workshop. At the top right, a video call shows two participants: Shuyu Fang and Warren Lehrer. The main area is a digital workspace with a central prototype of a BIPOC staff visibility dashboard. The prototype consists of several panels: a 'BIPOC staff visibility' overview, a 'BIPOC staff visibility' data visualization (a bar chart), and a 'BIPOC staff visibility' data table. The workspace is annotated with various text boxes and sticky notes. On the left, a sidebar contains several text boxes with questions and feedback, such as 'What is the best practices/format to demonstrate the dataset?', 'what's your concert to publish your creation on this platform?', 'would you like to have a open space below for comments/discussion?', 'any supportive resource you would like to have? Example : the patrol connect to designer personal website/portfolio', and 'In order to protect the right of bipoc staff's, there will some commitment to review before obtain the dataset.'. In the center, there are sticky notes with feedback like 'you might think about separate quan/qual data to protect participant privacy', 'for data visualizer, it's easier to show the sheet and look over them', 'try to not being subjective on the category', and 'I'm happy to see the number/scale/fact first, which might attract my attention'. At the bottom, another video call shows two participants, Shuyu Fang and Warren Lehrer, looking at the workspace.

Guideline for visualizers



Guideline

More detailed content about the issue

navigate the creation process

Works from visualizers

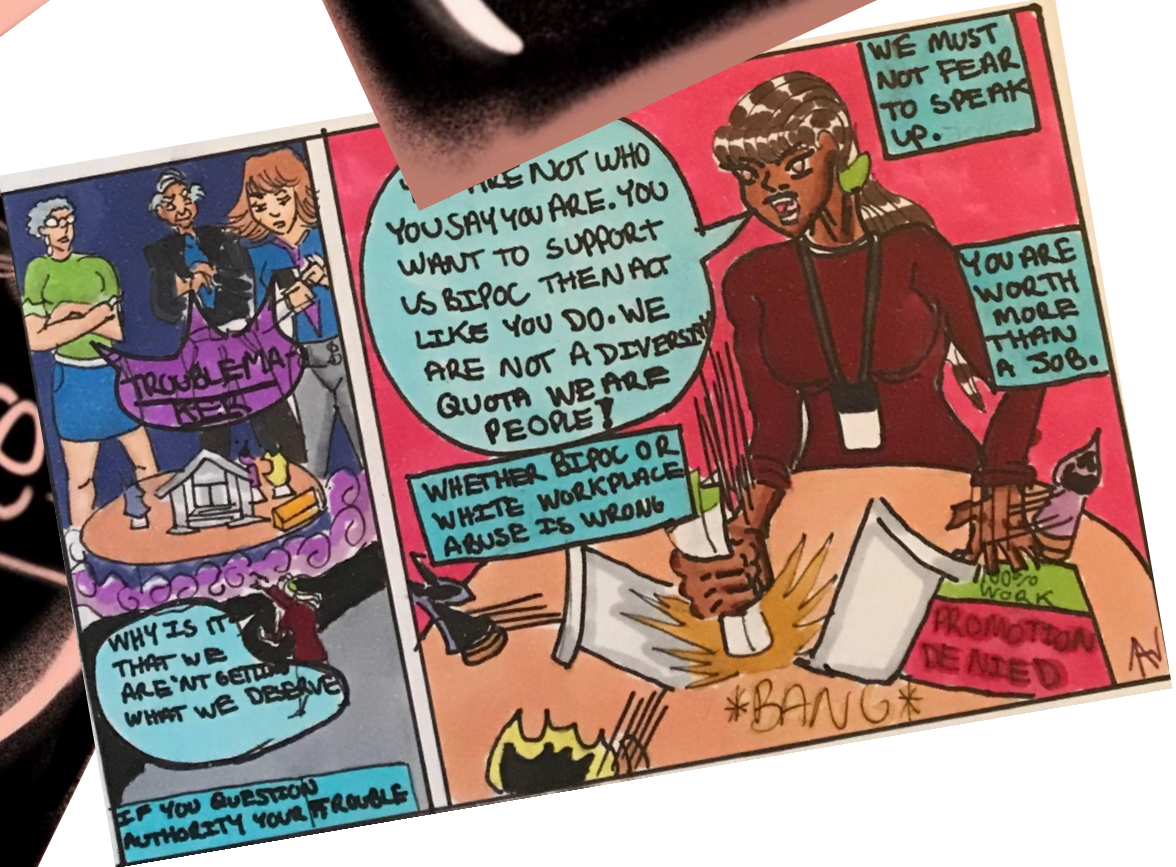


"Privilege is when you think something is not a problem because it is not a problem to you personally"

People
—OVER—
profit



Culture
OVER
Objects



MUSEUMS ARE NOT
NEUTRAL



Visualizers' quote

"I've given someone just a bit of power or at least an understanding that meant to eventually make them think "yeah I'm worth more than this" and from there they can decide how to embody that whether they walk away from a toxic work relationship with their job or they demand they be treated fairly based on their service."

—Angel Vicioso,illustrator

"I feel happy and frustrated during the process, happy about making them visible, frustrated about what they experienced."

"Had fun with it and it was a meaningful practice. "

Prototype with museum-goers

Present the visuals to some museum-goers and encourage them to reflect on the experiences.

Reflective question

- **What thoughts or feelings came up learning about BIPOC Staff's experiences?**
- **What would you like to demand the museum to change?**
- **Would you like to share any thoughts or feelings with the BIPOC Staff that shared their experience?**

Intervention



Museum Unmuted

An online platform that collect the stories and experiences of museum BIPOC staff, which are then placed in anonymously in database that connects with visualizers for them produce original visualization that are then shared publicly on the Museum Unmuted's website. Once online, the public can see these BIPOC staff's experiences in order to stimulate conversation and understanding and contribute their thoughts and hopes for museums to change.

Why website

Dedicated space to combine bipoc staff, visualizers, the public.

An official space to store and showcase the stories and visuals

A space to develop more activities and branding in order to establish legitimacy and authority on the topic

Link:<https://www.museumunmuted.com/>



For BIPOC staff

We are interested in hearing from you! If you have an experience to share, we'd love to add it to our repository where designers will bring in to life visually.

All stories are anonymous unless it is explicitly indicated that a submitter would like to be identified.

If you have multiple stories to share, please submit each separately through this same form. They will not be linked together unless otherwise specified.

[Share your experiences](#)

For Designers

Through research, we know museum BIPOC staff experience discrimination and unequal treatment in the workplace and their experiences are often ignored and/or silenced. This project aims to break the silence using visual storytelling to elevate BIPOC staff's voices.

It is through visuals that we believe we will can powerfully articulate the issues and evoke emotion on a wider scale by catching the public's attention.

As a designer, this is where you come in! Museum Unmuted works directly with BIPOC staff to collect their experiences, which we then compile into quantitative and qualitative data. This data is available for you to download and review in order to co-design visuals to be shared on Museum Unmuted's platform.

Please use the link to download the data set.

[Download stories/data](#)

Once you've made your visual to be shared, please fill out your crediting info below to be included with your submission.

[Submit your visuals](#)



Share their story

Visualizers

Turn into visuals

BIPOC staff's voices will be heard and amplified

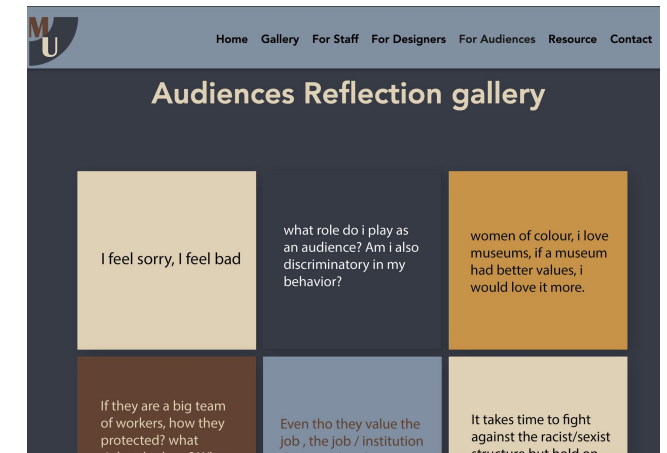
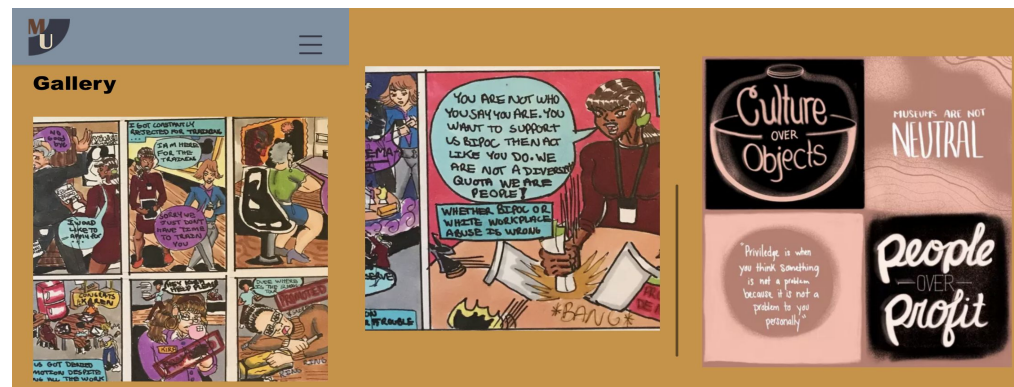
Museum leadership
Inform and pressure museum leadership

How it works

The public

Reflect their opinion and make the demand on improving bipoc staff situation.

Post on website gallery



Demand Change for Museum BIPOC Staff

After understanding the issues through visual storytelling, you can support museum BIPOC staff with your actions! We will publish your anonymous reflections, which we will be able to share with museums directly and through the press.

Please reflect your thoughts and your demands below.

What thoughts or feelings came up learning about the BIPOC Staff's experiences?

What would you like to demand the museum to change?

Would you like to share any thoughts or feelings with the BIPOC Staff that shred their experience?

SUBMIT

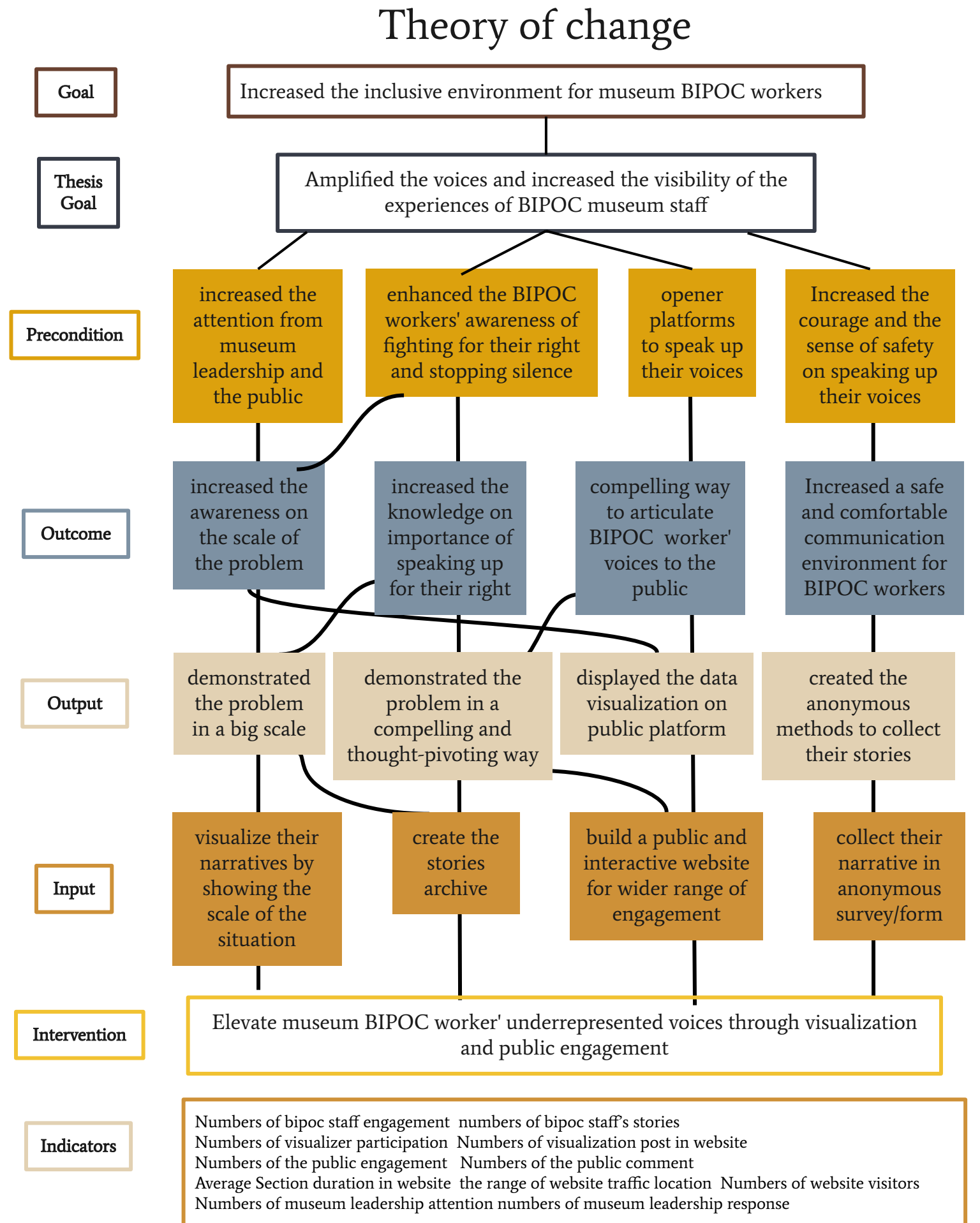
Measurement

Theory of change narrative

The mainstream Museums in US are white-dominant in staffing, BIPOC staff as a minority group face discrimination in race, gender, salary, promotion and etc. Their voices are disconnected and neglected to museum leadership.

The goal of Museum Unmuted is to amplify museum BIPOC staff's underrepresented voices through visualization and public engagement to pressure the museum institution to have better practice in justice and equality.

By transforming their voice into visuals makes their stories more accessible and scalable to the public. Using the power of the public voices to force museum leadership being attentive to the situation of their bipoc staff.



Log frame

Inputs

- a platform for bipoc staff to speak up
- visual submission portal
- Reflection activity for public
- connect designers/artists to the museum bipoc staff's stories

Process or activities

- anonymous form for story collection
- a guideline for visualizers/artists to visualize the stories
- a sign-up petition for the public to take their action
- provide the story/dataset with designers/artists

Outputs

- number of stories/ experiences from BIPOC staff
- number of visuals in our website gallery
- number of the public engage in the petition sign-up
- number of artists/designers participate

Intermediate Outcomes

- increase their confidence to speak up for themselves
- create the accessible and engaging approaches to demonstrate the problem to the public
- increased the awareness and attention of BIPOC staff unjust treatment
- the influences of artists/designers attract the attention of public

Outcomes

- create a safe and visible space to amplify their voices.
- increase public engagement
- pressure the institution to change
- increase the public engagement which pressure museums to change

Activity narrative:

Our activity will include encourage bipoc staff to share their stories on our platform; artists/visualizers will retold and reconstruct the stories into visuals; the public/audiences will reflect their feeling and thought on the visualizations that pressure the museum leadership to pay attention to the issue.

Objective:

To provide a safe and open platform to unmute museum bipoc staff voices.

To increase public's engagement and awareness by demonstrating in visual narratives.

To use public's engagement and discussion on the problems they aware to pressure museum leadership.

Evaluation question:

Did the public engagement and discussion push museum leadership to make a change on injustice and inequity in bipoc staff?

Did the visuals increase the attention and evoke awareness of the public?

Monitoring question:

How many visuals are published on the website?

How many stories are being collected on the website?

How many reflection and comments from the public?

How many numbers of website visitors?

How much attention get from the museum leadership?

Future Vision

By building out a platform and infrastructure that connects BIPOC, visualizers and the public we are creating a strong brand that has the opportunity to take the discussion offline and into the real world. One example is creating pop-up exhibitions of visualizers to share the artworks as well as raise awareness of the topic through marketing and PR campaigns around the event and its purpose.

Additionally, by creating a strong and recognizable platform, we can extend our services as a definitive brand representing the unheard voices of BIPOC staff. Through this position, we can design educational and workshop content to offer consultation services to museums to better listen and support their BIPOC staff.

What we can do as social designers is to create a platform that brings new bonds, connections and interactions by designing an ecosystem.

By engaging, understanding and changing the experiences of BIPOC staff is not just a benefit for them but a benefit for all when our museums reflect the diversity, equity and inclusion they claim reflect.



Credit & reference

Diversity in the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Community

<https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/diversity-in-the-new-york-city-department-of-cultural-affairs-community/>

New York Arts Organizations Lack the Diversity of Their City

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/29/arts/new-york-arts-organizations-lack-the-diversity-of-their-city.html>

Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey 2018

https://mellon.org/media/filer_public/e5/a3/e5a373f3-697e-41e3-8f17-051587468755/sr-mellon-report-art-museum-staff-demographic-survey-01282019.pdf

Museum Facts & Data

<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/>

<https://designcensus.org/>

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