



METRO ARTS

NASHVILLE OFFICE OF ARTS + CULTURE

PUBLIC COMMENT
Metro Art Board of Commissioners
March 17, 2022 12 p.m.

- A. Call to Order & Welcome
- B. Approval of Minutes: February 17, 2022

Public Comment: [B1](#)

- C. Action Items:
 - 1. Donelson Library Exterior Site Finalist
No public comment.
 - 2. Donelson Library Interior Site Finalist
No public comment.
 - 3. Budget reallocation
No public comment.
 - 4. DIAL Arts Host Awards
No public comment.
 - 5. REAL Project Awards
No public comment.
- D. Staff Reports
- E. Adjourn Meeting

Dear Metro Nashville Arts Commission board and staff, and the CARE team,

I am a former colleague of Janine Christiano, Lauren Fitzgerald, and Cecilia Olusola Tribble. I worked with these three women of color in various capacities between 2018 and 2021 through the Arts & Culture workgroup of the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE). Their experience, expertise, strategic visioning, and relational approach to change helped to further our greater purpose to support racial equity within and through government arts and culture. All three brought leadership to our group and at one point I had the opportunity to be Olusola's co-chair of the work group before she resigned from Metro Arts in 2019. I participated in my capacity as a member of the City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative Strategy Team and my specific work integrating arts, culture, mindfulness, and embodiment into our organizing across City departments.

I'm writing to express my surprise, confusion, and concern regarding the current situation at Metro Arts – from the racism my colleagues have experienced that has been reported in numerous newspaper articles to the most recent complaint that white leadership filed against a woman of color. I'm also writing to express my hope that you all will support practices that help white people and white-led institutions stop racially harmful behavior. I understand that organizational commitments to racial equity and even antiracism, such as the Committee for Antiracism and Equity (CARE) and the Cultural Equity Statement, are aspirational and that what is happening inside an organization often is not what appears to the public. As a white person, I have personally been part of creating similar statements and committees while being called in – and sometimes out – for contributing to ongoing patterns of racism. I share my concerns here with an awareness of my own positionality and the continuous learning and unlearning I am doing.

What I don't understand is how an organization that publicly proclaims that aspiration can simultaneously enable white leadership to claim that people of color speaking up about the racism and toxic environment they experience, and demanding change, is actually racial discrimination against or harassment of white people. It is one thing to find no violation of HR rules; these rules have been written to protect institutions, not to transform them. It is another thing all together to use whiteness and hierarchical power to shut down truth, concrete change, and collective healing. It leaves me wondering, sincerely, what Metro Arts Commission leadership, specifically board and staff, are doing to interrupt this age-old pattern of white people using existing rules and laws to protect their comfort and safety at the expense of collective movement to end institutional racism?

I very much hope Metro Arts Commission will support white leadership in naming and taking responsibility for their parts in the harm staff of color have experienced and in

leading the whole organization toward racial equity. As a white person, I've come to rely on practices that help me stay in it, for the long haul, to be part of the real change that is needed. This includes noticing and interrupting patterning from my white socialization that causes harm, processing with other white people who can hold me and challenge me, and – critically – listening to and reflecting deeply on the gifts of direct feedback from people of color speaking up about their own needs and demanding an end to the racial oppression that directly impacts them on every level of experience – from the structural to the institutional and individual levels.

I was inspired by the antiracism work that Metro Arts had been doing and very much hope the organization continues to deepen that work and its embodiment of its commitments.

Thank you,

Diana Falchuk
Seattle, Washington