

Shifting the Aircraft Carrier: Why Race Matters in Museums and Historic Sites: An Examination of Inclusive Practices

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Abstract

This study addresses the increased urgency in the field of cultural heritage informatics (specifically museums and historic sites) to articulate clear methods for inclusive praxis. Less than 10% of all museum visitors are people of color. Coupled with the fact that 80% of the museum workforce constitutes a demographic of white women; with changing racial demographics in this country, museums and historic sites are grappling with how to address and understand “doing” diversity and inclusion in museums. This study is a critical case study of a brand new historic site and museum that is attempting to be wholly inclusive by adopting and designing new methods which are drastically different from current best practices. Data was collected in the form of visitor surveys, observations, extensive interviews, and critical analysis of texts. Critical Race Theory was used as an informative framework to problematize and redefine how professionals frame discourses of diversity and inclusion as a critical issue where race serves as the discourse re-frame.