

*Cultural Equity:
What it means,
why it matters, and
what you can do about it.*



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Americans for the Arts

Who am I?

Who is
Americans for the Arts?



What is Cultural Equity?



DIVERSITY >> INCLUSION >> EQUITY

EQUITY = ACTION FOR FAIR TREATMENT

...cannot exist without...

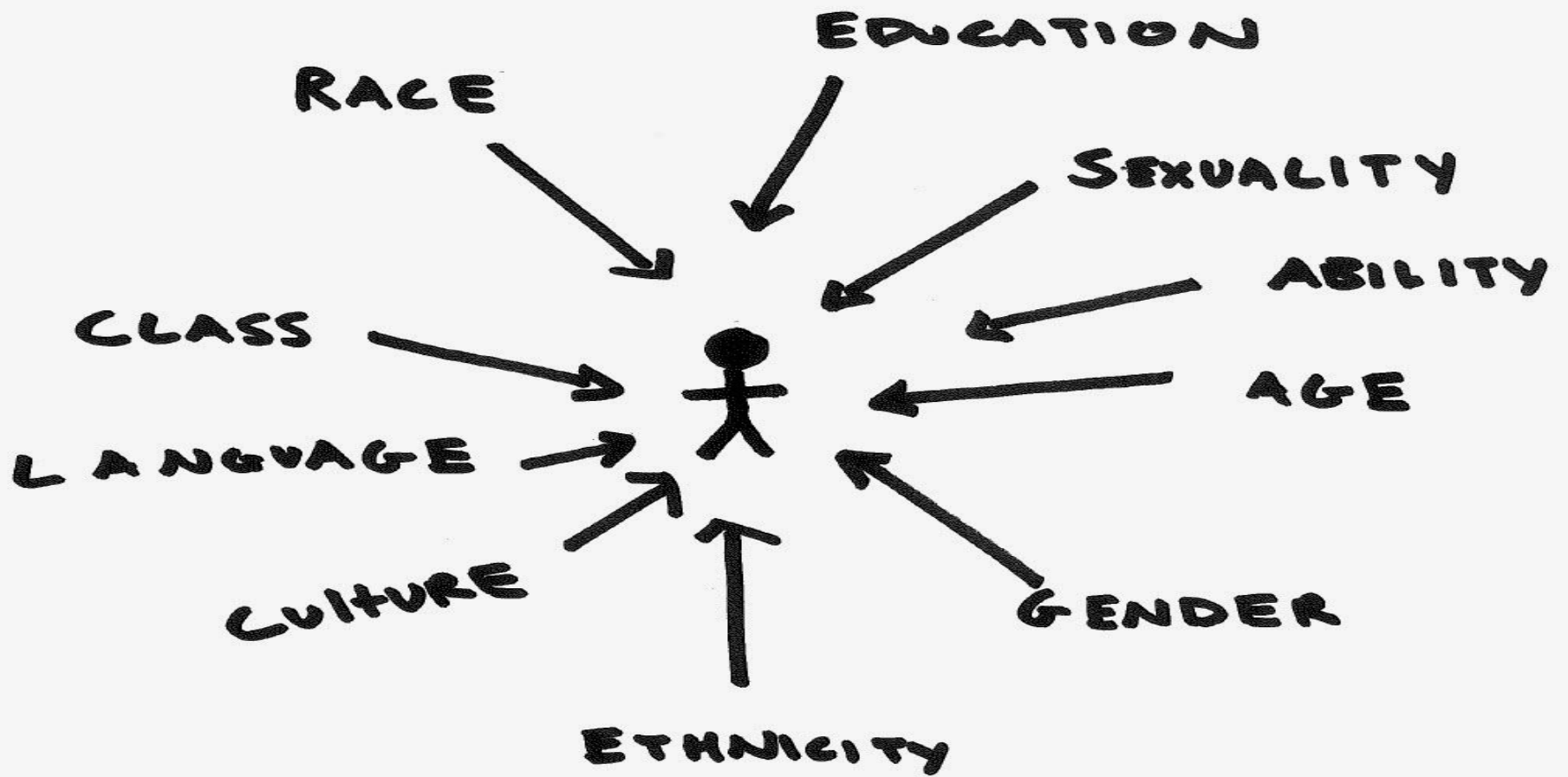
INCLUSION = INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

...which cannot exist without...

DIVERSITY = REPRESENTATION

CULTURAL EQUITY

Cultural equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including by not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of resources.



OUR PROCESS

Latest iteration of a written commitment to diversity and equity first started in 1988

Board-driven

Input/engagement from over 3,000 people

Meant to be guiding but not proscriptive



STRATEGY

STATEMENT ON
CULTURAL EQUITY

3 WAYS WE'RE
PURSUING
EQUITY INSIDE
AFTA

External DEI
Work Frame

3 WAYS WE ARE PURSUING EQUITY INSIDE AFTA

1. Create more learning opportunities and formal, transparent policies to **make sure our staff, board, and advisory bodies have the skills** to help create an equitable, culturally competent organization.

3 WAYS WE ARE PURSUING EQUITY INSIDE AFTA

2. Better understand and work to fix **inequities** in our policies, systems, programs and services to make AFTA an even better place to work.

3 WAYS WE ARE PURSUING EQUITY INSIDE AFTA

3. Commit **time and resources** to increase the **diversity** of our staff, board, and advisory bodies, and to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities to participate and grow.

External DEI Work Frame

What's the overall change we're seeking? What needs to change is who benefits, who decides and how resources are utilized. How will that happen?

To that end, over the next 3 years, AFTA resources will be focused and accountable to achieve four necessary shifts in **local arts development practice**:

- Support the fullest range of local arts, cultural and creative practices, expressions, and assets through advocacy, research and data, partnerships and resource participation and distribution;
- Honor the inherent knowledge of their communities and constituents and share power in the development of arts policy and practices;
- Cultivate the leadership of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer, Intersex and Asexual individuals and people from the disability community; and advocate for inclusive organizational policies and culture; and
- Transform systems and programs to center equity.

External DEI Work Frame

Americans for the Arts commits to:

Embrace listening and service mindset as we use our organizational voice to lead.

Be transparent and clear about what we can and cannot be responsible for fixing.

Be forthright about the programs and services that are working and how we can push them to be more inclusive and equitable.

Be honest about the programs and services that are not working and let them go.

Prioritize SYSTEMS change. Measure environmental effect. Focus on the ground water (Systems), support the fish (Individuals) while the pond (Organizations in the field) is improving.

Intersect Covid-19-related challenges to inform programs and service development that addresses inequities in recovery and evolution of field practice.

Share the learning.



**What does this mean
for the arts and culture
field at large?**

What can you do about it?



What is our relationship to our changing places?

Complicated.

People think they want change, but tend toward stability.

My place is not homogeneous, despite our assumptions.

Place is personal, but is also organizational and situational.

We're all trying to change—and keep—the place we live.

Place is a sense of belonging—you can feel out of place in a place that has changed around you.

You make change happen. Change is something that happens to you.



What questions do you need to ask before talking about “equity?”



Do you have the skill set to build equity?

Is equity a process or an outcome, or both?

What about the inequity of having the power to pursue equity?

How do we find the internal/ invisible barriers within us?

Is equity just a word you’re using to not-say diversity?

Have you talked *to* the community you’re trying to make “equitable?”

Are you willing to tackle the system or just the problem?

How can you guarantee “guaranteed opportunity?”

How do you acknowledge the trauma that has preceded the effort?



What questions do you need to ask before talking about “community?”

What are your hidden assumptions?

How do you account for the changing of community?

Who creates/defines community?

Can you be part of a community without wanting to?

What is your investment in community?

Does community perpetuate an inequitable system of power?

Who is in and who is out?

Who is defining the vision of a “better” community?

Where do you feel you belong?



QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!!

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