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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Statements in the U. S. Creative Sector: Progress, or More Bullshit?

A B S T R A C T

This article represents a snapshot and analysis of U. S. service arts organizations' DEI statements and activities in 2018. At that time, many primarily White-serving U. S. cultural organizations responded defensively to accusations of elitism and a harmful rigged funding system that maintained the status quo by awarding most cultural funding to these organizations while undermining the health and vitality of cultural organizations by and for historically oppressed communities (Sidford, 2011). Furthermore, Helicon Collaborative (2017) found that even with a host of cultural equity, "diversity" projects (Tseng 2016), and public-facing DEI statements, little had changed within six years. Therefore, this study uses directed and summative content analysis to investigate the research question "what do cultural equity and diversity statements communicate about cultural organizations' positions on DEI?" This study also uses Frankfurt's (2005) essay *On Bullshit* and Laing's (2016) two-prong definition of accountability as a theoretical framework to examine if and how cultural organizations hold themselves accountable for achieving DEI in the creative sector. Lastly, readers should keep in mind that the public murder of George Floyd in 2020 has hastened all of the service arts organizations' access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) work examined in this study.

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