

**INTRODUCTION II
(JUNE 1, 2020)**

The Council needs to say something before presenting a work of speculative fiction that addresses how the museum of the future might handle a very real crisis such as COVID-19. It is impossible for us to continue working in a realm of imagination without addressing our urgent reality.

We believe that the Museum is made up of all of us and that it is our responsibility to speak up. If you want our art, you must hear our voices. It is conditional that neither series of writings exists without the other. We are urging action, change, and real conversations about race.

Black Lives Matter.

“Put some colored girls in the MoMA”

Jay-Z “That’s My B*tch” *Watch the Throne* (2012)

Almost 7 years following the song’s release, I would become a colored girl in the MoMA. I became a colored girl in the MoMA. I was, no, I *am* a colored girl in the MoMA. Not a rendition of me, an interpreted cubist painting of me, but my body on its own, captured by light. I thought my black face in a high place would give some hope that black bodies were loved and cherished by this institution. That the love was requited and reciprocated. Maybe this is a space for us after all. My body as a representation to our black women, black girls, black bodies, black trans bodies, black folks, black beings, that this is a space they occupy, too.

I remember seeing Faith Ringgold’s 6-by-12-foot *American People Series #20: Die* positioned so perfectly that by-passers couldn’t ignore it. Your four-walled dedication to Jacob Lawrence. Your presentation of Basquiat’s greatest pieces. I thought this was a testament that black people mattered to this institution. Your prolonged period of silence makes me question otherwise.

But your silence is nothing new, it is consistent with past behavior.

Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Dante Parker, Michael Brown Jr., Sandra Bland, Tanisha Anderson, Freddie Gray, John Crawford III, Mya Hall, Walter Schott, Amber Monroe, Joseph Mann, Stephon Clark, Alton B. Sterling, Atatiana Jefferson, Shantel Davis, Korryn Gaines, Pamela Turner, Ahmaud Arbery, David McAtee, Tony McDade, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor.

Your silence was heard by us,

Your black employees,

Your black students in the Education department,

Your black visitors,

Your black i-wish-i-could-but-i-feel-like-this-isn’t-a-space-for-me visitors.

The ones who will never step foot in your galleries because you’ve never made space for them.

We see the lack of black faces in your boardrooms, departments, and conversations.
We see that you hire black bodies primarily in positions of servitude and security — why?
We see that you've poached black culture — and you love it, but where's your love for black bodies, when they're not in Picasso-like cubist forms, or abstract expressions on canvas?

Your silence is crippling.

Your selective display of black art with messages embedded in them does not exonerate you from opening your mouth. We must do better.

We hear your complicity — your firmly shut lips don't tell us otherwise.

Black lives matter.

White Walls
Black Frames

White Paper
Black Letters

White Breath
Black Death

Conscious
Silence

Black. Brown. Maroon. Pale. Queer. Underage. Adolescent. We are all.

We occupy the sliver of a fraction of traditionally underrepresented artists to have been exhibited on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art.

We hung as fictional characters but appear before you today as real as the blood underneath our flesh.

What is a modern art museum? White walls, brought to life by color and form. Hung together by a string of creativity. A string that has extended from generations past to today, where the central pendant rests.

The institution where our imaginations roamed. The halls were our home. But sometimes when you grow up and leave home, a new perspective fills your psyche where another point of view once stood.

We are grateful of the opportunities MoMA has afforded us
Here we found our friends, a community, a chosen family of the most supportive people
We found our mentors
We found the artists and artworks that changed the way we see the world
We are so lucky
But like children of parents -- we, the children, are the most critical because we know what
you are capable of and we expected more
We want you to stand up for us and the causes we stand for

We're disappointed because you are silent
We're disappointed because you are selfish
We're disappointed in the way you've treated your own
We're disappointed in the way you've treated others

We, the children, have always supported you, and now we need you to support us in saying:

Black lives matter
We support black, Indigenous, people of color in the arts *and don't tokenize us
We commit to fight racism
We commit to decolonize the museum
We commit to collective sacrifices in order to support the humans that breathe life into this
museum *as we've done for you
The humans we want to highlight are educators, some of whom you've "furloughed"
*Those were the people that changed our lives

That toxic upholding of the institution is what destroys the communities that we've all
spent time, energy, and money to build
We are angry
Because we thought we were family

We have used this museum as a safe space. How are we expected to continue doing so
when you refuse to fight alongside us? DO SOMETHING. You have the power to spread
information to millions and donate millions. This silence cannot continue. We have been
fighting, and will continue to fight. Will you join us?

O P E N Y O U R P U R S E

DIVEST!!!

MoMA, put your money where your mouth is. End all ties with donors who profit off the
prison industrial complex, weapons production, and unjust business practices.

We demand transparency, that board members and donors disclose any ties to political organizations that work in upholding racist, sexist and homophobic structures. We demand a radical reassessment of funding.

We as individuals independent of MoMA believe that museums need structural change in order to combat the long-standing system of racism upon which they are built, and that continues within them.

We believe radical change is necessary to support those most vulnerable in our fragmented society.

Disappointed. In an institution that holds no self-awareness. Not surprised, but disappointed. There's a dissonance between the museum and the educators that raised us. The educators have been there for us, working continuously to amplify our voices. Your solidarity is fueled by PR and not allyship. Will black lives matter in a week? In a *month*?

Why is it that MoMA is only interested in black people if it's for their art, their culture? Why is the museum not interested in the lives behind it? We can only suspect that MoMA is interested in exhibitions of black artists to further the narrative that black suffering is attractive. Why else would an art institution refuse to participate in currently, one of the largest civil rights movements in global history?

Solidarity is not enough. What good is your solidarity if the words are empty? You say you're standing in solidarity, we know you're sitting in silence.

As children of the MoMA, it's heartbreaking to watch the facade of this institution crumble before our eyes, unravel its corporate ties, upholding pillars of systemic racism that we found solace from in the classrooms. The museum is not for us. We have not, do not, and will not belong here because the MoMA has made it clear that they are not interested in investing towards a different world. Our world, our future.

In the eyes of MoMA, we are not worthy. In the eyes of MoMA, the educators that made us who we are, are not worthy.

MoMA has failed us. Art is hoarded behind the walls, behind a \$25 ticket.

We want action. Words do not equate to action. We urge MoMA to use their position to enable change. We know that other institutions aren't doing it. Lead by example. Listen to those you've raised. We have roamed your galleries, we have been on your walls, we have talked to your board of trustees. We grew up here. Will you take action?

Why must you even declare your solidarity? It's because there is an assumed racism within your walls. Coming out as "not racist" in 2020 is not revolutionary. Do better. End your ties with the NYPD, revive your contracts with your educators, DONATE money to

organizations that are dedicated to the justice and defense of the black community and protestors. Enough with the apathy. Create more programs that empower and amplify the voices of our time. Create resources. Educate your audience. No one should be able to walk through the galleries with Picassos or Gauguins without acknowledging the historically racist and violent context. Say the word BLACK. Contribute to change - open your museum to all. If Hello Kitty, who doesn't have a mouth, can say "black lives matter," why can't you?

*Sincerely,
Disappointed*

We live in a state of indifference and hatred
And I can't tell which one is worse
Do we deserve to call ourselves freedom fighters
When every day we ignore the black men traveling in the hearse

Or we ignore our brothers and sisters
Slowly dying overseas
Black boys mining for metals
So we can play games on our knees
Or the men not yet dead
But stricken with disease
While our government "forgets" to send doctors
Medicine to folks who really need
Or the system that enslaves us
Imprisons us, so our lives will freeze
Makes us work because out of our blood
There was no more money they could squeeze

So how can we call ourselves freedom fighters
Until we learn that it's not about bad apples
It's about rotten trees

Signed,

The Council

In order of written appearance:

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