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### **New Museum DEAI Book Guides Museums and Museum Professionals on their DEAI Journey**

*Renowned Museum Diversity Expert, Cecile Shellman,  
Releases Her First DEAI Book-- Part-memoir, part-DEAI framework-- in 2022*

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania....**From publisher Rowman & Littlefield, in partnership with the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), comes *Effective Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Practices for Museums : From the inside out*, by Pittsburgh-based consultant and diversity expert, Cecile Shellman, anticipated February 15, 2022, featuring custom illustrations by Sam Day. In this work, Shellman calls on decades of first-hand experience working throughout museums in myriad roles to present challenges facing museums, with a specific focus on the individual and systemic problems *within* our venerable institutions' own walls.

"If museums are expected to share in the social responsibility to champion justice and anti-oppression, it's imperative that we embrace the bravery of taking a stand. Or else there'll be no museums in the future," writes Shellman. "I'm thankful that many museums are becoming aware of inequity and trying to resolve it. Museum culture is tough, though. It truly is. It's a culture built on pillaging and pandering; on stratification and justification; on legacy, on lust, and on loss. Museums don't like to be called out on their sins. They like to present the most elegant, tidy treasures on pedestals under gleaming vitrines, as if to say nothing else matters now that there's a three-by-five-inch label exactly at right angles next to the sculpture."

In his review of the book, Robert (Bert) Davis, President and CEO of America's Black Holocaust Museum said: "The author, Cecile Shellman has provided a combination of her personal journey as a museum professional to a much needed and thorough template for DEAI implementation and success in our cultural institutions. Sharing her story is compelling and yet her providing a strategic approach to building a productive DEAI culture is brilliant. She not only 'knocked it out of the park ...she hit a grand slam!"

More than just a call-in to museum leadership teams and board members or a how-to manual for HR departments and hiring managers, the book underlines how DEAI initiatives are exactly that: initiatives. They are staff- and board-wide undertakings that require time, alignment, budget, buy-in, skilling up, and a lot of tough conversations and self-awareness. These DEAI programs are at once personal, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic.

#### *About the Book*

At the beginning of the book, we join Shellman about 30 years ago at the beginning of her museum career in Utah, where we then follow her journey east to Boston, New York, and eventually Pittsburgh. The locations may have changed, but her experience as the only, or one of the only, BIPOC woman in the room persists. As Shellman learns about the importance of representation of BIPOC in staffing and an increase in ability in individuals to recognize bias, so too do we. Her generous sharing of her own story here sets the stage brilliantly for the rest of the book: "Museums are about stories. Whose stories get told? By whom are they told?"

Following this, Shellman grounds us in the key definitions of DEAI terms and how they manifest—or fail to—in museum settings, an insight into ongoing work between Shellman and her museum colleagues through AAM. Here, Shellman offers practical, actionable items for museum professionals that can have an immediate impact on visitors and staff alike.

Lest readers, and museum professionals, get lulled into the sense that achieving diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion is possible through a checklist, Shellman reminds us that each institution, its collections, and its location are unique, and this will influence best practices. Ten short case studies, fictionalized but based on real events from Shellman's experiences, poignantly demonstrate the nuance and gray areas that need to be openly and honestly considered and discussed, which she helpfully facilitates from the page with discussion questions. Some of these case studies will challenge even the most brave and seasoned museum professionals.

Shellman finishes the book with the reminder that, regardless of intention, museums are inherently political places that reflect the communities they serve, who they believe matters, who deserves to be heard, who (and what) gets venerated, stored, cared for, and displayed, and of course what doesn't. As such, aligning strategy, structure, and systems with staffing governance boards, development and marketing, and educational programming to DEAI isn't something to tout on the institution's website, but indeed social justice work.

### *About the Author*

Cecile Shellman is a motivational speaker, author, and independent museum consultant whose work focuses on issues relevant to diversity, accessibility, inclusion, and anti-racism in museums.

From 1991 until the late 2010s Ms. Shellman worked in the visual arts sector at various galleries and museums across four states. Her deep knowledge of art interpretation and administration positions her to be an advocate for individuals and communities who have been marginalized and less represented by museums. She continues to work tirelessly in the service of museum practitioners, boards of trustees, and museum service organizations to teach best practices in anti-oppression and Inclusion in the arts.

Past appointments include: Director for Visual Arts and Exhibitions at the August Wilson Center; Program Manager for Pittsburgh Public Schools' Culturally Responsive Arts Education initiative; Education Coordinator at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston; Director of Education at Heckscher Museum of Art, New York; and Education Curator at the Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City.

She serves on the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh Board of Advisors, Is an advisor to the Sports and Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh, and works as a Senior Diversity Fellow of the American Alliance of Museums' Facing Change Initiative. Ms. Shellman has headed and contributed to museum teams across the nation to strategize and maximize their DEAI best efforts at every level of leadership and staff engagement.

Her current clients include: Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, The Frick Pittsburgh, The Terra Foundation for American Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, The New York Transit Museum, Discovery Place, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, The Concord Museum, The Farnsworth Art Museum, and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council.

Ms. Shellman holds a BFA in painting from Brigham Young University and CMS from Harvard University. She enjoys spending time with her husband, Spencer, and is a fiercely competitive Scrabble player.

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