



The Archivist's Task Force on Racism

REPORT TO THE ARCHIVIST

April 20, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Generally I have no regrets for the time that I spent in the National Archives and while I did not attain heights administratively, perhaps, that I would have desired and I think I might have attained had I not been black, I am not bitter about that fact because I think it's simply another indication of the status of blacks in American society that while they have progressed considerably, there are still frontiers for them to enter and they still simply have to work harder, perhaps, to attain the same levels that others might attain with less effort.

— Harold T. Pinkett, NARA's first Black archivist, as quoted in a June 10, 1985, oral history

Executive Summary

In May 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, was killed when a White Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly 10 minutes. This incident and other acts of police brutality against Black, [Indigenous](#), People of Color ([BIPOC](#)) served as a backdrop for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), like many others in the archival community, to discuss systems of racial inequality in our customer-facing operations and internally within our workplaces. These conversations emphasized the structural nature of [racism](#) that permeates all aspects of work and workplace culture at NARA. [Structural racism](#)—the overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society—unequivocally impacts how NARA staff interact with [records](#), colleagues, and customers.

Examples of structural racism at NARA include, but are by no means limited to:

- a preponderance of BIPOC in lower-paying, lower-status jobs and the preponderance of White people in higher-paying, higher-status jobs;
- [legacy descriptions](#) that use racial slurs and [harmful](#) language to describe BIPOC communities; and
- a Rotunda in our flagship building that lauds wealthy White men in the nation's founding while marginalizing BIPOC, women, and other communities.

Moreover, as Harold Pinkett's comments indicate, structural racism at NARA is not new; it dates back to the agency's founding, and NARA continues to battle many of the same issues that Pinkett experienced during his time at the National Archives from 1942 to 1979. On October 22, 2020, the Archivist of the United States formed the Archivist's Task Force on Racism to identify and recommend solutions to issues—both explicit and implicit—stemming from structural racism within NARA. This resulting report serves as the first of many steps that NARA must take to establish an inclusive organization for employees and customers. The recommendations correspond with the three component groups of the Task Force: the Main Task Force, the Archival Description Subgroup, and the Museum Subgroup.

Common themes and recommendations arose across all three groups that highlight the need for agency-wide commitment and change:

- **Accountability.** NARA is accountable to staff and the public for taking action on the Task Force's recommendations. In keeping with the agency's [transformational outcomes](#), NARA must engage in an ongoing process of review to ensure that our operations, policies, programs, and strategic direction work toward dismantling structural racism. This includes establishing one or more permanent bodies to continue and build upon the Task Force's work and developing appropriate policies to support this work.

- **Resources.** NARA must commit resources, including staff, to implement the Task Force’s recommendations. To truly foster “[one NARA](#),” NARA must prioritize resources throughout all levels of the agency that will contribute to anti-racism work.
- **BIPOC Recruitment and Retention.** NARA must address barriers that discourage or prevent BIPOC from securing staff, internship, and volunteer positions. To ensure that the agency is a “[great place to work](#),” NARA must also address barriers—including workplace culture—that discourage BIPOC staff, interns, and volunteers from remaining with the agency.
- **Training.** NARA must support staff in implementing the Task Force’s recommendations by offering relevant training. This includes all-staff training on topics such as diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion ([DEAI](#)), as well as subject-/job-specific training when recommendations require changes in workflows. This also includes developing and maintaining a language style guide that denotes anti-racist terminology and is regularly revised as language changes. Training will ensure that NARA can “[build our future through our people](#)” and cultivate a diverse, empowered workforce to engage in anti-racism work.
- **Internal Reflection.** NARA must continue to seek out and listen to staff input about racism within the agency, through a variety of methods (e.g., local site discussion groups, feedback tools, surveys). Empowering staff to carry out the Task Force’s recommendations and suggest other ideas for addressing racism in our policies and practices ensures that NARA fosters a “[culture of leadership](#)” on these issues.
- **Outreach.** NARA must recognize that the agency often starts from a position of broken trust with respect to [marginalized](#) communities. As part of (re)building relationships and (re)establishing trust, NARA must “[continuously engage with and learn from our customers](#)” to identify where efforts to dismantle structural racism fall short and ensure that we improve them.
- **External Partnerships.** NARA must also undertake anti-racism work with an attitude of humility and acknowledge that the agency may need external support to help with accomplishing the Task Force’s recommendations. In the spirit of an “[open NARA](#),” the agency will cultivate external partnerships that help achieve anti-racist goals, now and in the future.

Scope

The Archivist’s Task Force on Racism was charged with identifying recommendations to NARA’s internal and external systems, policies, processes, and procedures in support of an equitable environment. The Task Force consists of three groups: 1) the Main Task Force, 2) the Archival Description Subgroup, and 3) the Museum Subgroup. The recommendations from all three groups presented in this report seek to establish an inclusive organization for all employees and customers.

To help identify staff concerns and recommendations, the main group and both subgroups offered all staff the opportunity to provide input through solicitation tools, surveys, and focus groups. This resulted in robust conversations about the ways structural racism informs how NARA employees interact with both colleagues and customers. For a list of key themes emerging from staff feedback, please see [Appendix III](#).

In some instances, staff offered suggestions and feedback that fell outside the scope of this report. The Task Force recognizes that its work is only a foundation for NARA to use in moving forward and that racism affects other areas, such as research rooms, which NARA must also address. Further, racism is not the only form of discrimination or oppression impacting the lives and work of NARA staff. There is therefore a paramount need for ongoing, permanent bodies to continue the work of this Task Force, and to actively work against all forms of discrimination and oppression.

The Main Task Force examined the employee experience, including challenges related to recruitment, advancement, retention, assignment of work, and access to opportunities. The group equally examined the agency's diversity and inclusion experience to determine how NARA staff interact with each other and our customers, as well as current and historical [race](#)-based harassment and discrimination allegations.

The Archival Description Subgroup examined matters relating to anachronistic or offensive terminology in legacy descriptions in the National Archives Catalog. The group also reviewed how NARA presents information to the public and how NARA's [description](#) standards and lifecycle authority control policy, as documented in the [Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide \(LCDRG\)](#), addresses offensive terminology.

The Museum Subgroup investigated how NARA can ensure diversity of representation, viewpoints, access, and outreach in our exhibits, education, and public programs.

Summary of Process

The Main Task Force and both subgroups followed similar processes to evaluate staff comments and feedback, and provide recommendations. The process included the following:

1. Holding regular meetings between Task Force members and chairs
2. Examining and considering all NARA staff comments, including various threads on the [ICN](#), data compiled from Research Services, focus group results, surveys, and previous staff discussions
3. Identifying key issues and themes raised in different subgroups and integrated within the Main Task Force
4. Assessing current thinking, benchmarking, and activity from similar institutions and professional literature
5. Consulting with internal and external subject matter experts (SMEs) for advice and guidance
6. Identifying concrete and actionable short- and long-term recommendations based on the feedback and findings from the above steps

See [Appendix II](#) for a detailed account of our processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Main Task Force Recommendations

The Main Task Force (MTF) was charged with examining the agency through three lenses: Diversity and Inclusion, the Employee Experience, and Race-Based Harassment. The MTF was divided into three teams to mirror those themes. Each team reviewed employee experiences at NARA, including participation in [Employee Affinity Groups \(EAGs\)](#), internship program coordination, employee communications, and varying roles within the hiring/interview process.

Due to the nature of staff comments, there were several instances where specific feedback was addressed by more than one team. Also, the development of new training and education initiatives was widely explored and recommended by all teams. However, during the span of the review period, the MTF had to consider the implications of new executive orders, specifically Executive Orders [13950](#) and [13985](#), which were established prior to and during the review period, on the planning and possible eventual implementation of learning initiatives to address [anti-racism](#) at NARA.

To address diversity, inclusion, and equity at NARA, the Diversity and Inclusion team categorized staff feedback into four specific themes: workplace culture, recruitment and retention, NARA's interaction with customers, and transparency. The team focused on diversity in terms of the diverse representation of race and the inclusion of BIPOC staff and customers as welcomed and empowered participants in a fair and just organization that is informed by and acknowledges their different needs, barriers, experiences, and treatment historically.

The Employee Experience team examined employees' challenges related to recruitment and retention, career development opportunities, supervisor accountability, advancement, and hiring practices to make recommendations that insist that NARA take meaningful action against racism. Key goals of the team included making the employee experience more transparent and inclusive while celebrating diversity on all levels of race, age, and professional talents, which are key to NARA's mission of being "One NARA."

The Race-Based Harassment team contextualized staff's recommendations by researching NARA statistical data on EEO racial harassment complaint cases. The team considered ways to assess and universalize how evaluation procedures are done for employees at NARA to eliminate racial biases. They also examined procedures for hiring staff and Human Resources (HR) to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for new and retained NARA staff; ways to provide employees with resources needed to deal with racial harassment; strategies for making EEO procedures more transparent and accessible for staff who need to make racial harassment claims; the creation of safe spaces in every NARA facility; and the creation of a digital hub and FAQ page on a digital platform. Key goals of the subgroup were to implement actions needed to provide education, resources, and policies regarding racial harassment at NARA. As a result, the Task Force on Racism proposes the recommendations and supporting justification below.

[E1. Rebrand the Diversity and Inclusion \(D&I\) Program by creating a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion \(DEAI\) Program.](#)

The DEAI program will promote more employee involvement, a culture of inclusion and professionalism, support cross-collaboration, and create opportunities for NARA staff to learn more about people of different backgrounds. The DEAI program will explore educational and awareness opportunities for staff, reinvigorate the Special Emphasis Program, and conduct barrier analyses to identify barriers in NARA's policies, procedures, and practices. The program will also advocate for NARA to allocate more resources to support participation in Employee Affinity Groups (EAGs) and provide help and guidance to EAG leaders. The DEAI program can be used as a sort of a community center, where staff can go to a nonjudgmental place and feel comfortable sharing any concerns or issues.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Conduct a [barrier analysis](#) to review the diversity of NARA. This analysis may include but is not limited to:
 - Educating staff on the [Management Directive 715 \(MD-715\)](#)
 - Issuing exit surveys and MD-715
 - Auditing the hiring process and ladder positions
- Evaluate if job, detail, and cross-training announcements at certain grade levels have been implemented as a restrictive barrier to professional development for all employees.
- Develop action plans to eliminate racial barriers in NARA's policies and procedures.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Enhance and provide support to the DEAI program to include researching and educational opportunities for cross-cultural exploration. Focus areas may include but are not limited to:
 - Explore how NARA could annually celebrate Harold Pinkett, who was an activist and the first Black archivist hired at the National Archives on April 16, 1942. This might include creating an annual job/career fair, a Diversity Internship Program/Fellowship, and an award in his name to raise awareness about and expand resources to archivists of color.
 - Creating more awareness on NARA policies such as the No Fear, Anti-Harassment, and EEO policies.
 - Developing and implementing Diversity Days that celebrate diversity in all its forms. In addition to specific Diversity Days, the DEAI's ICN group would celebrate diversity year round.
 - Exploring agency-wide training needs and benchmarking other agencies to provide Annual EEO Cross-Cultural Training and cross-cultural communication.
 - Creating DEAI training resources that address favoritism and biases.
 - Exploring a senior leadership open-door policy and determining the need for a suggestion box.
 - Developing an annual EEO recognition program to informally recognize NARA program areas or individuals that work hard to make NARA an equitable workplace and strive to Build Our Future Through Our People.
 - Working with Research Services' Subject Matter Experts (i.e., Civil Rights and African American), external consultants/speakers, EAGs, and NARA staff organizations to develop more educational programs about the histories and cultures of BIPOC.
 - Creating a report card system that examines how diversity is executed at each facility; middle-management may be positioned to bring clarity on this point.
- Develop and foster [safe spaces](#) that would allow employees to feel heard and empowered. These safe spaces would also be informal settings that are approachable and comfortable for all employees.
 - Create a program that is informal with neutral, trained wellness coaches/staff that are accessible and can assist virtually or in each NARA building. Partner with EEO to include DEAI and other partners within [Human Capital](#).
- Work with the EEO program to advertise and offer assistance with safe spaces.

[E2. Create and promote educational opportunities to raise employee awareness about the EEO complaint process and Resolve Program.](#)

By supporting transparency and education around complaint filing procedures, NARA can help employees feel comfortable with filing complaints as soon as an offense occurs, clarify the filing procedures and process, and foster quick resolution to [EEO](#) and [anti-harassment](#) concerns.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Create transparency about the seriousness of racial harassment in the workplace.
- Define "racism" and promote awareness of the definition throughout NARA.
- Create awareness of the procedures for filing a complaint.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create individualized intervention plans on a case-by-case basis and collect more written witness statements from involved parties.
- Create a small permanent task force to continue the work after this Task Force, which will keep staff apprised of next steps and inform them that this is an ongoing and long-term commitment.
- Create an environment with a direct supervisor or a third party to communicate racial harassment claims. Allow both sides to be heard in the discussion with a three-way communication in order to come to a resolution both orally and in writing. Build a standard procedure for supervisors to follow, that helps them identify the root of the problem. Harassment claims need to be met with actionable resolutions with repercussions for the responsible party so that the harassment does not continue.
- Create an annual DEAI agency-wide training. Seek external consultation when needed to facilitate and educate staff on race and DEAI topics. Also, work with other federal agencies and organizations to provide resources and tools to support staff in addressing racism and deepening their understanding of it.

E3. Audit and reevaluate NARA's hiring practices and policies for bias, unfairness, and legality.

NARA's Human Capital and leadership must ensure that staff, volunteers, interns, and contractors experience an equitable work environment throughout NARA. To achieve this goal, NARA leadership must address racial barriers that may discourage or prevent BIPOC from applying for any position, pursuing career opportunities, or career advancement.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Develop a recruitment program to assist hiring managers with creating position postings.
- Develop a training program to teach hiring managers how to avoid cultural bias.
- Create a fact sheet with tips on how to create a diverse applicant panel/pool.
- Implement [blind hiring](#) procedures to ensure fairness and prevent discrimination when hiring candidates.
- Develop a partnership between EEO and Human Capital to identify and eliminate barriers for training and development opportunities within detail and cross-training announcements.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create a leadership and management developmental training program for BIPOC at NARA.
- Develop a strategy for recruitment and retention to ensure a more diverse staff on a Senior Level (supervisors, managers, and executives).
- Create a partnership between EEO and Human Capital to review data, identify any barriers, and develop ideas for outreach. Review the current hiring process to include the interview panel and selection process. Leverage data to identify trends or problem areas and implement data-driven solutions.
- Explore options for a neutral party to sit in on interviews or do a follow-up and determine if any discriminatory factors were included.
- Provide candidates who apply for jobs and are not selected with tips on how to improve for future positions and provide constructive feedback from the interview.
- Develop a new process where performance ratings are not used as barriers or tools to prevent advancement opportunities or all voices from being heard when creating solutions for change.
- Reconfigure the onboarding process.
 - Create a localized sponsorship program or buddy system for new hires to help them adapt to working at NARA.
 - Provide fact sheets about diversity programs and organizations at NARA.
 - Present about DEAI during the orientation/onboarding process.
 - Revise the onboarding process to recognize and accommodate each NARA location's unique context while ensuring that all locations prioritize DEAI in onboarding.

- Work with EEO to identify and develop targeted recruitment programs aimed at meeting diversity goals within NARA's workforce.
- Examine demographics of employees, and collect data on how many have been promoted to GS-13 and above, and how many of those were BIPOC. Collect data on how many BIPOC applied, were interviewed and selected, and were interviewed and not selected. Identify ways to help diversify the interview panel and develop an outreach program that targets diverse groups, establishing EAG or DEAI groups in each NARA facility as another means of getting assistance outside of the ICN.

E4. Evaluate the Performance Management System to ensure that prohibited factors are not considered, and develop guidance to support management.

Transparency in the performance management process will help ensure that NARA staff are evaluated on the quality of their work, without fear of racial discrimination.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Examine whether staff evaluations are used as a barrier for professional opportunities.
- Support the effective administration of NARA's Performance Management System and ensure compliance, transparency, and consistency.
 - Create awareness about the Performance Management System by providing frequent tips on best practices.
 - Support management in conducting ongoing dialogue with their employees.
 - Provide supervisors with training and guidance (FAQs, tip sheets, etc.) on performance reviews and discussions with staff.
 - Add a diversity standard to supervisors' performance plans.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Look at Human Capital work plans in terms of recruitment, possibly to incorporate recruitment into performance plans, including community outreach.

E5. Recruit and retain BIPOC.

Identifying career development opportunities through career pathing will equip employees with an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and experiences required to move into vertical, lateral, and cross-functional careers. NARA must address barriers that may discourage or prevent BIPOC from securing staff, internship, and volunteer positions.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Simplify and standardize the application process for volunteers.
- Develop targeted recruitment strategies for BIPOC.
- Foster connections with organizations in [underserved communities](#) to build a new generation of stakeholders and expand interest in careers at NARA. Conduct outreach at [HBCUs](#) and other diverse universities.
- Review position descriptions to consider if necessary job qualifications align with salary and benefits.
- Define relevant qualifications for position descriptions that do not create unneeded and possibly discriminatory hurdles for candidates.
- Evaluate [career-laddered](#) positions to determine the effectiveness and implementation across the agency. Informed by such evaluation, create positions with career ladders in mind, outlining a ladder in the position description.
- Retain BIPOC by creating projects that promote and showcase diversity.
- Use NARA's social media platforms for recruiting purposes. Develop campaigns that would target certain groups of people and encourage them to apply to NARA.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Develop agency-wide roadmaps that will inform and support career advancement opportunities. Roadmaps may include career paths for major occupations (i.e., Archivist Series, GS-1420s; Archives Technician Series, GS-1421s; etc.).
- Leverage federal programs such as AmeriCorps VISTA and Work Study (where applicable) to provide opportunities to build skills in NARA-relevant professions.
- Promote and strengthen NARA mentorship and growth opportunities such as the Capstone Program, details, cross training, and the Leadership Experience Program.
- Develop internal career pathing tools to help employees find positions of interest and enhance skills. Consider if there are multiple pathways to appropriate qualification for an advertised position. Ensure that position descriptions are sufficiently technical to attract qualified candidates, yet general enough to avoid excluding candidates who have the correct skills but may have developed those skills through pathways not historically represented in NARA position descriptions. Ensure that position posting questionnaires are tailored to meet the position and not crafted with an overqualified candidate in mind.
- Create a mentorship program that allows rotation with the mentors.
- Encourage hiring managers to recruit more BIPOC and work with NARA's Communications and Marketing Division on outreach strategies.
- Increase job shadowing and detail opportunities for career advancement.

E6. Develop a centralized internship program to facilitate communication among internship coordinators, develop an intern recruitment and awareness program, and create virtual internship opportunities.

Internships are vital to exposing students of all backgrounds to the career opportunities in the archival profession. NARA needs to enhance its internship program to include more opportunities outside of the DC area and develop virtual internships. The internship program creates a pathway to employment at NARA.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Develop internship opportunities in all facilities. Advertise them on the main [Archives.gov internship page](#), and ensure that announcements are easily accessible through various field offices' web pages. Also, ensure that the content on the internship web pages is current, and information such as application deadlines and coordinator's contact information is up to date.
- Create an endowment or scholarship fund for paid intern and docent positions for BIPOC.
- Work with current internship coordinators to share successful practices for recruiting BIPOC students and to raise awareness about internship opportunities. Ensure that leadership supports these efforts.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Collaborate with academic communities or other similar groups to create more internships that can afford to pay students, especially those interested in federal service or GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) fields, to travel to a NARA facility.
- Leverage the White House diversity program to include paid internship programs and/or credit for internships.
- Create more opportunities for virtual internships to eliminate travel expenses for those wanting experience in archival work.
- Create an Awareness/Recruitment Program that would focus on all types of students. There seems to be a lack of awareness about careers in archives, let alone the benefits of doing an internship at NARA. The duties of program facilitators could be to attend career fairs, maintain the Archives.gov internship page, communicate with school internship programs, host virtual informational sessions, and administer other activities that assist with recruitment.
- Create a NARA-wide Internship Coordinator position who would be responsible for administering all of NARA's internship programs. This person or office would provide guidance to other coordinators, maintain an updated contact list of coordinators, solicit virtual internship

opportunities, and handle any general administrative actions for NARA internships. Other duties could include directing the awareness/recruitment program and updating the [internship opportunities](#) page.

- Create Divisional Internship Coordinator positions who would be responsible for working with the NARA-wide Internship Coordinator, as well as maintain and track the progress of the internship programs in the division. These persons would also work with the various units in the division to support and make sure that needed information is shared. Other duties could include maintaining the website, tracking demographic information, communicating with schools' internship programs, and compiling a list of virtual internship opportunities.

E7. Develop training and development programs at NARA to create an equitable environment.

Equitable spaces require knowledge and work. By creating training and development programs centered on DEAI, NARA can provide staff the necessary tools to create equitable environments that are inclusive for the diverse workforce and public.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Contact other federal agencies' EEO divisions, as well as private organizations and entities, to explore how best practices in the DEAI field can be adopted by NARA and to facilitate training and workshops.
- Work with external consultants to develop a robust training program.
- Continue to provide resources for resume training from USAJobs (e.g., Career Development Newsletter).
- Offer incentives for employees to join EAGs, such as training that will enhance their job skills at NARA.
- Train employees on how to effectively apply for positions on USAJobs.
- Create awareness on the [classification](#) process (and position qualifications).
- Reevaluate the Individual Professional Development Plan to ensure that it clearly identifies and incorporates career advancement opportunities.
- Consider allowing non 1420s and 1421s to participate in the Archivist Development Program, Archives Technician Development Program, and Archives Specialist Development Program.
 - Explore creating similar programs for the offices of Agency Services ([A](#)), Innovation ([V](#)), and Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services ([L](#)).
- Consider offering more leadership/team-building opportunities with supervisors and staff to bridge the gap between supervisors and employees. Provide resources to assist with bridging that gap.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Offer training electives for interested staff, such as the [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#), in which results are only given to the taker to self-examine [unconscious bias](#). Hire outside consultants to facilitate training and workshops focused on addressing unconscious bias, cultural competency, and anti-racism. These courses could focus on items like the New IQ, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Awareness, or similar types of instructional development to further diversity and inclusion as laid out by the [NeuroLeadership Institute](#).
- Offer more [All Hands](#) or Town Halls and invite speakers to talk about race-related topics, the history of racism, and structural racism in the federal government. In addition, these meetings should discuss how specific NARA programs and EAG groups can address these issues.
- Evaluate and further develop existing training resources. Dedicate funding to maintain and advance training resources, and empower NARA staff to facilitate and support such training programs.

Archival Description Subgroup Recommendations

The Archival Description Subgroup (ADS) was charged with examining harmful language in legacy descriptions in the National Archives Catalog, including how the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG) addresses this terminology and how NARA presents information to the public. Staff feedback emphasized updating archival descriptions, solving technical constraints of the Catalog, and ensuring that a program is in place to continue [reparative description](#) efforts. Professional literature and benchmarking with other institutions reinforced these themes.

As a result, the ADS proposes the following recommendations. All recommendations are grounded in the understanding that NARA has a responsibility to eliminate racist language in archival descriptions and revise the policies and practices that led to it. By racist language, the ADS means not only explicitly harmful terms, such as racial slurs, but also information that implies and reinforces damaging stereotypes of BIPOC individuals and communities while valorizing and protecting White people. Descriptive terminology cannot be divorced from its context.

The ADS also recognizes that racist language is only one type of harmful language and that oppressive systems do not exist in a vacuum. The subgroup therefore calls on NARA to address sexist, homophobic, ableist, etc., language in archival descriptions and related policies and practices. NARA will only succeed in dismantling oppressive systems if we acknowledge their complex, overlapping nature and the cumulative harm they cause to marginalized communities.

These recommendations and action items serve as ways for NARA to move forward in these efforts.

[A1. Develop an alert for online users regarding potentially harmful content in the NARA Catalog.](#)

Providing an advisory notice to users gives us an opportunity to mitigate harm and contextualize records. It also creates a space for NARA to share with the public our ultimate goals for reparative description, demonstrate our commitment to the process, and address any barriers that we may face in achieving these goals.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Add a banner to the Catalog with a general warning about harmful language—both in digitized records and legacy descriptions.
- Create a webpage on Archives.gov about NARA's commitment to addressing harmful legacy descriptions.
- Link the explanatory webpage to the Catalog banner.
- Present about the Task Force's work at professional conferences to promote transparency and gain feedback from our peers.
- Direct the appropriate body to carry out these recommendations.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Establish a workflow by which the public can report harmful legacy descriptions for NARA to review.
- Continue to use NARA's existing blogs (e.g., AOTUS Blog) to present updates and discuss challenges.
- Commit to having one or more staff positions dedicated to reparative/iterative description work.
- Ensure that the appropriate body develops and establishes policies for an ongoing examination of descriptive language.

[A2. Clarify creator-supplied titles as distinct from NARA-created titles in the Catalog so that users understand when the title is original to an archival record and when it is created by NARA staff.](#)

By better distinguishing creator-supplied [descriptive metadata](#) from archivist-supplied description, NARA can assure stakeholders that the former has not been changed or obscured while also allowing for ongoing, iterative change to the latter.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Publish a web page explaining why NARA does not alter records.
- Update the Citizen Archivist Dashboard with guidance for tagging and transcribing records that contain harmful language.
- Standardize the practice of identifying the source of a description, whether provided by NARA or the creating entity.
- Work with the Lifecycle Data Standards Board to update NARA descriptive standards (LCDRG and related documentation) with clear, consistent guidance.
- Notify staff of any changes to descriptive standards.
- Provide opportunities for discussion and training regarding how to implement new guidelines.
- Direct the appropriate body or working group to determine whether additions or changes to NARA data entry systems (e.g., [DAS](#)) are required to support new standards.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Continue to champion transparency in government and consider the implications of long-term reparative description efforts.
- Consider exploring how to track changes to approved descriptions.
- Consider revising the Record Group 64 records schedule to include DAS and the National Archives Catalog and/or reconsidering [disposition](#) of archival descriptions as “Temporary” until superseded or deleted once [deaccessioned](#).

[A3. Review the list of racist and otherwise harmful terms that have been identified in the Catalog, and create a roadmap for addressing them.](#)

NARA must address harmful language in legacy descriptions. This issue presents itself in various ways within the Catalog. Harmful terminology such as racial epithets and other offensive language appears in titles, descriptions, and other [metadata](#).

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Establish a high-level, agency-wide approach to finding and correcting racist and otherwise harmful terminology in the Catalog.
- Use the Catalog API to identify where these terms appear in the Catalog, and use data to address specific problem areas.
- Develop short-term staff projects to address harmful language in small groups of records. Consider making these projects opportunities for telework, cross-training, and interns.
- Ensure staff have appropriate training and ongoing support to make informed decisions when correcting and contextualizing racist language in legacy descriptions.
- Explore the implementation of a find-and-replace feature in DAS that allows for searches across all descriptions and replacing and/or adding a value.
- Assign dedicated staff to double-check the context of terms in descriptions.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Establish a permanent working group to develop and implement a systematic approach to changing language, and provide documented training and standard operating procedures for staff.
- Implement a policy of ad hoc corrections to descriptions, and engage DAS points of contact to track these changes.
- Commit to using groups’ preferred terminology for [Topical Subject Authority](#) Records, and review existing [authority records](#) for nonpreferred terms.
- Review ways to make authority records more relevant in Catalog searches.
- Review LcdrG fields to determine the most efficient way to clarify confusion around creator-supplied description versus NARA-supplied description.
- Involve Citizen Archivists in long-term efforts to correct harmful, racist language, and develop additional guidance for them to use in this work.
- Create a method by which end users can notify NARA of racist and otherwise harmful language they find in descriptions.

A4. Improve the Catalog's basic technology and user interface to improve the overall discoverability of records.

The Catalog is not agile or robust enough to provide an experience for remote customers that is comparable, let alone superior, to the traditional in-person reference dialogue. If NARA's priorities continue to inadequately support its public [access](#) systems and the staff who maintain them, we will continue to fail to "Make Access Happen" for our most hard-to-reach customers.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Engage NARA staff and Citizen Archivists in using the Catalog's existing tagging feature to flag harmful language and images, and explore how the public could suggest appropriate terminology instead.
- Adapt the Citizen Contribution Policy to include guidance for flagging harmful language and images.
- Consider adding a new "Suggest a Correction" button on each description.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Address the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed closure of the National Archives at Seattle regarding NARA's ability to achieve our Strategic Goals, specifically our ability to provide remote access to permanent federal records.
- Seek end-user feedback from all stakeholders on Catalog functionality.
- Allocate additional resources to support the evolution and improvement of the Catalog.
- Consider how staff can best be supported when implementing new Catalog features or repurposing existing ones, particularly if they lead to an increase in reference requests.
- Ensure that the pipeline for public inquiries, from the point of receipt to reference staff, is clear so that inquiries are routed to the appropriate office.
- Continue to evaluate staffing levels for their ability to handle any increase in the volume of requests.

A5. Explore and develop processes to correct under-described and over-described records in the Catalog.

Discoverability refers to the degree to which records are findable in the Catalog. NARA's records related to BIPOC are more difficult to find because they are under-described, while our website and Catalog over-describe the records and achievements of White men by using more extensive, superlative, and subjective language. NARA needs to rectify generations of racist recordkeeping practices that have marginalized BIPOC and made them footnotes in the historical record.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Develop Citizen Archivist Missions to tag and transcribe digitized records related to marginalized communities. Connect with underserved communities to explore how missions can be used to update descriptions.
- Design short-term telework opportunities and cross-training projects for staff to enhance legacy description and [research series](#) and entries suitable for enhanced description, [augmented processing](#), and digitization.
- Reassess OurDocuments.gov, DocsTeach.org, and other NARA online content for over-description, and rewrite where necessary.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Reassess the More Product, Less Process (MPLP) approach and support augmented processing to address under-description and improve discoverability of BIPOC records.
- Dedicate more staff time across the agency to describing records related to BIPOCs.
- Expand existing research on Ethnic Heritage guides, create additional guides and subject-based finding aids, and extend these projects to include [field and Presidential records](#).
- Focus future digitization initiatives on records related to [underrepresented communities](#).
- Seek out grants and partnerships to assist with digitization of marginalized communities' records.

- Create and disseminate guidelines to staff, as determined by the future permanent [reparative description working group](#), on how to describe records in a way that encourages discoverability and addresses over-description.
- Review how and why subject authority records are created to ensure that they are inclusive of all communities.

[A6. Ensure that external stakeholders participate in decision-making for description and digitization.](#)

Communities *being* described should have agency in and be the authorities on *how* they are described. NARA has the responsibility to seek out and take care in using community input on an ongoing basis.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Consult with members of marginalized communities to ensure that we use appropriate language and terminology in descriptions.
- Consult with staff at other archives, libraries, and museums and with professional archival organizations on best practices for updating legacy descriptions.
- Invite public comments on recommendations for updating legacy descriptions.
- Uphold our commitment to the Alaska Digitization Project.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Develop and sustain relationships with marginalized communities to (re)build trust and demonstrate NARA's commitment to addressing racist language in the Catalog.
- Explore the formation of a permanent working group that engages with external stakeholders on the issue of language in archival description.
- Understand that NARA operates from a position of power with respect to marginalized communities, and compensate community members for their time and labor if they choose to consult with us.

[A7. Provide language translation in the Catalog and other Archives.gov sites.](#)

Our customers speak many languages and our records use many scripts, yet the NARA Catalog and website reflect the United States' legacy of colonialism and cultural erasure. NARA has not consistently transcribed, translated, or tagged records in languages other than English, and we have made no major shifts to address the needs of non-English and low-English-proficiency speakers.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Identify the extent of digitized records in languages other than English in the Catalog.
- Use data to develop projects to describe non-English-language records and improve existing descriptions.
- Change the Language element in the LCDRG to emphasize that it must be included if the records are not in English.
- Recruit multilingual NARA staff and Citizen Archivists to tag English-language records with non-English tags.
- Host crowdsourcing-style events during which multilingual staff and Citizen Archivists can translate records from specific series, and then add the translations to the Catalog.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Make the Catalog and website more Spanish/English bilingual.
- Make technological changes to the Catalog to improve description of and access to non-English-language records and more fully support the inclusion of non-English scripts and diacritics.
- Make translation of non-English-language records into English a part of reference services.
- Create a Subject Matter Expert-type position for Latin American records, with the requirement that the person be bilingual.

A8. Develop a dedicated working group to ensure the above issues are continually addressed as a program rather than a one-time project.

NARA must make a public commitment at the highest level to reparative description and lay an operative, institutional foundation to implement official policy and ensure a continuity of efforts. Continuity will ensure that this is a program, not a project, with an ongoing commitment that can keep pace with social change.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Issue a public statement from AOTUS declaring a deep institutional commitment to identifying and resolving issues related to harmful, racist legacy language in Catalog records.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create a dedicated working group or office with Subject Matter Experts or other staff whose primary duties are to develop and carry out the long-term recommendations made by the Task Force and its subgroups.
- Develop a new Strategic Goal, "Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Justice," and incorporate related objectives into the critical elements of performance for staff in relevant positions.
- Create a dedicated staff position or office to ensure continuity of reparative/iterative description efforts across work units.
- Incorporate reparative descriptive metadata into the LCDRG as a stand-alone chapter and as additional guidance for each existing element.
- Develop training for relevant staff on new LCDRG guidelines and notify them of any future updates.

Museum Subgroup Recommendations

The Museum Subgroup (MS) was charged with investigating how NARA can ensure racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity regarding representation, viewpoints, access, and outreach throughout our exhibits, education, and public programs. Based on staff comments, benchmarking, and customer data, the MS recommends that NARA take the following immediate and long-range measures. At the center of all of the Subgroup's recommendations is a single concept: active engagement. With a focused and sustained effort to actively engage with staff and customers, the MS believes that NARA can successfully create a culture that is ready to welcome a diverse audience and maximize its value to a broader spectrum of the nation.

[M1. Listen and take meaningful action in response to museum staff input.](#)

Establish a regular forum for meaningful conversation between NARA and [Foundation](#) leadership and staff, enabling NARA to check in with individuals who may be resistant to change, gather feedback, and promote responses to concerns that are meaningful and actionable.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Continue to encourage smaller group discussions centered on DEAI at NARA sites that will promote deeper sharing and listening, rather than large forums (e.g., the ICN, with its accessibility issues, or all-staff meetings that tend to be one-way communication forums). To promote even richer discussion, the MS recommends seeking external discussion leaders with training and understanding in combating structural racism to lead peer-to-peer conversations.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Develop anonymous feedback mechanisms that will promote earnest conversations around sensitive subject matter without fear of reprisal.

[M2. Provide training focused on DEAI.](#)

Making NARA spaces inclusive, equitable, and accessible for its diverse employees and audiences means ensuring that all NARA employees are educated and able to meaningfully engage with one another and the public.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create DEAI-focused training opportunities that begin with onboarding and continue throughout a NARA employee's career. The training should be regularly updated to reflect ever-evolving terminology and practices that promote diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

[M3. Create a culture and standard practice of active engagement with the public.](#)

NARA must regularly and actively engage with and listen to the public—specifically the public that NARA does not currently attract—and apply what is learned when planning new or improving existing programs, exhibits, and public spaces.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Engage with underrepresented audiences through focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one conversations to better understand the barriers that restrict access.
- Engage in meaningful, standardized, and regularly scheduled review of existing third-party platforms and social media—such as, but not limited to Yelp, Tripadvisor, Twitter, and Facebook—to learn about visitor experiences and perceptions of NARA museums.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create standardized survey methods that allow for more robust data collection and centralized response. Regularly review data and update survey questions to best reflect evolving terminology, standards, and trends.
- Create an agency-wide archive of evaluation and survey results and social media feedback. Though this archive should be a search tool available to all NARA staff, analyses of

evaluations and surveys and the trends revealed through such analyses should be distributed regularly by NARA Communications.

- Hire a neutral outside vendor or contractor to accomplish the above action items.

M4. Conduct regular exhibit and program evaluation and audience research.

By making comprehensive museum evaluation and visitor advocacy a regular feature of the exhibit development process, our exhibitions will better reflect the experiences and recognize the roles of all people who have lived in what is now the United States.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create an office-level museum evaluator position within Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services, or earmark funds to contract an experienced professional, and empower them to ensure that all NARA and Presidential Libraries exhibit projects are informed by BIPOC input and evaluated to assess fulfillment of exhibition goals. The museum evaluator will oversee and coordinate research, interviews, focus groups, and collaboration with communities throughout the exhibit development process.

M5. Fill gaps in the record.

Federal government archival records contain gaps, silences, erasures, and distortions of marginalized peoples, especially BIPOC. Exhibit developers must seek to overcome these obstacles when selecting archival records for display. If NARA records fail to adequately or accurately document the experiences of BIPOC, we must compensate by seeking alternative sources of material or interpretive methods informed by the latest scholarship, such as recontextualization and external loans.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Evaluate permanent exhibits to identify gaps, and seek loans from other institutions that would enhance and contextualize the exhibition.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Cultivate partnerships and strategic alliances with institutions whose collections would be helpful in filling these gaps.
- Empower staff to recommend policies to facilitate recontextualization and external loans.
- Create policies and standard practices to ensure that upcoming exhibits include a diverse range of materials.

M6. Reimagine the Rotunda.

By recontextualizing the murals and architectural elements and installing a new exhibition in the Rotunda, NARA can create a more inclusive and historically accurate tribute to the nation's founding.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Add labels to one of the Rotunda cases addressing the lack of representation and predominant focus on the men who framed the founding documents. These labels could also address efforts to reimagine the Rotunda for the future.
- Initiate planning for a new Rotunda exhibit that explores the roles of women, enslaved Africans, and Indigenous Americans in the founding of the United States along with contemporary views on the men who framed the founding documents and their participation in and positions on slavery.
- Consult with members of the community, historians, museums with related missions, and other advisors for guidance on creating an inclusive story of the founding.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Working with advisors as outlined above, develop a new exhibit for the Rotunda to be unveiled during celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026.
- As part of the project, commission a series of temporary sculptures or art installations for the Rotunda's empty niches. (See the "[Reimagine the Rotunda](#)" proposal in the appendix.)

M7. Address accessibility.

By making accessibility a central pillar of staff and customer experience and exhibit design, NARA can create inclusive and equitable employee, public, and exhibit spaces.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create a NARA Task Force on Accessibility to identify accessibility barriers.
- Broaden access to our exhibits by providing non-English translations and accommodations that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, such as recorded audio descriptions and closed captioning. Use audience research to determine which languages are spoken by visitors at each NARA site, and provide downloadable translations and adaptive technologies that visitors may access on their own devices to address language and disability barriers.
- Earmark funds to pay for updates to address accessibility needs.
- Build partnerships with external experts and organizations that serve audiences with various accessibility needs.

M8. Devise standards for the presentation of difficult history.

By developing standards and guidelines for the presentation and interpretation of [holdings](#), NARA can prevent censorship or avoidance of potentially disturbing subject matter. [NOTE: Library Directors are aware of ongoing examination of existing policy in this area, but more communication and education are necessary for this to take full effect.]

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Allow visitors to engage with upsetting content in an informed manner through use of [content warnings](#), disclaimers, and/or removable covers for sensitive content.
- Begin evaluating standards and guidelines for presenting difficult history at comparable institutions that are already engaged in combating structural racism.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create policies that require sensitivity in the selection of items within an exhibit.
- Create an agency-wide style guide that denotes anti-iracist terminology (e.g., use of “enslaved people” rather than “slaves”). The style guide should be regularly revised as language changes.

M9. Develop a unified communications/marketing message that resonates with BIPOC audiences.

To recognize and be flexible in regard to changing societal values and social movements, NARA must prioritize marketing campaigns targeting historically underwelcomed communities and establish a unified communications strategy for outreach to BIPOC audiences, partners, and stakeholders.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Develop and implement NARA-wide initiatives or themes that focus on specific aspects of U.S. history and culture, or celebrate significant commemorations and anniversaries, and incorporate the stories of BIPOC individuals in a cohesive manner.
 - Feature programs or records related to BIPOC communities, histories, or interests.
- Incorporate into the [Me to We](#) national civics education project a goal of attracting diverse audiences.

M10. Develop long-term strategic alliances with partner entities in BIPOC communities to enhance outreach across all NARA locations.

External partnerships present an opportunity to not only enhance agency offerings but also grow audience development and engagement with communities not normally seen or represented in program attendance.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Expand and encourage existing relationships with organizations that reach communities NARA has failed to engage.
- Create guidelines to assist NARA staff in seeking and developing external partnerships.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create R- and L-level outreach positions, and empower them to foster external strategic alliances that benefit NARA, the partnering organizations, and underrepresented communities.

M11. Establish a clearly defined virtual outreach program, specifically targeting BIPOC.

The shift of the Archives Sleepover to a Virtual Pajama Party in 2020 saw a tenfold increase in registrations (from 60 to 600+), and the movement of the Young Learners program (an interactive museum education program that introduces younger audiences to famous historical individuals) to a virtual environment also resulted in a significant increase in participants (from the typical 15–25 on-site participants to 2,600+ views on YouTube). Given the popularity of these recent virtual programs, NARA should develop additional virtual programs designed to reach marginalized communities who may otherwise not be able to attend in-person events.

Immediate/Short-Term Action Items

- Continue the work that began during the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to developing additional sustainable virtual programming.
- Expand what began during the pandemic by identifying entities in which partnerships and strategic alliances could be more formalized for long-term relationships.
- Begin working with the agency's designated External Affairs Liaison to identify key (national) organizations with which to establish relationships.

Continuous/Long-Term Action Items

- Create an outreach team specifically dedicated to working with BIPOC communities and on agency initiatives that actively combat systemic racism.
- Examine the feasibility of continuing to offer on-site public programming and educational learning opportunities to determine if NARA should move all outreach efforts to a virtual mode.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations contained in this report are a mix of short- and long-term actions, incremental changes, and bold steps. They represent a beginning to the work NARA must undertake. All of the Task Force's recommendations are practical and align with NARA's current Strategic Plan and must be incorporated into all future plans. The Task Force unanimously believes that the data directs us towards recommendations for NARA to develop itself from within and establish a workplace that actively acknowledges and works against historic and structural racism. Uniting the recommendations at the highest level are the central themes of Accountability; Resources; BIPOC Recruitment and Retention; Training; Internal Reflection; Outreach; and External Partnerships.

Racism is embedded in the history and current practices of NARA. Dismantling such structural racism will require vast changes to NARA's work culture at every level as well as an ongoing and active commitment to anti-racist work throughout the agency's future. By creating a work culture that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and inclusive, NARA will be better prepared to welcome and engage historically marginalized, underserved, and diverse populations. We look forward to the next phase of translating these recommendations into action.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Task Force Members

Main Task Force Members

Erica Pearson, Director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (NEEO), Chair
Ovnelle Millwood, Director of Workforce Strategy and Analysis (H), Co-chair
Jena Cochrane (ANDC)
Jametia Davis (ACO2)
Michael Davis (SC)
Gabrielle Hutchins (RR2A)
Willie M. Johnson (AFOE-FW)
Tina L. Ligon (RR2R)
Ashney Randle (RRPO)
Stephanie Sizemore (AFN-MC2)
Beverly Versey-Riley (AFN-MC2)
Ashley Young (AFN-MC2)
Jennifer Pollock (RR2R), Coordinator

Archival Description Subgroup Members

Pamela Wright, Chief Innovation Officer (V), Chair
Daniel Rooney, Director, Special Media Division (RRS), Co-chair
Rose Buchanan (RR1R)
Alex Champion (RR2A)
Elise Fariello (RRFC)
Brittany Gerke (LP-WJC)
Daria Labinsky (LP-JC)
Alexandra Lange (RRSS)
Katharine Seitz (RZA)
Crystal Gail Shurley (RRFE)
Kathleen Brown (VPA), Coordinator

Museum Subgroup Members

Alan Price, Director, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (LP-JFK), Chair
Meredith Evans, Director, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum (LP-JC), Co-chair
Catherine Brandsen (VH)
Netisha Currie (RR2RA)
Michael J. Hancock (RR2RM)
Alice Kamps (LO)
Rachael MacAskill (LP-JFK)
Amanda Melancon (LP-LBJ)
Kimberlee Ried (LO)
Ian Shepherd (LP-JFK)
Sabrina Suggs (SE), Coordinator

Appendix II: Detailed Process

This appendix provides a detailed overview of the methodology employed by each group that comprises the Task Force on Racism. Though there was some overlap in process and themes, each group pursued research methods that best fit their individual charges.

Main Task Force

The Main Task Force (MTF) studied feedback from NARA staff through the lenses of the three main areas identified in the Task Force Charter: Diversity & Inclusion, the Employee Experience, and Race-Based Harassment. The MTF was divided into three subgroups to mirror those themes. Each subgroup reviewed employee experiences at NARA, including participation in Employee Affinity Groups (EAGs), internship program coordination, employee communications, and varying roles within the hiring/interview process. The MTF also reviewed formal and informal interaction between supervisors and peers in various program areas.

Some of the main themes and key issues detailed by the feedback and recommendations included internships, the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Anti-Harassment complaint process, mentorships, [lunch and learns](#), more office-level All-Hands, and award programs to boost morale and recognize employees for their hard work. To address these themes and issues, the MTF looked at hiring practices, diverse groups progressing through career ladder positions, strategies for recruiting and retaining more diverse employees, and ways to create more diverse internship opportunities. The group recognized the support needed for such initiatives, such as bringing on coordinators at different NARA buildings to establish collaborative internship connections. Also discussed was the importance of establishing safe spaces for employees to be able to discuss challenges and concerns.

In addition to analyzing staff feedback, the MTF also analyzed several data sources including MD-715 data tables, EEO and harassment complaints data, and time-to-hire tables. The team extrapolated information based upon NARA-wide locations, gender, pay grade levels, and racial makeup and paid special attention to the gaps in diversity in upper management. The group looked at professional development possibilities and training programs, specifically the Archivist Development Program ([ADP](#)) and career-ladders, as well as train-the-trainer type programs, and considered how more training and initiatives that involve diversity and inclusion, respectful communication, and team-building exercises could lead to better working relationships and fair evaluations between supervisors and employees.

Once the information was compiled, the MTF subgroups rejoined to meet with SMEs to better enhance the recommendations and solicit more specialized opinions and suggestions. The MTF met with Human Capital and EEO on several occasions. The SMEs shared their advice and provided additional recommendations. In addition to providing recommendations based upon feedback and SME input, the MTF also identified and reviewed current NARA programs and initiatives, took a temperature check to determine what could potentially be revitalized and restored, and recommended new needs for potential future development.

Archival Description Subgroup

The Archival Description Subgroup (ADS) met regularly to discuss the issue of racist and otherwise harmful language in the National Archives Catalog. The team initially reviewed staff comments, including those received through the Task Force call for comments, various threads on the ICN, and data compiled by Research Services from previous staff discussions. The group identified themes from this data and used that information to inform and shape the report. Team members also created several benchmarking

documents, including reference documents pertaining to anti-oppressive archival description, which linked to articles, panel discussions, and resource lists created by other organizations.

The ADS consulted with several NARA employees who specialize in description, particularly with NARA's Description and Authority Service (DAS), the Catalog, and the Lifecycle and Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG), to provide detailed technical and process-related information. The team, with the assistance of Innovation (V) staff, also examined compiled search results from DAS of harmful terms that appear in specific descriptive fields. This exercise utilized a repeatable process and workflow that future work can build upon. Meg Phillips, NARA's External Affairs Liaison, provided insights and recommendations for consulting external experts on this topic and developing outreach efforts to cultivate relationships with marginalized communities. In addition to NARA staff, the ADS met with Dominique Foisy-Geoffroy, a senior adviser at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), who provided an overview of how the LAC developed a historical language advisory for records related to Indigenous populations to use in their online catalog.

Museum Subgroup

The Museum Subgroup (MS) analyzed the staff comments on the ICN (one post alone had 126 replies) and used that input as a starting point for their continued inquiry. They reviewed posts on two NARA blogs (The Text Message and The Unwritten Record), as well as public comments on a variety of platforms, including Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Google Reviews for all Presidential Libraries and Museums; Tweets sent to @USNatArchives; and TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Facebook for the National Archives in Washington, DC, and Research Services. The MS analyzed all of these to identify comments pertaining to racism or barriers that limit Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) audiences within NARA museums.

The MS also received 78 staff submissions to the staff feedback solicitation tools between October 23 and November 8. Focus groups were offered to all staff members who had applied to the Task Force but were not selected. Of the 80 applicants, 19 participated in the focus groups. After the focus groups, a survey was issued to those who were unable to attend a focus group and then to all NARA staff. A total of 79 additional anonymous surveys were submitted and reviewed between January 6 and 12.

Through benchmarking with other cultural institutions, the MS identified an appropriate taxonomy of categories that might organize staff observations and suggestions. The MS then formulated recommendations based around staff and customer feedback and constructed a draft document to support the Archivist and the agency to move with rapidity and clarity into an implementation phase. The MS also had a series of conversations to ensure that:

- there was a common and agreed-upon understanding of staff and customer feedback, challenges, and opportunities;
- recommendations were sufficiently aligned and focused so they would be mutually reinforcing when implemented; and
- it would be possible to assess the impact of the recommendations so that NARA could understand, over time, how to best make progress until goals are achieved.

Appendix III: Key Themes from Staff Comments

Staff had multiple opportunities to share their knowledge and experience with the Task Force, and their feedback was critical to the Task Force's work. The tables below summarize key themes emerging from staff comments and connect them with the recommendations that they informed.

Main Task Force

Recommendation No.	Corresponding Staff Feedback Themes
E1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase leadership support in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives. ● Create a respectful culture to encourage healthy relationships among employees. ● Create an environment for inclusiveness where there is no segregation. ● Increase employees' comfort with addressing racism in the workplace. ● Create a welcoming environment for diverse employees.
E2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide employees with safe spaces to address injustice. ● Explore racism across the agency and how it affects groups from different races, ethnicities, and cultures.
E3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase transparency in the hiring/promotion process to ensure fairness while addressing the perception of favoritism. ● Address the lack of diversity in upper ranked positions. ● Provide targeted recruitment for a more diverse workforce.
E4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase transparency in the performance management process. ● Examine whether staff evaluations are used as a barrier for professional opportunities.
E5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide the opportunity for employees to preview positions of interest. ● Create a mentorship program and encourage qualified employees to apply for positions to ensure that the most diversified employees are in the right positions.
E6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure equal opportunity for career advancement and training for interested employees. ● Consider paid internship opportunities. ● Provide a more diverse professional line staff and upper management reflecting today's population.
E7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide training and awareness about D&I.

Archival Description Subgroup

Recommendation No.	Corresponding Staff Feedback Themes
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement a standardized disclaimer, banner, or warning in the Catalog about potentially harmful content. ● Publicly document changes made to Catalog descriptions to ensure transparency.
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address the lack of transparency in the Catalog with respect to language inherited or received from creating entities vs. NARA-created language in archival description.
A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that efforts to address legacy descriptions in the Catalog account for the volume of descriptions. ● Focus on photo captions, which are among the “worst offenders.”
A4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address the Catalog’s significant technical and performance issues, which are fundamental barriers to changing and improving archival description on a large scale.
A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize that racism is not only perpetuated by using offensive terms to describe underrepresented communities but also by failing to describe communities using appropriate terms. ● Draw on internal and external resources to better identify and describe records related to underrepresented communities.
A6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborate with external stakeholders, including members of underrepresented groups and Citizen Archivists, to identify and evaluate harmful descriptions in the Catalog.
A7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add language translation to the Catalog and NARA websites. ● Use Citizen Archivists to transcribe documents in languages other than English and add tags in other languages to English-language documents.
A8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that efforts to address harmful descriptions in the Catalog are ongoing and not thought of as a one-time cleanup. ● Develop an ongoing program to address harmful descriptions that adapts to the needs of NARA users.

Museum Subgroup

Recommendation No.	Corresponding Staff Feedback Themes
M1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NARA does not empower employees; every decision has to go up and down the chain. Create ways to gather suggestions from staff.
M2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide unconscious bias training and rigorous diversity training for all employees. Staff need training to understand different ways of communicating. Training should be part of the onboarding process and part of orientation.
M3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although customer demographics vary by facility/location, the overall observation of staff is that current customers do not represent the full diversity of the nation nor of their surrounding communities. Create ways to gather suggestions from the public. Get museum-goers involved.
M4; M5; M6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NARA has not done a good job of engaging BIPOC audiences who (a) do not see themselves included in our portrayals of the nation's history, and (b) do not see context in our exhibits that raise appropriate questions about the lack of diversity on display.
M7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove barriers to access; provide translation offerings for signs, brochures, maps, etc.
M8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage problematic terminology and standardize best practices and language for all NARA sites to use when handling sensitive subject matter. Be wary of an exhibit where the first thing you see will turn people away, and think about the perspective of the variety of people visiting. Have more cultural sensitivity around how things are presented.
M9; M10; M11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NARA museums are not on the radar in BIPOC communities. Significant work must be done to influence BIPOC awareness and interest in museum attendance.

Appendix IV: Glossary of Select Terms & Concepts Related to Race and Racial Equity

These working definitions are synthesized from professional literature and other resources. Where we have drawn specific wording, the source is cited. This list is not intended to be a comprehensive collection of terms relating to either racial equity or archival/museum work. It is an effort to clarify some terminology used in our reports, as well as outline some of the related concepts that heavily influenced our discussions during the process of creating the reports. Language and grammatical styles evolve quickly, and these terms should be continuously evaluated for their usefulness.

General Definitions and Acronyms

- **Anti-racism:** An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional, and structural racism.¹ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **BIPOC:** This acronym is meant to unite these communities in the work for liberation while intentionally acknowledging each has unique histories and faces different kinds of injustices. The term was designed to be an alternative to the term **people of color (POC)** which many felt erased the historical and contemporary prominence and uniqueness of anti-Blackness and Indigeneous-erasure when discussing racism in the United States. BIPOC is a useful umbrella term but specificity is best; e.g., do not use BIPOC when referring to issues specific to the Black community.² [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Content Warning:** A verbal or written notice that precedes potentially sensitive content. Such notices flag the contents of the material that follows, so readers, listeners, or viewers can prepare themselves to adequately engage or, if necessary, disengage for their own well being. A **trigger warning** is a specific variety of content warning that attempts to forewarn audiences of content that may cause intense physiological and psychological symptoms for people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other anxiety disorders.³ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **DEAI:** An initialism standing for Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion, defined individually below. DEAI work is a core component of several professional organizations, such as the American Alliance of Museums. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
 - **Diversity:** Socially, it refers to the wide range of identities, including: race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. Within an organization diversity entails examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure multiple perspectives are represented.⁴
 - **Equity:** The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement of all individuals, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and

¹“Race Equity Glossary,” Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://mneep.org/word/#>

² This definition is derived from *8 Terms used in Anti-Racism Work Explained* (<https://futureofgood.co/8-terms-anti-racism-explained/>), *Making a Microaggression: Using Big Data and Qualitative Analysis to Map the Reproduction and Disruption of Microaggressions through Social Media* (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305120975716>), and *Why the term “BIPOC” is so complicated, explained by linguists* (<https://www.vox.com/2020/6/30/21300294/bipoc-what-does-it-mean-critical-race-linguistics-jonathan-rosa-deandra-miles-hercules>)

³ “An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings.” University of Michigan, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts Inclusive Teaching, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching-sandbox/wp-content/uploads/sites/853/2021/02/An-Introduction-to-Content-Warnings-and-Trigger-Warnings-Draft.pdf>

⁴ This definition is derived from *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary* (<https://environment.uw.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/tools-and-additional-resources/glossary-dei-concepts/>) and *Definitions of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion* (<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion/facing-change-definitions/>).

- that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist in the provision of adequate opportunities to all groups.⁵
- **Accessibility/Access:** Giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. This also encompasses broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for characteristics that each person brings. Access can also refer to public accommodations and job opportunities for marginalized populations; the context of the use of the word(s) will determine if accessibility is meant in the physical, legal, or experiential sense.⁶
 - In the context of archival description, the term **accessibility** can also refer to the characteristic of being easily reached or used with minimal barriers; the ability to locate relevant information through the use of catalogs, indexes, finding aids, or other tools; and the permission to locate and retrieve information for use (consultation or reference) within legally established restrictions of privacy, confidentiality, and security clearance; access.⁷ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
 - **Inclusion:** The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. While a truly “inclusive” group is necessarily diverse, a “diverse” group may or may not be “inclusive.”
 - **Harmful:** Within the context of our report, harmful is used to describe words, phrases, and actions that cause harm to marginalized groups. It can include language and behavior that is racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-Semitic, etc. The term “harmful” should not replace or be used as a euphemism for these more specific terms but may be used to convey that many types of harm are being described. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
 - **Historical Negationism:** The illegitimate distortion of the historical record, often constituting in the denial or lessening of the impact/severity of historical crimes. In order to support a new historical narrative, certain facts are presented while purposely withholding others. This differs from **historical revisionism**, which is the reinterpretations of facts and narratives based on new evidence and sources (which can be negative or positive).⁸ As an example of these concepts in use at NARA see the DocsTeach lesson “Assimilation and the Native People of Metlakahla, Alaska,” which encourages students to consider the positives of forced assimilation on Indigenous communities.⁹
 - **Implicit/Unconscious Bias:** The unconscious attribution of particular qualities to a member of a certain social group. Shaped by experience and based on learned associations between particular qualities and social categories.¹⁰ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
 - **Indigenous:** A term referring to people with preexisting sovereignty who were living together as a community prior to contact with settler populations. **Indigenous American** refers to the descendants of people who lived within what is now the United States prior to European contact. **Native American** and **American Indian** may also be used. Whenever possible, it is best to use the name of an

⁵ This definition is derived from *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary*

(<https://environment.uw.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/tools-and-additional-resources/glossary-dei-concepts/>)

⁶ “Definitions of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion,” American Alliance of Museums, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion/facing-change-definitions/>

⁷ “Accessibility,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/accessibility.html>

⁸ This definition is derived from *Historical Revisionism (Negationism)*, World Heritage Encyclopedia

([http://www.self.gutenberg.org/article/WHEBN0000026092/Historical%20revisionism%20\(negationism\)](http://www.self.gutenberg.org/article/WHEBN0000026092/Historical%20revisionism%20(negationism))) and *Revisionism, Denialism, and Negationism in History* (<https://blogs.it.vt.edu/criticalreading/2017/09/15/revisionism-denialism-and-negationism-in-history/>).

⁹ “Assimilation and the Native People of Metlakahla, Alaska,” DOCSTeach, 2013, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/assimilation-and-the-native-people-of-metlakahla-alaska>

¹⁰ “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary,” University of Washington College of the Environment, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://environment.uw.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/tools-and-additional-resources/glossary-dei-concepts/>

individual's particular Indigenous community or nation of people. American Indian is currently used by the United States Government.¹¹ [\[Return to reading\]](#)

- **Intersectional:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender that can create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.¹²
- **Latinx:** A non-gendered, non-binary term for an individual from Latin America or of Latin American descent. The term **Latine** is also used and may be preferable to some. **Hispanic** is also a term commonly used to identify people with historical or cultural links to Spain, or of a Spanish-language background. Individuals who identify by any of these terms may also have direct ties to the varied Indigenous people of Central and South America and the Caribbean. Hispanic is currently used by the United States Government. Whenever possible, it is best to use the name of an individual's particular country of origin or descent.¹³ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **LGBTQIA+:** A common abbreviation for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersex, Agender, Asexual and other queer-identifying community.¹⁴
- **Marginalized Populations:** Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political, and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. May also be referred to as **systemically minoritized** groups. Both terms are preferable to the word **minority** as not all marginalized groups are minorities in all areas.¹⁵ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Microaggression (specifically racial):** Everyday verbal/behavioral/environmental insults, indignities, and/or demeaning messages sent to people of color by others who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent; acting with bias.¹⁶
- **Race:** This Task Force acknowledges that there are many definitions of “race” that are used in different contexts throughout our study. For the purpose of writing this report, the Task Force has followed two definitional guidelines:
 - First—given the charter, objectives, and goals of this Task Force—a broader definition of race helped navigate the complexities and nuances of how race is experienced in the agency. There is a history of how racism and exclusion can be perceived (among staff, across public audiences, across exhibits and collections), that is better understood through this broader explication. This second definition of race is quantified (or expressed) as a subjective social construct based on observed and/or ascribed characteristics that have taken on socially significant meaning. At its core, it is an abstract and fluid concept based on the ever-changing social attitudes and behaviors that evolve over time by different groups. As such, the meaning of race, as it relates to its social-cognitive construct, will surely alter over time as socio-economic, socio-political, and cultural patterns and standards change.
 - Second, we recognize that the EEO definition of race is based in how people are subjected to discrimination. According to the EEO, race discrimination involves the mistreatment of someone (an applicant or employee) because they are of a certain race or because of personal

¹¹ “Resources on Native American and Indigenous Affairs: Native American and Indigenous Peoples FAQs,” UCLA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, April 14, 2020,

<https://equity.ucla.edu/known/resources-on-native-american-and-indigenous-affairs/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples-faqs/>

¹² “Building Equity and Inclusion through the Power of Language,” Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs, accessed March 8, 2021,

<https://multicultural.utah.gov/poweroflanguage/>

¹³ Del Real, Jose A. “‘Latinx’ Hasn’t Even Caught on among Latinos. It Never Will.” Washington Post, December 18, 2020, www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/latinx-latinos-unpopular-gender-term/2020/12/18/bf177c5c-3b41-11eb-9276-ae0ca72729be_story.html.

¹⁴ “LGBTQIA+ Terminology: Common Terms associated with the LGBTQIA+ community,” Gender and Sexuality Student Services at University of Illinois Springfield, accessed March 10, 2021,

<https://www.uis.edu/gendersexualitystudentservices/about/lgbtqaterminology/>

¹⁵ This definition is derived from *Marginalized Populations* (<https://nccdh.ca/glossary/entry/marginalized-populations>) and *Building Equity and Inclusion through the Power of Language* (<https://multicultural.utah.gov/poweroflanguage/>).

¹⁶ Tori DeAngelis, “Unmasking ‘racial microaggressions’,” American Psychological Association, February 2009, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/02/microaggression>

characteristics associated with race (such as hair texture, skin color, or certain facial features). Color discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because of skin color or complexion.

[\[Return to reading\]](#)

- **Racial Prejudice:** Racial prejudice refers to a set of discriminatory or derogatory attitudes based on assumptions deriving from perceptions about race/skin color.¹⁷
 - **Reverse racism:** Reverse racism is a fallacy that refers to discrimination against White people, usually in the form of programs meant to advance ethnic minorities such as affirmative action. Anti-racist activists in the U.S. have largely deemed reverse racism to be impossible, as the power structure of the United States has historically benefited White people and continues to do so today. Reverse racism is often confused with racial prejudice against White people, which does exist, but lacks the systemic relationship of power that would qualify such prejudice as racism.¹⁸
- **Racism, Forms of:**
 - **Structural:** The overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to White people resulting in disadvantages to people of color. Also referred to as **systemic racism**. Structural racism encompasses:
 - history, providing the foundation for white supremacy
 - culture, providing the normalization and replication of racism
 - interconnected institutions and policies providing the legitimacy and reinforcements to maintain and perpetuate racism.¹⁹
 - **Institutional:** Occurs in an organization; includes discriminatory treatment, unfair policies, and biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for White people over people of color and extends beyond prejudice
 - **Interpersonal:** Occurs between individuals; often involves slurs or hateful actions.
 - **Individual:** The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.²⁰ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Safe Space:** A place or environment where a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm; any place or group of people where individuals commit to consistently providing each other with a respectful, supportive environment (especially for people from historically marginalized groups).²¹ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Underrepresented Populations:** Populations who are not represented in education, jobs, housing, etc. relative to their numbers in the general population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and other federal measuring tools, underrepresented populations include African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans. However, other underrepresented populations may include, but are not limited to: other ethnicities; adult learners; veterans; people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals; certain religious groups; and groups sharing particular economic backgrounds. For the purposes of this Task Force, underrepresented

¹⁷ "CARED Glossary," Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://www.aclrc.com/glossary>

¹⁸ Nadra Kareem Nittle, "Does Reverse Racism Exist?" ThoughtCo., July 3, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/does-reverse-racism-exist-2834942>

¹⁹ This definition is derived from *Talking About Race: Being Anti-racist* (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>) and *8 Terms Used in Anti-Racist Work Explained* (<https://futureofgood.co/8-terms-anti-racism-explained/>)

²⁰ "Talking About Race: Being Anti-racist," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

²¹ Rachel Terrell, "Ally Question: Why Do We Need Safe Spaces?" National Archives ICN, June 15, 2020, <https://icn.nara.gov/groups/stonewallnara/blog/2020/06/15/ally-question-why-do-we-need-safe-spaces>

focuses on representation within the NARA workforce, within archival descriptions, and within exhibits.²² [\[Return to reading\]](#)

- **Underserved Populations:** Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. In the context of this report, underserved populations generally refers to communities that NARA has historically neglected.²³ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **White Privilege:** The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are White.²⁴
- **White Supremacy:** The concept that people and communities who are White have superior ideas, beliefs, and actions to those of BIPOC individuals and communities, which affects political and socio-economic systems in which White people have the structural advantage. The phrase “white supremacy” is most often associated with extremist groups; however, white supremacy is present in all American institutions and culture.²⁵ (See also: White Supremacy Culture.)
 - **White Supremacy Culture:** The dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. These standards may be seen as mainstream, dominant cultural practices; they have evolved from the United States’ history of white supremacy. White supremacy culture is so normalized that it can be hard to see, but it values some ways of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing—ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a White, western tradition—while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways.²⁶

²² This definition is derived from Emory University’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, “Common Terms,” accessed March 26, 2021, <https://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/about/resources/terms.html>

²³ Executive Order of January 20, 2021, Advancing Racial Equality and Support of Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

²⁴ “8 Terms Used in Anti-Racism Explained,” Future of Good, June 4, 2020, <https://futureofgood.co/8-terms-anti-racism-explained/>

²⁵ This definition is derived from “Racial Equity Tools Glossary,” accessed March 18, 2021, <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

²⁶ This definition is derived from “Racial Equity Tools Glossary,” accessed March 19, 2021, <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Appendix V: Glossary of Professional Terms

NARA Organizations, Offices, Systems, and Institutional Documents

- **A:** Office code for the [Office of Agency Services](#). [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **All Hands:** A meeting that gathers all staff members within an organizational unit. This may include agency-wide meetings, as well as site-specific meetings. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **The Archival Research Catalog (ARC):** The former data-entry system used by staff to describe NARA's holdings; it was discontinued in 2012.
- **Archivist Development Program (ADP):** The ADP is intended to provide a uniform, coordinated delivery of information and experiences so all archivist hires receive the same foundation. The ADP is meant to include a broad understanding of the mission and responsibilities of NARA, an overview of the functions of the agency, an introduction to archival activities and the lifecycle of records, and on-the-job training in archival job duty areas. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Description and Authority Service (DAS):** DAS is the current data-entry system used by staff to describe NARA's holdings and archival creators. Descriptions in DAS get pushed to the National Archives Catalog. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Employee Affinity Group (EAG):** EAGs are voluntary, employee-driven groups organized around a particular shared interest or aspect of diversity. Affinity groups are not intended to create a public forum or platform or to establish or promote any political or social agenda. Rather, they are established to facilitate employee professional development, cultural connections, and diversity and inclusion, and to promote employee engagement within NARA's workforce. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS):** The EVS is an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) tool that identifies employees' perceptions and satisfaction about their organizations and work experiences. OPM administers the EVS on an annual basis. This questionnaire serves as NARA's Annual Employee Survey (AES).
- **Foundation:** National Archives Foundation. The Foundation is an independent nonprofit that increases public awareness of the National Archives and provides financial support for NARA's exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives. The term may also be used to reference the Foundation of a Presidential Library, which serves a similar purpose for the legacy of the President to which a library is dedicated. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **H:** Office code for the [Office of Human Capital](#). [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Internal Collaboration Network (ICN):** The ICN is a virtual platform for employee communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across NARA. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Individual Development Plan (IDP):** The IDP is a tool, process, and catalyst for employee growth opportunities.
- **L:** Office code for [Office of Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services](#). [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG):** The LCDRG currently contains elements that were developed for the archival description portion of the records lifecycle. These elements were based in part on NARA's previous data standard, Data Elements 800 (DE 800). [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Me to We:** A working title for an L-specific national initiative to increase civic engagement. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **N:** Office code for the [Archivist of the United States \(AOTUS\)](#).
- **Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM):** SEPMs are an integral component of the EEO's Affirmative Employment Program (AEP). The appointment of SEPMs is designed to assist management in identifying and eliminating employment barriers that may deny equal opportunities for individuals who are members of a protected class. As representatives of the EEO, SEPMs are a resource to managers and employees. SEPMs are responsible for assisting in the development of

effective strategies that will help NARA establish and maintain a Model EEO Program. Such strategies will include efforts towards outreach, targeted recruitment (minorities and persons with disabilities), hiring, employee development and advancement, and retention. SEPMs are not involved in representing an employee in any aspect of the EEO complaints process.²⁷

- **R:** Office code for the [Office of Research Services](#). [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **The Museum System (TMS):** A museum collection management system used by Presidential Libraries.
- **V:** Office code for the [Office of Innovation](#). [\[Return to reading\]](#)

EEO Terminology

Anti-Harassment Complaint Process: The investigation of an allegation of harassing conduct. Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to: bullying, slurs, derogatory or disrespectful remarks, spreading rumors, swearing, jokes, obscenities, incessant teasing, expressing or insinuating threats, threatened assault, hitting, punching, other unwanted touching, and malicious or insulting gestures. Unlawful harassment is defined as any unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age (40 or older), disability (mental or physical), genetic information, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, status as a parent, or retaliation when:

- An employee actually suffers a personal loss or harm with regard to a term, privilege, or condition of employment relating to any of the protected bases; or
- The behavior can reasonably be considered severe or pervasive creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

NARA has appropriate measures to prevent harassment in the workplace and to correct harassing behavior before it becomes severe or pervasive. Harassing behavior by a NARA employee does not need to rise to the level of unlawful harassment in order for it to constitute misconduct.²⁸ [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Barrier: An agency policy, principle, or practice that limits or tends to limit employment opportunities for members of a particular EEO group based on their sex, race, ethnic background, or disability status. Many employment barriers are built into the organizational and operational structures of the agency and embedded in the day-to-day procedures and practices of the agency. Barriers generally fall within one of three broad categories: institutional/structural; attitudinal; and physical.

Barrier Analysis: The process to identify root causes of disparities in equal employment opportunities so that action can be taken to remedy the policies, procedures, and practices that lead to such disparities.²⁹ [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Blind Hiring: Removing personal and demographic information from the hiring process so candidates can be assessed on their abilities alone. [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Career Ladders: Federal jobs (i.e., positions) that offer noncompetitive promotion potential³⁰ [\[Return to reading\]](#)

²⁷ NARA Notice 0190 - NEW Special Emphasis Program Collateral Duty Assignment, August 1, 2013, <https://work.nara.gov/notices/2013/190>

²⁸ NARA Equal Employment Opportunity Program, "Anti-Harassment Policy Statement," accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/eoo/policy/anti-harassment-statement.html>

²⁹ This definition is derived from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Barrier Analysis: Questions to Guide the Process," accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/management-directive/barrier-analysis-questions-guide-process>

³⁰ This definition is adapted from NARA's "Job Announcement Terminology," accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/careers/jobs/fields.html>

Classification: The process through which federal jobs (i.e., positions) are assigned to a pay system, series, title, and grade or band, based on consistent application of position classification standards.³¹

[\[Return to reading\]](#)

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Complaint Process: The investigation of an an allegation of discrimination because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual harassment and sexual orientation), age, physical or mental handicap. The complaint may arise from a specific personnel action, such as employment, promotion, work assignment, selection for training, disciplinary action, or separation, or it may relate to prevailing conditions in an organization.³² [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Harvard Implicit Association Test: Also referred to as the Harvard Implicit Bias Test, this research tool measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. Specifically, it measures the strength of associations between concepts and evaluations or stereotypes. The test was developed in 1998 by scientists at Harvard University, the University of Washington, and the University of Virginia.³³

[\[Return to reading\]](#)

Historically Black College and University (HBCU): Institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the intention of primarily serving the African American community. [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Lunch and learns: Voluntary meetings, training, or presentations that take place during the lunch hour.

[\[Return to reading\]](#)

MD-715 Data Tables: The [MD-715 workforce data tables](#) are a useful initial diagnostic tool to assist federal agencies in identifying triggers during the barrier analysis process. A trigger is a trend, disparity, or anomaly that suggests the need for further inquiry into a particular policy, practice, procedure, or condition; they can be gleaned from various sources of information, beginning with workforce statistics. There are two types of MD-715 data tables: “A” and “B,” which contain snapshots of the gains and losses in the total workforce, occupational categories, pay plans/grade levels, mission-critical occupations, senior grade levels, salary, management levels, and awards. With a nearly identical format, the A tables collect race/ethnicity and gender data, and the B tables capture persons with targeted disabilities data. While the workforce data tables are helpful as a starting point, identification of workplace barriers demands a thorough examination of all relevant circumstances. An agency should focus on what the compiled data reveals about its workforce, and it must recognize that statistics are only the starting point of the barrier analysis process. Once an agency finds triggers, it must investigate to uncover links to specific employment policies, practices, and procedures. The results of this investigation are reported in PART I (race, gender, and national origin) and PART J (disability status).³⁴ [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Time-to-Hire Tables: The U.S. Office of Personnel Management measures “[Time to Hire](#)” under the End-to-End Hiring Roadmap’s 80-Day Hiring Model utilizing two methodologies: 1) from the time the hiring manager submits an approved hiring request to human resources to the acceptance of the tentative offer; and 2) from the time the hiring manager submits an approved hiring request to human resources until the day the new employee’s entrance on duty (EOD). All time-to-hire data is reported in calendar days.

Universal Design: The composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.³⁵

³¹ Office of Personnel Management, “Frequently Asked Questions: Classification,” accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.opm.gov/faqs/topic/classification/index.aspx>

³² NARA Equal Employment Opportunity Program, “EEO Complaint Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/eoo/policy/complaint-faq.html>

³³ Project Implicit, “About the IAT,” accessed March 25, 2021, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html>

³⁴ “Instructions to Federal Agencies for EEO MD-715,” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/management-directive/instructions-federal-agencies-eeo-md-715-0>.

³⁵ “What is Universal Design,” Center for Excellence in Universal Design, accessed March 15, 2021, <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>

Archival Description Terminology

- **Approved and Under Edit Descriptions:** There are two domains for archival descriptions in the Description and Authority Service (DAS): “Approved” and “Under Edit.” Archival descriptions in the “Approved” domain are used to populate the National Archives Catalog. The “Approved” domain is a read-only domain that cannot be directly edited. Archival descriptions in the “Under Edit” domain are new archival descriptions and copies of “Approved” archival descriptions that can be edited. All data entry is done in this domain
- **Authority Record:** An entry in an authority file that contains information about the preferred form of a name or subject heading.³⁶ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Deaccession:** A formal action and process taken to recommend and approve the disposal of accessioned records from NARA’s legal and physical custody. NARA 1540 governs reappraisal and deaccessioning and, in Research Services—established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), provide implementation instructions.³⁷ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Description:** Information created to help identify and represent an archival resource. Descriptions are often used for discovery and management of archival resources, and they frequently detail resources’ physical characteristics, informational content, and functional purpose.³⁸ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
 - **Legacy Descriptions:** archival descriptions carried over from an earlier time. In the context of this report, legacy descriptions refers to descriptions that already existed in the National Archives Catalog before the Task Force issued its final report.³⁹ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Descriptive Metadata:** Information that refers to the intellectual content of material and aids discovery of such materials⁴⁰
 - Creator-supplied: Made by the individual, group, or organization that is responsible for the record’s production, accumulation, or formation
 - Archives-supplied: Made by the National Archives employee who entered the record into the National Archives Catalog or a related system (e.g., DAS) [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Digital Object:** A born-digital file or digitized version of an analog record that appears in the National Archives Catalog⁴¹
- **Disposition:** Materials’ destruction or transfer to an archive as determined by their appraisal.⁴² [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Field and Presidential Records:** Records held by Research Services Field offices and the Presidential Libraries. [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **File Unit:** An organized unit (file, volume, etc.) of documents grouped together either for current use or in the process of archival arrangement. For NARA’s descriptive practices, the file unit is the intellectual handling of the record item, which may or may not be the physical handling. In other words, a folder does not necessarily equal a file unit. For example, a case file may be in several physical folders but is described as one file unit.⁴³

³⁶ “Authority Record,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/authority-record.html>

³⁷ NARA 1540 - Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Archival Federal Records (Directive), February 4, 2013, <https://www.archives.gov/files/foia/directives/nara1540.pdf>

³⁸ “Description,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/description.html>

³⁹ Definition adapted from “Legacy (Entry 2 of 2),” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legacy>; and “Description,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/description.html>.

⁴⁰ “Description Type,” Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, October 25, 2019, https://work.nara.gov/archives_and_records_mgmt/archives_and_activities/accessioning_processing_description/lifecycle/elements/descriptiontype.html

⁴¹ Jon Fletcher, “Digitized Records in the National Archives Catalog: How Do They Get There?” NARAtions, September 24, 2019, <https://narations.blogs.archives.gov/2019/09/24/digitized-records-in-the-national-archives-catalog-how-do-they-get-there/>

⁴² “Disposition,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/description.html>

⁴³ “Description Type Authority List,” Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/lcdrg/authority_lists/descriptionlist.html

- **Holdings:** The whole of a repository's collections.⁴⁴ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Item:** The smallest indivisible archival unit (e.g., a letter, memorandum, report, leaflet, or photograph). For example, a book or record album would be described as an item, but the individual chapters of the book or the discs or songs that make up the album would not be described as items.⁴⁵
- **Metadata:** A characterization or description documenting the identification, management, nature, use, or location of information resources (data). Metadata is commonly defined as “data about data.” Metadata is frequently used to locate or manage information resources by abstracting or classifying those resources or by capturing information not inherent in the resource. Typically metadata is organized into distinct categories and relies on conventions to establish the values for each category.
 - **Administrative Metadata:** May include the date and source of acquisition, disposal date, and disposal method.
 - **Descriptive Metadata:** May include information about the content and form of the materials.
 - **Preservation Metadata:** May record activities to protect or extend the life of the resource, such as reformatting.
 - **Structural Metadata:** May indicate the interrelationships between discrete information resources, such as page numbers.⁴⁶ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **OCR:** An abbreviation for Optical Character Recognition, the process of converting images of typed, handwritten, or printed text into machine-encoded text that can be electronically searched and edited. The term can also refer to the product of this process (e.g., “The OCR contains mistakes”).⁴⁷
- **Processing:** Preparing archival materials for use.⁴⁸
 - **Basic Processing:** Necessary actions completed for a series to meet basically acceptable standards of physical and intellectual control over archival resources. Basic processing addresses three fundamental goals: provide physical control of the holdings, promote discovery and access to the holdings, and assure safe use of holdings (protecting the holdings and securing information when required by law).⁴⁹
 - **Augmented Processing:** Any action taken to address intellectual, physical, or administrative control needs over archival resources that are not covered or required by basic processing. Actions taken are intended to meet a very specific goal or need and justified by the significance of the records. Most augmented processing will be actions that provide holdings maintenance, conservation, or description. Augmented processing actions are often more labor intensive than basic processing.⁵⁰ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Processing Note:** Explanations or significant information about archival resources that are created during archival processing. Processing notes may relate to the administrative history of records, the biographical history of records' creators, access or use restrictions, or other aspects of records' creation, physical occurrence, and scope.⁵¹
- **Record:** Data or information stored on some medium and used as an extension of human memory or to support accountability. See also [44 U.S. Code § 3301. Definition of records](#). Can also be used to refer to an entry describing a work in a catalog (i.e. [descriptive record](#)); however, in this document these are referred to as descriptions.⁵² [\[Return to reading\]](#)

⁴⁴ “Holdings,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/holdings.html>

⁴⁵ “Description Type Authority List,” Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/lcdrg/authority_lists/descriptionlist.html

⁴⁶ “Metadata,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/metadata.html>

⁴⁷ “Optical Character Recognition,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/optical-character-recognition.html>

⁴⁸ “Processing,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/processing.html>

⁴⁹ ouR Manual: The Big Book of How,” Nara@Work, September 4, 2020, <https://work.nara.gov/research-services/manual/index.html>

⁵⁰ ouR Manual: The Big Book of How,” Nara@Work, September 4, 2020, <https://work.nara.gov/research-services/manual/index.html>

⁵¹ This definition created from definitions of various other “notes” in the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide

<https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/lcdrg/alpha.html>

⁵² “Record,” Dictionary of Archives Terminology, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/record.html>

- **Record Creator:** The individual or organization responsible for archival materials' creation, accumulation, or maintenance.⁵³
- **Reparative Description:** Description that reinterprets and replaces existing description in order to prevent or minimize unnecessary harm.⁵⁴ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Reparative Description Working Group:** A permanent working group the Archival Description Subgroup proposes that will continue identifying issues of racist, harmful, and otherwise inappropriate descriptive language. The creation of this group is integral to implementing and building on the recommendations made throughout this document and is further defined in the Archival Description Subgroup's detailed report (see [recommendation A8](#)). [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Series:** File units or documents arranged in accordance with a filing system, or maintained as a unit, because they result from the same accumulation or filing process, the same function, or the same activity; have a particular form; or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt, or use.⁵⁵ [\[Return to reading\]](#)
- **Steward:** The entity responsible for managing archival resources. Stewardship typically implies the management of archival resources as a surrogate for another party, such as the records creators. Some writers have pointed to not only the sense of responsibility but also of power and authority that derives from the role of steward.⁵⁶
- **Topical Subject Authority:** The established, preferred form of a topical term.⁵⁷ [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Museum Terminology

- **Projection mapping:** A projection technique used to turn objects into a display surface for video projection. This is a proposed idea in Reimagining the Rotunda of the National Archives in Washington, DC.⁵⁸

⁵³ "Creator Type Authority List," Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/lcdrg/authority_lists/creatorlist.html

⁵⁴ Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, "Moving Toward a Reparative Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, Vol 5, Issue No. 1 (2018): accessed March 11, 2021, <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=jcas>

⁵⁵ "Description Type Authority List," Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/lcdrg/authority_lists/descriptionlist.html

⁵⁶ "Stewardship," *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/stewardship.html>

⁵⁷ "Topical Subject" Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, December 14, 2018, https://work.nara.gov/archives_and_records_mgmt/archives_and_activities/accessioning_processing_description/lifecycle/elements/topical_subject.html

⁵⁸ "Projection Mapping," Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, accessed March 15, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projection_mapping

Appendix VI: Main Task Force's Detailed Report

Recommendations, Themes, and Action Items from the Archivist's Task Force on Racism: Employment Experience, Diversity and Inclusion, and Race-Based Harassment

E1. Rebrand the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Program by creating a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Program.

Staff Comments

Increase leadership support in DEAI initiatives. Create a respectful culture to encourage healthy relationships among employees. Provide DEAI training and awareness. Create an environment for inclusiveness where there is no segregation. Increase employees' comfort with addressing racism in the workplace. Creating a welcoming environment for diverse employees.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Conduct a barrier analysis to review the diversity of NARA. The barrier analysis may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Educating staff on the Management Directive 715 (MD-715).
 - b. Issuing exit surveys and MD-715.
 - c. Auditing the hiring process and ladder positions.
- B. Evaluate whether job, detail, and cross-training announcements at certain grade levels have been used as a restrictive barrier to professional development for all employees.
- C. Develop action plans to eliminate barriers in NARA's policies and procedures.
- D. Promote a culture of inclusion and professionalism throughout NARA, conduct and support cross-collaboration, and create opportunities to learn about people of different backgrounds.
 - a. Enhance and provide support to the DEAI program for cross-cultural exploration. Focus areas may include but are not limited to:
 - i. Explore how NARA could annually celebrate Harold Pinkett, who was an activist and the first Black archivist hired at the National Archives on April 16, 1942. This might include creating an annual job/career fair, a Diversity Internship Program/Fellowship, and an award in his name to raise awareness about and expand resources to archivists of color.
 - ii. Creating more awareness on NARA policies such as the No Fear, Anti-Harassment, and EEO policies.
 - iii. Developing and implementing Diversity Days that celebrate diversity in all its forms. In addition to specific Diversity Days, the DEAI's ICN group would celebrate diversity year-round.
 - iv. Exploring agency-wide training needs and benchmarking other agencies to provide annual EEO cross-cultural training and cross-cultural communication.
 - v. Creating DEAI training resources that address favoritism and biases.
 - vi. Exploring a Senior leadership open-door policy and determining the need for a suggestion box.
 - vii. Developing an annual EEO recognition program to informally recognize NARA program areas or individuals that work hard to make NARA an equitable workplace and strive to Build Our Future Through Our People.
 - viii. Working with Research Services' Subject Matter Experts (i.e., Civil Rights and African American), external consultants/speakers, EAGs, and NARA staff organizations to develop more educational programs about the histories and cultures of BIPOC.
 - ix. Creating a report card system that examines how diversity is executed at each facility; middle management may be positioned to bring clarity on this point.
- E. Develop and foster safe spaces that would allow employees to feel heard and empowered. These safe spaces would also be informal settings that are approachable and comfortable for all employees.

- a. Create a program that is informal with neutral trained wellness coaches/staff who can assist via telephone, virtually, or in each NARA building. Partner with EEO to include DEAI and other partners within Human Capital.
- b. Work with the EEO program to advertise and offer assistance with safe spaces.

[\[Return to report, E1\]](#)

E2. Create and promote educational opportunities to raise employee awareness about the EEO complaint process and Resolve Program.

Staff Comments

Provide employees with safe spaces to address injustice. Explore racism across the agency and how it affects groups from different races, ethnicities, and cultures.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Create transparency about the seriousness of racial harassment in the workplace and awareness of the procedures for filing a complaint.
 - a. Define “racism” and promote awareness of the definition throughout NARA.
 - b. Create individualized intervention plans on a case-by-case basis and collect more written witness statements from involved parties.
 - c. Create an environment with a direct supervisor or third party to communicate racial harassment claims. Allow both sides to be heard in the discussion with a three-way communication in order to come to a resolution both orally and in writing. Build a standard procedure for supervisors to follow, that helps supervisors identify the root of the problem. Harassment claims need to be met with actionable resolutions with repercussions for the responsible party so that the harassment does not continue.
- B. Create an annual DEAI agency-wide training. Seek external consultation when needed to facilitate and educate staff on race and DEAI topics. Also, work with other federal agencies and organizations to provide resources and tools to support staff in addressing racism and deepening their understanding of it.
- C. Create a small permanent task force to continue the work after this Task Force, who will keep staff apprised of next steps and inform them that this is an ongoing and long-term commitment.

[\[Return to report, E2\]](#)

E3. Audit and reevaluate NARA’s hiring practices and policies for bias, unfairness, and legality.

Staff Comments

Increase transparency in the hiring/promotion process to ensure fairness while addressing the perception of favoritism. Address the lack of diversity in upper-ranked positions. Provide targeted recruitment for a more diverse workforce.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Develop and implement a strategy for hiring more diverse staff across the agency.
 - a. Develop a recruitment program to assist hiring managers with creating position postings.
 - b. Develop a training program to teach hiring managers how to avoid cultural bias.
 - c. Create a fact sheet with tips on how to create a diverse applicant panel/pool.
 - d. Develop a strategy for recruitment and retention to ensure a more diverse staff on a Senior Level (supervisors, managers, and executives).
 - e. Work with EEO to identify and develop targeted recruitment programs aimed at meeting diversity goals within NARA’s workforce.
- B. Create a partnership between EEO and Human Capital to review data, identify any barriers, and develop ideas for outreach. Review the current hiring process, the interview panel and selection process. Examine data to identify trends or problem areas and implement data-driven solutions.

- a. Implement blind hiring procedures to ensure fairness and prevent discrimination when hiring candidates.
 - b. Explore options for a neutral party to sit in on interviews or do a follow-up and determine if any discriminatory factors were included.
 - c. Provide candidates who apply for jobs and are not selected with tips on how to improve for future applications and provide constructive feedback from the interview.
 - d. Develop a new process where performance ratings are not used as barriers or tools to prevent advancement opportunities or all voices from being heard when creating solutions for change.
 - e. Examine demographics of employees, and collect data on how many have been promoted to GS-13 and above, and how many of those were BIPOC. Collect data on how many BIPOC applied, were interviewed and selected, and were interviewed and not selected. Identify ways to help diversify the interview panel and develop an outreach program that targets diverse groups, establishing EAG or DEAI groups in each NARA facility as another means of getting assistance outside of the ICN.
- C. Reconfigure the onboarding process.
- a. Create a localized sponsorship program or buddy system for new hires to help them adapt to working at NARA.
 - b. Provide fact sheets about diversity programs and organizations at NARA.
 - c. Present about DEAI during the orientation/onboarding process.
 - d. Revise the onboarding process to recognize and accommodate each NARA location's unique context while ensuring that all locations prioritize DEAI in onboarding.
- D. Develop a partnership between EEO and Human Capital to identify and eliminate barriers for training and development opportunities within detail and cross-training announcements.
- a. Create a leadership and management developmental training program for BIPOC at NARA.

[\[Return to report, E3\]](#)

E4. Evaluate the Performance Management System to ensure that prohibited factors are not considered, and develop guidance to support management.

Staff Comments

Increase transparency in the performance management process.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Examine whether staff evaluations are used as a barrier for professional opportunities.
- B. Support the effective administration of NARA's Performance Management System and ensure compliance, transparency, and consistency.
 - a. Create awareness about the Performance Management System by providing frequent tips on best practices.
 - b. Support management in conducting ongoing dialogue with their employees
 - c. Provide supervisors with training and guidance (i.e., FAQs, tip sheets, etc.) on performance reviews and discussions with staff.
 - d. Add a diversity standard to supervisors' performance plans.
- C. Look at Human Capital work plans in terms of recruitment, possibly to incorporate recruitment into performance plans including community outreach.

[\[Return to report, E4\]](#)

E5. Recruit and retain BIPOC.

Staff Comments

Provide the opportunity for employees to preview positions of interest. Create a mentorship program and encourage qualified employees to apply for positions in order to ensure the most diversified employees in the right positions.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Develop targeted recruitment and retention strategies for BIPOC.
 - a. Foster connections with organizations in underserved communities to build a new generation of stakeholders and expand interest in careers at NARA. Conduct outreach at HBCUs and other diverse universities.
 - b. Use NARA's social media platforms for recruiting purposes. Develop campaigns that would target certain groups of people and encourage them to apply to NARA.
 - c. Leverage federal programs such as AmeriCorps VISTA and Work Study (where applicable) to provide opportunities to build skills in NARA-relevant professions.
 - d. Retain BIPOC by creating projects that promote and showcase diversity.
- B. Identify career development opportunities through career pathing that will equip employees with the understanding of the knowledge, skills, and experiences required to move into a vertical, lateral, or cross-functional career.
 - a. Develop an agency-wide roadmap that will inform and support career advancement opportunities. Roadmaps may include career paths for major occupations (i.e., Archivist Series, GS-1420s; Archives Technician Series, GS- 1421s; etc.).
 - b. Review position descriptions to consider if necessary job qualifications align with salary and benefits.
 - c. Define relevant qualifications for position descriptions that do not create unneeded and possibly discriminatory hurdles for candidates.
 - d. Develop internal career pathing tools to help employees find positions of interest and enhance skills.
 - i. Consider if there are multiple pathways to appropriate qualification for an advertised position.
 - ii. Ensure that position descriptions are sufficiently technical to attract qualified candidates, yet general enough to avoid excluding candidates who have the correct skills but may have developed those skills through pathways not historically represented in NARA position descriptions.
 - iii. Ensure that position posting questionnaires are tailored to meet the position and not crafted with an overqualified candidate in mind.
 - e. Evaluate career-laddered positions to determine the effectiveness and implementation across the agency. Informed by such evaluation, create positions with career ladders in mind, outlining a ladder in the position description.
- C. Promote and strengthen NARA mentorship and growth opportunities such as the Capstone Program, details, cross training, and the Leadership Experience Program.
 - a. Create a mentorship program that allows rotation with the mentors.
 - b. Increase job shadowing and detail opportunities for career advancement.
- D. Incorporate recruitment into performance plans, including community outreach responsibilities.
- E. Simplify and standardize the application process for volunteers.

[\[Return to report, E5\]](#)

E6. Develop a centralized internship program to facilitate communication among internship coordinators, develop an intern recruitment and awareness program, and create virtual internship opportunities.

Staff Comments

Ensure equal opportunity for career advancement and training for interested employees. Consider

paid internship opportunities. Create a more diverse professional frontline staff and upper management reflecting today's population.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Develop internship opportunities in all facilities. Advertise them available on the main [Archives.gov internship page](#), and ensure that announcements are easily accessible through various field offices' web pages. Also, ensure that the content on the internship web pages is current, and information such as application deadlines and coordinator's contact information is up to date.
- B. Work with current internship coordinators to share successful practices for recruiting BIPOC students and to raise awareness about internship opportunities. Ensure that leadership supports these efforts.
- C. Explore options for offering paid internship opportunities.
 - a. Create an endowment or scholarship fund for paid intern and docent positions for BIPOC.
 - b. Collaborate with academic communities or other similar groups to create more internships that can afford to pay students, especially those interested in federal service or GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) fields, to travel to a NARA facility.
 - c. Leverage the White House diversity program to include paid internship programs and/or credit for internships.
- D. Create more opportunities for virtual internships to eliminate travel expenses for those wanting experience in archival work.
- E. Create an Awareness/Recruitment Program that would focus on all types of students. There seems to be a lack of awareness about careers in archives, let alone the benefits of doing an internship at NARA. The duties of program facilitators could be to:
 - a. Attend career fairs.
 - b. Maintain the Archives.gov internship page.
 - c. Communicate with school internship programs.
 - d. Host virtual informational sessions.
 - e. Administer other activities that assist with recruitment.
- F. Create a NARA-wide Internship Coordinator who would be responsible for administering all of NARA's internship programs. This person or office could:
 - a. Provide guidance to other coordinators.
 - b. Maintain an updated contact list of coordinators.
 - c. Solicit virtual internship opportunities.
 - d. Handle any general administrative actions for NARA internships.
 - e. Direct the awareness/recruitment program.
 - f. Update the [internship opportunities](#) page.
- G. Create Divisional Internship Coordinators who would be responsible for working with the NARA-wide Internship Coordinator, as well as maintain and track the progress of the internship programs in the division. These persons would also work with the various units in the division to support and make sure that needed information is shared. Other duties could include:
 - a. Maintaining the web page.
 - b. Tracking demographic information.
 - c. Communicating with schools' internship programs.
 - d. Compiling a list of virtual internship opportunities.

[\[Return to report, E6\]](#)

E7. Develop training and development programs at NARA to create an equitable environment.

Staff Comments

Provide training and awareness about Diversity and Inclusion.

Proposed Action Items

- A. Contact other federal agencies' EEO divisions, as well as private organizations and entities, to explore how best practices in the DEAI field can be adopted by NARA and to facilitate training and workshops.
- B. Work with external consultants to develop a robust training program.
- C. Continue to provide resources for resume training from USAJobs (e.g., Career Development Newsletter).
- D. Offer incentives for employees to join EAGs, such as training that will enhance their job skills at NARA.
- E. Train employees on how to effectively apply for positions on USAJobs.
- F. Create awareness on the classification process (and position qualifications).
- G. Reevaluate the Individual Professional Development Plan to ensure that it clearly identifies and incorporates career advancement opportunities
- H. Consider allowing non-1420s and 1421s to participate in the Archivist Development Program, Archives Technician Development Program, and Archives Specialist Development Program. Explore creating Agency Services (A), Innovation (V), and Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services (L).
- I. Consider offering more leadership/team-building opportunities with supervisors and staff to bridge the gap between supervisors and employees. Provide resources to assist with bridging that gap.
- J. Offer training electives for interested staff, such as the Harvard Implicit Association Test, in which results are only given to the taker to self-examine unconscious bias. Hire outside consultants to facilitate training and workshops focused on addressing unconscious bias, cultural competency, and anti-racism. These courses could focus on items like the New IQ, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Awareness, or similar types of instructional development to further diversity and inclusion as laid out by the [NeuroLeadership Institute](#).
- K. Offer more All-Hands or Town Halls and invite speakers to talk about race-related topics, the history of racism, and structural racism in the federal government. In addition, these meetings should discuss how specific NARA programs and EAG groups can address these issues.
- L. Evaluate and further develop existing training resources. Dedicate funding to maintain and advance training resources, and empower NARA staff to facilitate and support such training programs.

[\[Return to report, E7\]](#)

D&I Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Culture	Resistance to Anti-Racism Task Force Initiative	<p>Systematic racism does not exist at NARA. Reprimand individuals who have complaints against them not the entire workforce at NARA.</p> <p>Stop the work of the Task Force.</p>	AOTUS EEO	<p>Acknowledge that everyone does not support the initiative and/or thinks racism is an issue at NARA.</p> <p>Start an educational program for all staff regarding racism in the workplace and utilize and share statistical data such as MD-715 to educate staff on the issues and solutions. MD715 provides a lens into areas where NARA needs improvement in employment and opportunities for BIPOC staff.</p> <p>Share federal directives and statutes that support NARA's diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts and assess and share to what degree NARA meets the regulations.</p> <p>Acknowledge that even with education efforts, all staff will not be supportive of the task force's work.</p> <p>However it is important to address these viewpoints as no one's voice should be suppressed.</p>
Culture	Creation of safe spaces to discuss experiences with racial discrimination and prejudice.	<p>Provide guidance with how-to open a discussion about race issues in the workplace and in the larger community? Where questions such as What does it mean to be an "ally?" What everyday things do people say and do that are racially insensitive, if not racist, without even realizing and knowing it? How can they be pointed out without it being a calling out? Or is a calling out what it takes to get the message across?</p> <p>Develop space(s) for staff to be voice experiences.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for a diverse group of people get together, either virtually, or in person, and discuss racism issues.</p>	EEO	<p>Establish programming to address differences and similarities; Have facilitators come in to talk with staff who volunteer for groups or workshops (e.g., 2-day workshops) to allow opportunity for all NARA employees to tell their personal experiences with racism.</p> <p>Provide opportunities that allow for voluntary discussions around race, ancestry, separate discussions for "what does it mean to be BIPOC, Latinx, African American, White, Asian, etc., through workshops, brown bag discussions, and other ways to have dialogue.</p> <p>Reaching out to NARA staff to request their ideas for themes/topics they'd like to explore with other staff virtually/in-person.</p> <p>Provide a suggestion box for those ideas over time and offer discussions.</p> <p>Create a physical suggestion box at each facility and a link on nara-at-work where employees can make suggestions, comment, make complaints, and/or vent. This goes back to the suggestion of the suggestion box.</p> <p>Also, having a comprehensive list of NARA resources such as EAP for employees. This will allow people to make their opinions known and have a forum to be heard.</p>

D&I Team Tables

Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Culture	<p>Need for training and other educational opportunities, resources, and tools to facilitate learning and understanding of: Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Backgrounds and Histories Bias, Racism, and Anti-racism Reconciliation and Healing</p>	<p>Have a diverse group of people get together, either virtually or in person, and discuss racism issues.</p> <p>Provide guidance on how to enhance social interaction with individuals of different races and backgrounds to eliminate ignorance and make positive changes.</p> <p>Provide guidance with how-to open a discussion about race issues in the workplace and in the larger community? Where questions such as "What does it mean to be an "ally?" What everyday things do people say and do that are racially insensitive, if not racist, without even realizing and knowing it? How can they be pointed out without it being a calling out? Or is a calling out what it takes to get the message across?</p> <p>Provide information on how to identify and address bias (intentional and non-intentional biases).</p> <p>Develop space(s) for staff to voice experiences.</p> <p>Create a repository/place for staff to share their personal stories (re: ancestral backgrounds) and experiences with racism in order to promote learning, dialogue, and healing.</p> <p>Utilize reconciliation resources to assist in meaningful work, such as the following used in South Africa, Germany and Ireland: 1. Forgiveness project (30 sec overview) 2. Jack Kornfield explores forgiveness 3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission from South Africa--- Desmond Tutu on Truth and Reconciliation 4. Forgiveness project book 5. Forgiveness in Northern Ireland: facing the truth</p> <p>Create a culture of forgiveness for those who do the wrong thing/make mistakes but are trying to improve.</p>	<p>Reach out to chairs of the Affinity Group and Marketing to run an online suggestion box.</p> <p>EEO</p> <p>AOTUS/ EEO (D&I) OPM (we need Tammy) Mathieu Sherman is an expert in this. Also Alison Wise from OPM</p> <p>Affinity groups, ethnic employee groups, Wellness (Betsey Emilen), academic institutions, & Foundation for presentations and speakers</p>	<p>Develop cross-programming events that are sponsored by affinity groups to address similarities and differences among staff regarding lived experiences, learn about different cultures and histories. Create voluntary learning events where people can discuss race.</p> <p>Provide opportunities that allow for voluntary discussions around race, ancestry, separate discussions for "what does it mean to be BIPOC, Latinx, African American, White, Asian, etc.," through workshops, brown bag discussions, and other ways to have dialogue.</p> <p>Reach out to NARA staff to request their ideas for themes/topics they'd like to explore with other staff virtually/in-person.</p> <p>Provide a suggestion box for those ideas over time and offer discussions.</p> <p>Provide managers with training and resources around building teams in order to adopt more team building events as a way staff to get to know each other.</p> <p>Provide training on racial topics, history of racism, systematic racism in the federal government.</p> <p>Offer more All-hands type sessions where speakers come to talk about these issues, promotion of NARA programs from EAG groups, AAHS, Stonewall, etc., that address these issues. Mindfulness & Awareness training sessions to uncover unconscious bias and assist in reframing our reference point.</p> <p>Utilize wellness groups/training to address dealing with stress and anxiety around discussions and initiatives around race.</p> <p>1 hour to multiple day training agency wide--annual training. / Bringing someone from the outside to facilitate. Contact Director Alison Wise from OPM for input.</p> <p>Tap Mathieu Sherman to assist and drive this initiative.</p> <p>Use the Harvard Implicit Association Test or the New IQ test as the basis for this training.</p> <p>Work with other federal agencies and/or organizations</p> <p>Need external consultation, such as Think Positionality, LLC.</p> <p>I believe this culture of forgiveness needs to be pushed from senior leadership and the EAG department. This way, this culture gets adopted faster and agency-wide.</p>

D&I Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Culture	Need for a diverse and inclusive environment at NARA	Other organizations (such as colleges and universities) are changing their culture to be BIPOC friendly and we should use their expertise. These changes include sending out letters of apology for mistakes made, offering internships, mentoring, creating details, coaching, or partnering with schools. Also these organizations are Creating Racial Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Groups, Using resources to create a more welcoming environment for Diversity and Inclusion Offices, and partnering with Educational feeder schools to raise awareness of BIPOC opportunities	HR	<p>During the intake process, provide information about diversity programs and organizations at NARA.</p> <p>Create a buddy system for new people (partnering with NARA staff).</p> <p>Have D&I person present at the orientation/on boarding process.</p>
Culture	Address offensive behavior in the workplace (e.g., inappropriate comments and jokes)	<p>Despite the President's EO limiting diversity and inclusion training, that is exactly what NARA needs.</p> <p>Address offensive behavior by staff with specific training on white privilege and systemic racism.</p>	Archivist's Office, EEO, (EAGs), ethnic employee groups, Wellness, academic institutions, & Foundation for speakers and presentations	<p>Send to Race-Based Harassment subgroup</p> <p>Need training on racial topics, history of racism, systematic racism in the federal government.</p> <p>Offer more All-hands type sessions where speakers come to talk about these issues, promotion of NARA programs from EAG groups, AAHS, Stonewall, etc., that address these issues.</p> <p>Use wellness groups to address dealing with stress and anxiety around discussions and initiatives around race.</p> <p>Remind people of the procedures for filing a complaint.</p> <p>Increase understanding of DEI and racism; educate staff on race and DEI topics; empower staff to address issues. Provides resources and tools to support staff as issues and understanding of racism are addressed.</p>

D&I Team Tables				
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Culture	Employee morale is low at the NARA, and staff feels isolated.	Leadership (directors and deputy directors) are not in touch with or prioritizing diversity and inclusion. Staff suggestions are dismissed and not implemented, leading to low morale and status quo.	Archivist's Office, EEO	<p>Middle-management may be positioned to bring clarity on this point. This needs to be a reoccurring theme not only in NARA-wide All hands meetings but need to be addressed in departmental meetings. Almost like a COVID temperature check. Also, communication on what is being done and how that relates to suggestions from the staff.</p> <p>Add a D&I standard to the workplace culture element of performance plans.</p> <p>Create a report card system that examines how diversity is executed at each facility.</p> <p>These changes need to be driven from the top down with a focus on policy and guidance initiatives that come from AOTUS: 1. No tolerance of racist policies; 2. Create and support current and new initiative to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of NARA; 3. Specific initiative with tangible and measurable goals and milestones for all levels of NARA. (e.g., in 2 years, the Archives aims to do "X", 5 years "Y"); 4. Make inclusion and equity key aims for these programs as having a diverse workforce is not enough.</p> <p>Clarifies and solidifies NARA's commitment to DEI and increases likelihood that positive changes will occur relating to anti-racism. Increases understanding of DEI across NARA. Incorporates DEI in work processes and procedures.</p>
Culture	Comments have been made that White applicants will not get a position because there is an emphasis on hiring BIPOC individuals.	These comments cover reverse racism.	HR/EEO	<p>Explain and educate staff why reverse racism does not exist.</p> <p>Build transparency into the interview process with a focus on explaining to NARA staff why a person was hired. This justification would focus on their skillset and competencies as they relate to the position and department. 2. Create another hiring authority (similar to schedule A) that focuses is on minorities and diversifying the workforce. This hiring authority would help minorities filter to the top of the hiring process, allowing them greater access to advancement.</p> <p>Create educational opportunities for NARA staff to address the misnomers of reverse racism. It is important to explain that providing opportunities for minorities is not limiting to others.</p> <p>Create diverse interview hiring panels made up of cross-unit leaders and/or member of EEO/HR to oversee the development and review justifications for selection process (comparing skills, experience, etc. vs. written justification and educational standing) that also focus on Unconscious bias in the hiring process; add outsider to panel to pick up on institutionalized racism that may not be identified by internal employees.</p>

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Culture	<p>Some employee's feel that they treat others with (what they believe) is dignity, respect, and professionalism regardless of race, religion, gender, education, etc. Therefore they conclude that racism does not exist or that the problem is being inflated. They feel that racial issues at NARA are not systemic or widespread as NARA claims. They see issues of racism as individual isolated events.</p>	<p>How does NARA address a cultural shift within the organization when some people do not believe there is a problem or do not want to change? Also, how does the organization promote rewarding people for positive behavior?</p>	EEO/Communications	<p>Training focused on the the adverse results for those in the BIPOC community needs to be facilitated with NARA staff that focuses on the results and conclusions found in the MD-715 data tables, EEO and harassment complaints data, and time-to-hire tables. Going over the spreadsheets in an all-hands meeting that shows where NARA is lacking would be helpful in showing the masses why these initiatives are important. It is a concrete way of showing the larger issues that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Perception and buy-in to change a culture is important for this initiative. It would be beneficial to have AOTUS, Management, and EEO recognize all the NARA people that make the right decisions every day.</p> <p>Perhaps the implementation of a spot award where you catch people doing the right thing with diversity would be helpful. Also the organization needs to stress that diversity and inclusion is a continuum where we strive to grow and improve constantly like the EVS scores. Again, this sentiment needs to come from leadership.</p> <p>This may be a branding issue for the Task Force where language and wording need to be re-done to spur buy in.</p> <p>The work of the Task Force needs to be done despite varying opinions and hurt feelings. However, focusing on language, messaging and sensitivity to help achieve NARA's goal of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion benefits us all.</p> <p>The NEEO office could recommend an EEO Award for doing the topics in this area. In addition, NEEO could potentially create a survey where we ask questions tied to EEO related topics to determine where there is an opportunity to provide education and awareness and then provide training sessions in the areas of concern</p>

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Culture Transparency	Combining unconscious bias training and customer service training grounded in real life scenarios could be effective in changing the culture of the research rooms. These changes would benefit many multifaceted issues.	<p>NARA needs to create better training on unconscious bias and customer service to improve our interactions with each other and our customers. A good place to start is the Harvard Implicit Bias test.</p> <p>There is a difference on how researchers of color are treated by archival staff that is manifested in tone and unwelcoming behavior. Researchers of color are over policed, scrutinized, and assumed to not be as knowledgeable. They are being profiled as a higher risk of theft. Bringing to light unconscious bias and working through previous interactions can change this culture. It is not enough to address unconscious bias. It requires behavioral modification training.</p>	EEO HR Mathieu Sherman (ANDC)	<p>Optional trainings and workshops to address: Unconscious bias, cultural competency in customer service; breaking down stereotypes in the research room (i.e. theft of records); point out the reality of who steals from NARA vs. the stereotype.</p> <p>Offer training electives for interested staff such as the Harvard Implicit Bias test, in which results are only given to the taker to self-examine unconscious bias; hire outside consultants to facilitate training and workshops focused on addressing unconscious bias. These courses could focus on the <u>New IQ</u>, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Awareness, or similar type of instructional development to further Diversity and Inclusion as laid out in the <u>Neuro Leadership Institute</u>.</p> <p>(For more training information on Unconscious Bias and New IQ, please reach out to Mathieu Sherman.)</p> <p>Invite ideas on how to improve SOPs in research rooms by those who work in those divisions. Cultural competency for staff that interact with customers. Surveys from researchers (anonymous). Training is good--small group discussions need to happen as well.</p>
Recruitment/ Retention	ALL staff members should have been considered for the task force. This selection process should have been a random process. Furthermore, barring staff members; who received low ratings eliminates salient viewpoints that should not be excluded and does not reinforce fair and equitable treatment by the agency.	N/A	EEO HR	<p>Develop a new process where ratings barriers do not prevent cooperation. A problematic supervisor can prevent participation of a whistleblower or others opinions, and these may be the voices that are needed at the table to create change.</p> <p>Address iniquity for Bargaining Unit Employees (BUE) verses non-BUEs. These groups may have different standards when being considered for working groups.</p> <p>Create and run an anonymous suggestion box both online and in a specific location at each NARA location to gather feedback from employees.</p>
Recruitment/ Retention	NARA giving paid internships will open opportunities disadvantage students that they could not otherwise afford. This could open up the applicant pull to more diverse candidates.	Paid Internships	HR Tina Ligon	<p>Implement a NARA-wide internship coordinator as a central liaison for NARA.</p> <p>Also, create and revisit the value of the STEP/SCEP type programs to address needs for staff, recruitment and paid/vs nonpaid internships for college credit.</p> <p>Assess if paying interns would really increase the pull of diverse candidates or will it conversely limit the number of students who can intern instead? Develop a plan to unearth the reason for the lack of diverse candidates and put a plan in place to increase diversity.</p> <p>Paid internships may be the product of class disparity and not race inequality.</p>

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Recruitment/ Retention	Qualified candidates are finding that they need to take GS-5 jobs and below to initially get hired at NARA. However they are actually qualified for GS-9 through GS-11 jobs. Unfortunately there are not enough mechanisms or ladders to move these individual up the career ladder.		HR EEO	<p>Create a NARA Mentorship program that walks a candidate through the hiring process. This is separate from an IDT career development program.</p> <p>Identify and address barriers for advancement affecting all grade levels and disadvantaged racial groups.</p> <p>Create more education about career series and ladders and how to navigate the process.</p> <p>Build new positions and review position requirements. Across NARA facilities, review GS jobs series vs. promotion potential of each job. Focus on who gets the jobs (competitiveness).</p> <p>Suggest more career ladders be available after 1 year of work. What are the barriers to this? Re-look at the skill sets for the different series. Evaluate if the requirements are necessary or artificial barriers?</p> <p>Identify the bottleneck for the GS grade level glass ceilings and create more positions to help employees bridge the gap.</p>
Recruitment/ Retention	BIPOC are not represented equally in Management and Senior Management positions past GS-13. NARA lacks diversity in its upper ranks. It is important to explore data for these positions (people applying, interview, hired) for these positions. There is a disproportionate number of BIPOC in GS-9 and below, whereas Whites are largely represented in GS-9 and above. There is a problem if someone starts their career at a Grade 4 and retires at a 4 or 5 or starts at a grade 6 and retires at a 6 or 7 or when he or she finds it extremely difficult to move from a Grade 7 to 9 (and not for a lack of trying or applying or having the credentials). This needs to be improved upon and remedied.	It looks like the preponderance of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are in lower-paying, lower-status jobs and the preponderance of white people in higher-paying, higher-status jobs	HR Senior Management EEO	<p>Identify and address barriers for advancement affecting all grade levels and disadvantaged racial groups. Create program's to address inequality gaps</p> <p>Analyze the lack of the most disadvantaged groups in upper management and purposefully recruit for those positions.</p> <p>Actively recruit disadvantaged racial groups for senior management positions. Create hiring authority to promote the hiring of diverse candidates to mold and potential candidates to move into those positions.</p> <p>Create a Diverse (inter-division) panels to address racial disparagement.</p> <p>Identify and remove artificial barriers to minority hiring.</p>

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Recruitment/ Retention	In order to achieve the goal of a diverse workforce, NARA needs diverse candidates to make it through the hiring process. Unfortunately NARA does not have enough diverse candidates that make it through the interview process.	<p>NARA has a self-selection section where applicants are encouraged to rate themselves when applying for employment opportunities. If a candidate does not rate themselves as proficient, then the applicant is usually not passed on for the interview phase.</p> <p>A qualified applicant can be passed over in the NARA hiring process because they failed to put their years of experience on a resume.</p> <p>Standardizing questions or not allowing an applicant to bring paper, pen, resume, or portfolio into an interview can sometimes put them at a disadvantage in the hiring process.</p> <p>If a candidate does not speak to all of their experience regardless of (whether it's included on the resume), then they are not rated on their proficiency in this area and it's as if they never did it at all.</p>	HR	<p>Actively recruit disadvantaged racial groups for senior management positions.</p> <p>Identify and remove artificial barriers to minority hiring especially in the application process</p> <p>Create and use special hiring authorities to expand the applicant pool for disadvantaged racial groups.</p> <p>Create a NARA Mentorship program that walks a candidate through the hiring process.</p>

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Recruitment/ Retention	Ensure equal opportunity for career advancement and training opportunities is available for everyone who is interested.	Most work positions, and details are highly competitive with limited spots available which does not allow for everyone to advance. Advancement opportunities can be facilitated through their direct supervisors if an employee is on their radar screen due to good work performance. Attentive supervisors can recommend details and additional work responsibilities that positions an employee into a much more favorable spot for advancement opportunities and helps them develop new skills and software knowledge. This helps a person raise to the top of the applicant pull. Also, direct supervisors, leads, and colleagues can play a key role in recognizing the potential in a person that they may not see in themselves due to lack of confidence and inferiority complex. The possibility of rejection makes many people not try so it is nice to be mentored by others that can help you see that you can be so much more.	Supervisors Leads, Directors	Directors, Supervisors, Leads need to be given autonomy to still mentor and bring potential deserving candidates through the ranks if it's in the best interest of NARA. These opportunities need to be expanded to others; especially disadvantage racial groups.
Recruitment/ Retention	NARA needs to maintain a mentoring list. This would be like the Language Roster kept on NARA at Work. Staff could go in and sign up to work with someone like they do for Take Your Child to Work Day. This program could be called "Try on another Job Day." Employees could sign up for sessions and one-on-one conversations with various staff to learn more about their fields and work.	In Corporate America there was a similar program called "Walk a Mile," where a person could shadow an employee in a different department or functional unit for the day. It helped them realize whether they wanted to pursue a job in that other department giving valuable career information before applying. This also allowed the candidate to informally meet supervisors, observe culture, and understand future skills needed.	HL ANDC Training Dept	Construct a "Walk a Mile" program for NARA that would allow employees to informally shadow an employee in a different unit or department for the day. (The EVS team created a similar informal program for the ANDC)

D&I Team Tables

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Recruitment/ Retention	It's important for NARA to hiring BIPOC interns which improves the entire workforce. This provides a symbiotic relationship that benefits everyone. It is important to let this underserved community know these opportunities exist.	N/A	Intern Coordinator	<p>Increase recruiting and awareness efforts by the National Archives to attract BIPOC students.</p> <p>Create a NARA-wide intern coordinator to assist with recruitment.</p>
Recruitment/ Retention	This intern initiative would expand the diversity of the candidate pool for a wide variety of NARA positions. A barrier to gaining NARA experience is unpaid internships that don't help students pay their bills. Unpaid internships benefit those who can afford to work for free with other means of support.	Have paid internships.	Intern Coordinator	<p>Increase recruiting and awareness efforts by the National Archives to attract students of other races.</p> <p>Create a NARA-wide intern coordinator who can help place interns around the country.</p> <p>Unpaid internships is also a class issue.</p>
Recruitment/ Retention	Real change can be achieved by recruiting and hiring BIPOC staff.	N/A	HR EEO	<p>Increase recruitment and outreach to people from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Create a mentoring program.</p> <p>Develop a leadership training program for employees of color.</p>

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Recruitment/ Retention	Make the hiring process fair, explain to people why they were not advanced and offer these people advice on how to improve their application in the future...in short, INVEST IN YOUR EMPLOYEES.	This task force needs to investigate the legality of past hiring decisions.	Training/HR. EEO	<p>Develop a panel to examine the hiring patterns and to look into the lack of diversity in higher positions.</p> <p>Encourage managers and supervisors to recognize their employees accomplishments.</p> <p>Develop leadership trainings.</p> <p>Do an audit on past hiring practices.</p> <p>Building relationships with management (M&S need to be aware of why someone wants to leave)</p> <p>HR to find out how people are hired.</p> <p>Each office should model Chief of Staff and Communications Office by having monthly All-Hands and have Gold Star Awards (spot awards) where employees can nominate/recognize their fellow employee.</p> <p>Open door policy with leadership.</p> <p>Add outreach and mentorship towards Supervisor/Manager performance plans.</p> <p>Have outside oversight of job postings and promotions to ensure fairness.</p> <p>Develop more career ladder positions.</p>

D&I Team Tables

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Recruitment/ Retention	<p>"Diversity, diversity and diversity. It will make NARA even better with a more diverse professional line staff and upper management reflecting how the country is today. Having more diversity and inclusion helps an agency grow. Having more diversity NARA will be able to count on a wider body of knowledge and frankly of life experiences. That can only enrich us as an agency.</p> <p>Hosting interns of diverse backgrounds is helpful in many ways--it provides opportunities for the interns, but it also provides opportunities for the staff of the unit where the intern works. The more people of diverse backgrounds that we work with, the better. It also lets interns know about the National Archives as a possible career.</p> <p>Diversity in upper management lends to better and fair decisions in all institutions.</p>	<p>NARA would benefit from more diversity in its upper management ranks as well as in its professional archival side. For example, I recall once the agency made a real concerted effort by having recruitment talks at local HBC's including Howard, Bowie State, Morgan State, etc., which led to some successful recruitments.</p> <p>Need more diverse SES leadership in NARA. Not sure how to go about this. Reach out to OPM? Leadership development?</p> <p>Develop a cohort focused on boarding under represented staff with other agencies and institutions. Colleges, universities, federal, state and or local agencies.</p>	D&I, EAGs, HR Learning and Development Division, Human Capital	Develop programs/mentoring to get more diverse candidates into the 1420 series and into supervisors/management roles.
Recruitment/ Retention	What type of issues can I post if I witness blatant racism, disparaging promotional hiring within the workplace? I believe others within the (FRC) workforce may have experienced similar situations but are silent because they fear retribution.	This was posted before the task force was created and before the NARA-wide EEO trainings, but I think it would be helpful for people to have a place to report, and know what resources are available to them.	EEO	<p>Shared with the Race-Based Harassment sub-group.</p> <p>Increase awareness and promotion of the complaint process.</p> <p>Create a hotline and/or anonymous complaint procedure.</p>

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Transparency	Plan and then continuously communicate to new and long time staff that this is who we are -- an agency committed to improving in these areas.	<p>This is a general suggestion. After a few months of planning, I suggest communicating our ongoing commitment to this new program(?).</p> <p>"Task" sounds like a one time project and then it's behind us. What happens in the coming years and decades after? How are we going to show continuing commitment and improvement -- no matter who is leading our agency or Human Capital?</p> <p>This one is a "keeper." I'm excited to see this cultural change within our agency. Thank you!</p>	Archivist Office, EEO Director	Create a small permanent task force or group to monitor the process of the approved recommendations.
NARA interactions with customers	N/A	<p>It is our recommendation that NARA further promote its resources to communities of color via customized tutorials, programs, and educational resources for conducting genealogical and general research at the archives (e.g., records relating to immigration research, slavery documents, resources of children/adoptees who were born during/after wars and are searching for an American parent, etc.).</p> <p>Also, it is our recommendation that NARA's records requests (recently unclassified/FOIA/general) processes are reviewed to determine whether equitable treatment, effort, and results occur for requestors of color vs. White requestors; and/or requests that relate to topics/individuals/cases that focus on people of color vs. others.</p> <p>Surveys should be required to be sent to all requestors to determine whether excellent customer service is exhibited and requests are made. The feedback from customers should be anonymous. Similar surveys should also be extended to researchers to document and improve the customer experience, if needed.</p>	Museums and Education Divisions, FOIA, Declass Units	<p>Shared with the museum and archival description sub-groups.</p> <p>Develop automated surveys should be sent to requestors/researchers to determine customer experiences.</p> <p>Collect anonymous feedback from customers that will be analyzed to improve the customer experience.</p>

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NARA interactions with customers	Upon entering our facility, guests/visitors/researchers are greeted by multiple uniformed, armed security guards -- while I know this is standard at all federal buildings	Perhaps this should be mentioned as part of the researcher communications prior to their arrival so they are at least aware of the potentially triggering circumstances?	R	<p>Not necessarily a racism issue. There is security in all federal buildings.</p> <p>Review security policies for racial barriers.</p> <p>Review visitor orientation video/slideshow for racial barriers.</p> <p>Institute a door greeter.</p>
NARA interactions with customers	The low volume of researchers in our facility often means 1:1 staff/researcher ratios. The constant staring and scrutiny basically amounts to being treated as though they are guilty of theft, even if they may not have ever even heard of Barry Landau or Jason Savedoff. We're not allowed to do any other busywork, or anything besides monitor the researcher.	This is nerve-wracking for any person, much less marginalized communities who have experienced institutionalized racism their whole lives.	R/BX	<p>Forward suggestion to R and BX to note concerns about security procedures on visitor information page posted on NARA's website.</p> <p>Revise Visitor orientation video/slideshow to include security procedures.</p> <p>Photos of notable thefts reveals to all researchers that crimes committed against NARA are not primarily committed by people of color.</p> <p>Invite facilitator for research staff's cultural competency training that focuses on cultural/historical institutions and visitors/customers and use photos for this point - behavior and ideas of criminality and impact on people of color vs. reality.</p> <p>Have less visible people on the floor devoted to security. Use more cameras, and have staff monitor them from a hidden locations.</p> <p>Have people still walk the floor so complacency doesn't set in, but make the people more focused on going to check on individuals from the perspective of helping them. This will change the culture while still maintaining security.</p>
NARA interactions with customers	The requirement of government issued IDs to conduct research -- are we inadvertently preventing immigrant or undocumented citizens from accessing records?	N/A	R	<p>Not necessarily a racism issue. Government-issued IDs are required for all federal buildings.</p> <p>Train staff on research room policies. International researchers, who are not citizens, are allowed to enter the building.</p> <p>Review of NARA's research room policies for racial barriers.</p>
NARA interactions with customers	If we cannot remove or lighten the policies and procedures in place, what are we doing to encourage access virtually? Is charging fees for digitizing records when researchers cannot or will not conduct on-site research another inadvertently racist barrier to access?	N/A	R	<p>Recommendation is outside the scope of the task force. This is more of a class issue.</p> <p>Waive copying fees in special circumstances. This can be done on a case-by-case basis, but a person must request it.</p> <p>More training for staff on NARA's policies and procedures for research room use.</p> <p>Review of NARA's research room policies for racial barriers.</p>

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Culture	N/A	Simply put, NARA has a culture problem. NARA people are not nice, not professional, and everyone is jealous of someone. Please no more annoying parties and cutesie photo contests or baking competitions. Grow up. Treat people with respect, like adults, in a professional manner. Diversity and Inclusion means treating people respectfully, if you can do that across the board, diversity and inclusion will improve.	EEO	Encourage professionalism among all NARA employees, contractors, and volunteers. Have leadership set the example for a professional work environment.

Employee Experience Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Recruitment & Career Advancement	<p>Issue 1: Many students of limited means cannot afford to work for free. Giving paid internships will open opportunities to them that they could not otherwise afford to take advantage of. When you give more people an opportunity to participate, you end up with a more diverse candidate pool, and have more talent to choose from.</p> <p>Issue 2: Some new hires who take GS-5 jobs are often pigeon-holed into being stuck at the bottom of the NARA ladder, with no way up to move. Several people have taken low entry positions in order to HAVE a job, but they are actually qualified by experience and education for GS-9 or GS-11 work. When they prove their work in the workplace, supervisors wish to promote them, but because of the archaic way things go, there's usually no way to promote them. They are stuck having to climb a ladder that may never materialize. This keeps the agency from developing talent it already has.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support PAID internships to train students to become professionals in the various fields covered by NARA. Giving students an income while they learn will allow for a more diverse group of internship candidates. 2. Proactively advertise NARA job openings and internships in HBCUs, community job centers, and other places that support diverse populations. 3. Build in promotion potential to all jobs. Re-think how promotions are given from their more-or-less automatic way to only give them when they are truly deserved. Give people who show potential the chance to move up. If government regulations prohibit this, build in more mid-level jobs so that people who have introductory jobs have a natural pathway up. I've been hearing for years that NARA is trying to do this, but I've yet to see this really come to fruition. 	Talent Acquisition Division and Classification Office, Office of Human Capital, Human Resources Operations Division	<p>Upward Mobility Recs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Work with the Human Resource Operations Division to help develop and put into effect a strategy for NARA's recruitment and retention work plans for the purpose of hiring more diverse staff on a Senior Level management scale. •Educate staff about the classification process and the opportunities offered to move up the career ladder. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examine the career ladder and pathing conditions at NARA. Make changes to the position classification process and ensure that it offers opportunities to everyone. •Examine HR functions in terms of training and development, recruitment, and work directly with supervisors to create new classification requirements. •Matching employees up mentors who similar characteristics, etc. Having a mentor not only increases awareness of the person's skill set but also improves diversity professionally and builds morale in the work setting. <p>Internship Recs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Work with the NEEO to identify and develop targeted recruitment programs aimed at meeting diversity goals within NARA's workforce. Collaborate with universities and other stakeholders to assist. Study what is the White House doing in regards to there HBCU internship program. •Have the internship program and mentorship program collaborate. •Paid internships are needed. Make it easier on students who may not have a full scholarship, or have to work to pay bills for the roof over their heads. •Identify and create meaningful projects for interns.

Employee Experience Team Tables				
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<p>Career Advancement</p>		<p>Most of the positions or work details have limited spots and tend to be very competitive, which leads to some people missing out on growth opportunities. When I worked in RRB, I improved my quotas and Mike called me into his office and said there was a detail and I earned the opportunity to be part of the team if I was interested. I took the opportunity and learned new skills that continue to help me with my current position after I transferred to a different department. At the time I was my biggest critic even though my quotas improved I didn't feel deserving of career advancement. I remember asking my peers to teach me different aspects of CMRS and other tools available. I felt like my leads and supervisors had too many people to notice my work performance changes but they were paying more attention than I thought. It was that moment that really showed me hard work does pay off and I continued to grow and learn new skills. I feel like if my supervisor (Sheena), lead, and Mike hadn't done anything I wouldn't have applied for more specialized positions in RRB and I definitely wouldn't be where I am currently. It wasn't just me a lot of my peers had opportunities to specialize in different areas in RRB. Rejection is a part of life that many people have to deal with and the fear of not being good enough or limiting our own abilities makes people miss out on opportunities.</p>	<p>HR, Supervisor, Training Team, EEO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Depending on size of a team or operation, have departments within an agency designate 1 or more positions for a consistently rotating detail. •Reexamine how cross-trainings are run. Cross-trainings appear to be used to find people who already have the skills to do a project, when it should be offered to those lacking those skills applying. Grade level restricting opportunities for those at the lower grade (where there is a high level of minority employees) from applying to cross-trainings they are interested in.

Employee Experience Team Tables

Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
<p>Diversity Training</p>	<p>Desire for more Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion training to improve the workplace culture of NARA</p>	<p>Staff training, possibly covering some of the items mentioned in this anti-racist checklist: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fLOn5hTLtOALsg4XL52ufxBta-OltB5qgYZK2RUS1Us/edit</p> <p>Look into starting an "asynchronous educational book club" where a specific video could be suggested and placed on the ICN event log. The event could link to a post where people could comment and discuss their thoughts after watching it. Perhaps one link per week.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Find or create training that will aid in the improvement the workplace environment. Having a diverse and safe work environment will help the workers to succeed in the jobs. •Provide or encourage more opportunities to participate in D & I, sexual harassment, and cultural awareness training whether it be through LMS or in person workshops •Establish times for open discussions about racism and its negative effects in the workplace •Watch videos similar to "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man" to raise awareness •Work with D&I and the EAGs to host these events to So we can learn more about each other. •Dedicate certain "NARA Learning" times (maybe 1 hr a week - every Thursday at 10 a.m.) where employees can learn about D&I. Learning is one of NARA's values.

Employee Experience Team Tables

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<p>Career Advancement</p>	<p>The whole employment advancement and promotion thing is wrapped in mystery and confusing language. Being transparent and maybe explaining it in simple terms that any regular person can understand could help people who feel trapped in their GS level. There are people who feel trapped and believe they can't get ahead in this agency because they are Black or have a recognized disability or didn't go to college or aren't a veteran.</p> <p>Reaching out to local HBCUs and Gallaudet will either bring potential new colleagues in the form of co-workers or users. By bringing in more of this group of people NARA staff will have to relate to individuals of color and gain more experience with working with these user groups.</p> <p>The last suggestion would be to have the uncomfortable opportunity to look at ourselves and our failures. In <i>Wise v. Ferreiro</i> (https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCOURTS-dcd-1_10-cv-01899/pdf/USCOURTS-dcd-1_10-cv-01899-0.pdf) we see what does not rise to the level of discrimination in the workplace as far as the courts are concerned. Typically people want others to have the hard conversations, okay, let's have the hard conversation where it is hard for everyone and no one gets to sit comfortably, the the accuser and not the accused.</p>	<p>More transparency! Meaning linking job announcement with positions allowed by the Freeze board or announced to be coming down the pipe, showing if they were internal only, merit based, or open to the public, how many applicants applied, and how many made it to the interview stage.</p> <p>Same with details. How many people applied for a detail? And more importantly, especially for large departments, can employees apply? There was discussion on the ICN about employees being told by their supervisor that they could not apply for a detail. Or maybe figure out how if employees can apply first and get permission 2nd.</p> <p>As far as recruitment, talk about how NARA has reached out to local HBCUs to recruit students or even advocated to host classes on using primary source materials.</p> <p>Maybe even get to extreme transparency by posting court cases, brought before a local or Federal judge of EEO cases against NARA. This does not include EEO complaints that don't make it to court.</p>	<p>Human Capital, Chief of Staff, Tina Ligon, Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Change must happen individually, as a unit, and within NARA'S organization as a whole. We should focus on intercultural competency learning and embedding inclusion in the work plans. •We should examine and audit the hiring practices, performance management plans, and reward systems at NARA. Once we identify the barriers of inclusion, we can move forward and recreating the policies to make sure everyone has a chance. •Furthermore, building better partnerships within the community. For example HBCU'S STEM programs, history, and library science programs, collaborating with museums and archives on a local level, and making meaningful connections within our agency. <p>- Pitch African-American stories/blogs to HBCUs</p>

Employee Experience Team Tables

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Retention	<p>There could be a mentoring list, like the Language Roster where staff are identified and manage on their own, or could be a specific day, like Take Your Child to Work day, that is named as a "Try On Another Job" day where people sign up for sessions and one-on-one conversations with various staff to learn more about their fields and work.</p> <p>(I've mentioned this before but I don't remember where - I think verbally.)</p>	<p>Create a mentoring program where staff who want to learn about a particular job can shadow someone and learn about "a day in the life of..." for whatever ones have an available mentor.</p>	<p>D&I, work life wellness, HR Learning and development division</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Create career development programs at NARA. For example, Research Services has the Archives Development Program, something similar could be done for Agency Services and other areas. •We should reevaluate the Individual Professional Development Plan and hold the staff and management accountable. Is it possible to have a safe space where staff can discuss their career concerns and what they can do to move forward. Match staff up with mentors of similar interests. •Detail opportunities should not be limited or considered on a case by case basis. How is the employee able to grow if some supervisors limit the opportunities. How are the supervisors evaluated on their jobs? •Can the mentorship program collaborate with the interns? •Career shadow at work is a great way for everyone to use their skills sets and an opportunity for staff to learn new skill sets.
Recruitment	<p>It's hard to obtain experience, or even be aware of a potential career in the field when one needs to rely on paid employment to stay afloat. Unpaid internships are, of course, only for those who can afford them.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Communications Dept., Social Media team, Public Affairs, HR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reach out or help collaborate with the academic community or other groups to create more internships that can afford to pay students to travel to a NARA facility for an internship, especially those geared increasing diversity into the federal workplace or the LAM (libraries, archives, and museums) profession as a whole. •Find more opportunities for virtual internships, where students do not have to travel in order get experience in some aspect of Archival work •Perhaps make it so that internship opportunities in ALL facilities at NARA are located on the main page. Currently, one has to navigate to an individual field office's webpage to find opportunities. All opportunities should be posted in one central place, and the field site's can link their Internship opportunities page to that main page.

Employee Experience Team Tables

Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
<p>Recruitment and Retention</p>	<p>1. "Diversity, diversity and diversity. It will make NARA even better with a more diverse professional line staff and upper management reflecting how the country is today. Having more diversity and inclusion helps an agency grow. Having more diversity NARA will be able to count on a wider body of knowledge and frankly of life experiences. That can only enrich us as an agency.</p> <p>2. Hosting interns of diverse backgrounds is helpful in many ways--it provides opportunities for the interns, but it also provides opportunities for the staff of the unit where the intern works. The more people of diverse backgrounds that we work with, the better. It also lets interns know about the National Archives as a possible career.</p> <p>3. "Talk to people there to find out what action items they're taking and see if that offers any ideas for us.</p> <p>The report above identifies key factors for recruiting, such as increasing sense of belonging, representation, academic support, and structure.</p> <p>We could offer paid internships, mentorships, appearances at universities, offer scholarships, participate in gov programs to reduce student loans, etc."</p>	<p>NARA would benefit from more diversity in its upper management ranks as well as in its professional archival side. For example, I recall once the agency made a real concerted effort by having recruitment talks at local HBCUs including Howard, Bowie State, Morgan State, etc., which led to some successful recruitments.</p> <p>Need more diverse SES leadership in NARA. Not sure how to go about this. Reach out to OPM? Leadership development?</p> <p>Develop a cohort focused on boarding under represented staff with other agencies and institutions. Colleges, universities, federal, state, and/or local agencies.</p>	<p>D&I, EAGs, HR Learning and Development Division, Human Capital</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Develop a program similar to the White House diversity program •Bring back the internship program and pay interns (or credit for class) •We could offer paid internships, mentorships, appearances at universities, offer scholarships, participate in gov programs to reduce student loans, etc.

Employee Experience Team Tables

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<p>Transparency</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Reinforce that employee services or a similar phone service is available to assist employees with processing race-based issues and discrimination.</p>	<p>D&I, Human Capital, EEO, Human Resources, Hire specialized psychologist who teaches team building skills...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •First identify the resources already out there, make people feel comfortable to meet, examine the differences, and come up with a way to make everyone feels ok to talk about the issue. • Create a safe space where staff can vent. Have a liaison from that department assist with helping alleviate these issues. Less disgruntled or frustrated employee is a safer work space. •Talk to other organizations or programs about what they are doing to get ideas about how to approach our programs. •Physical comfort, mental comfort...etc. Understand throughout our work that our audience is shifting. Have team building workshops where staff can learn from each other and learn about various ways to cope with stress in the workplace. •Funding seems to be an issue in terms of hiring outside psychologist to assist us. Find out what other talents staff posses and perhaps they can lead our team building sessions or provide leadership training. •Understand who we are by inviting all races and creeds to the table. By understanding them and their needs we become more socially conscious. - Make skills training mandatory for all NARA employees, similar to an All-Hands meeting but with individual offices. Similar to Breakout Rooms in Zoom.
<p>Recruitment & Retention</p>	<p>I've seen too often qualified BIPOC individuals not be given opportunities, support, and most of all encouragement to advance. I know that the Government is an equal opportunity employee, but I don't think there is anything wrong with approaching a staff member to encourage them to apply for a position. When this doesn't happen, the usual types of people get promoted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Create an employee mentorship program. •Management should discuss how they can encourage qualified people to apply for jobs so that the agency can have the best and most diversified employees in the right positions. 	<p>HR, Steven Flowers, HL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NARA needs to identify what exactly people are expecting out of a mentorship program. Is it job shadowing or actually meeting with someone interested in helping them develop professionally where they already are? •Create a sponsorship program where someone is assigned to a new hire right from the start and they help them adapt to the workplace culture of NARA for a few months. •Develop internal career pathing tools to help employees find positions closer to their interests and skills could also be beneficial. More federal agencies have created job exploration tools (https://www.intelligencecareers.gov/ic_jet2.html) that help prospective and current employees find relevant positions, and from there they can help find a mentor whose in that department/position they are interested in to help them develop. •Create a mentorship program per division...allow rotations with mentors.

Employee Experience Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Diversity	The impression I have and that I have heard anecdotally from others is that NARA lacks diversity in its upper ranks. It seems that the ratio of minorities to non-minorities at NARA gets more skewed the higher you look up the GS ladder, so there is a disproportionately small group of POCs at the GS-13 level and above. Having as much actual data as possible about these positions (and the people who apply for, interview for, and hire for these positions) would be an important first step in combating this problem.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the demographic makeup of facilities, divisions/units (and the nature of the work within), grade levels. 2. Examine whether staff evaluations are used as a tool to prohibit individuals from professional opportunities (i.e. task force, cross-training, government fellows programs). Also, are demands/nature of the work prohibitive of additional opportunities? 	EEO Human Resources, Communications, Human Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Look at the demographics of employees and collect the data on how many have been promoted to GS-13 and above, and how many were POC. •Collect data on how many POC applied for the position, interviewed and selected, or interviewed and not selected. •Identify ways to help diversify the interview panel. Panel should be as diverse as the agency. •Establishing EAG or D&I groups in each NARA facility as another means of getting assistance outside of the ICN. Computer access not always possible for some staff once operations return to normal. •Develop an outreach program that targets diverse groups"
Recruitment/ Career Advancement	<p>RECRUITMENT (the problem): Too few African Americans represented in upper management positions at NARA.</p> <p>ADVANCEMENT (the problem): There is a disparity at the agency. We find a disproportionate number of African Americans in Grades 9 and below, whereas whites are largely represented in grades 9 and above. There is a problem if someone starts their career at a Grade 4 and retires at a 4 or 5 or starts at a grade 6 and retires at a 6 or 7 or when he or she finds it extremely difficult to move from a grade 7 to 9 (and not for a lack of trying or applying or having the credentials). This needs to be improved upon and remedied.</p>	<p>RECRUITMENT: There should be a concerted effort to recruit African Americans and other racial minorities to upper management positions. They would, of course, be recruited from a pool of qualified applicants. NARA also needs to foster an atmosphere that retains these individuals at the agency.</p> <p>ADVANCEMENT: There needs to be more varied opportunities for advancement for people of color (additional training, courses, committed mentors, matching an employees skill sets and strengths with work assignments to help propel them forward, etc). It is imperative to create an environment in which employees can maintain their strengths and strengthen their weaknesses as it relates to work. Also, hire supervisors who are open-minded, encourage their employees to succeed and foster a sense of inclusivity among their staff.</p>	HR (Gabrielle on the team representing - SIL and other EAGs and HBCUs), possibly James Pritchett from Public Affairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improve diversity at NARA by engaging with, educating, and attracting students of color/other affinities to the National Archives. We'll improve diversity by bridging a gap between academic programs and the Archives institution and other agencies. •Educate and inform students about the opportunities we have at NARA. Moreover, increase awareness in career opportunities as an archivist through informational lectures/booths. •Work with HR on there work plan in terms of recruitment. •Incorporate recruitment in the performance plans...community outreach...archivist or museum specialist can go out in the field and talk/recruit - Continue to provide resources for resume training from USA Jobs (Career Development Newsletter) - Offer incentives for employees to join EAGs such as providing job duties that will enhance their job skills at NARA - Use NARA's social media platforms for recruiting purposes. Develop campaigns that would target certain groups of people and encourage them to apply to NARA.

Employee Experience Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Workplace Culture	Concern that EVS results are not being effectively utilized to identify issues pertaining to minority groups.	Human Capital should segment EVS response data according to gender, generation, ethnicity, geography, etc., where employees have provided that data.	Human Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hold leadership accountable for the results in the EVS. •Bridge that gap between supervisors and employees. •Emphasize solutions per section of the evs not just workplace culture...offer more leadership/team building with supervisors and staff...bridge that gap. •Explore racism more broadly at NARA and how it affects groups from different races, ethnicities and cultures across NARA. In doing so, reaching out to individuals and/or groups that represent to get their input on experiences as well as feedback on potential strategies. •Examine/prioritize tools to look at racism issues at facilities outside of the DC area and Suitland where employees often complain about neglect from HQ (A1 and A2).
Retention	<p>There could be a mentoring list, like the Language Roster where staff are identified and manage on their own, or could be a specific day, like Take Your Child to Work day, that is named as a "Try On Another Job" day where people sign up for sessions and one-on-one conversations with various staff to learn more about their fields and work.</p> <p>(I've mentioned this before but I don't remember where - I think verbally.)</p>	Create a mentoring program where staff who want to learn about a particular job can shadow someone and learn about "a day in the life of..." for whatever ones have an available mentor.	Human Capital, Training & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Being a mentor will allow you to execute leadership skills and add it to the critical elements We all need positive reinforcements •Supervisors should utilize their employee's gifts and talents •Having a space to utilize skill set •Re-assess how the development programs are structured, implemented, and rewarded
Diversity	High up management in Diversity makes better and fair decisions in all institutions.	Diversity in high up decision makers is needed.	HR	Create more team lead positions for more employees to participate in (even on a rotating basis) - to give people more of an opportunity to boost resumes and skill sets.

Employee Experience Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Recruitment & Retention	If real changes can take place, it can turn things around in a big way. I think more recruitment and hiring of people of color is a great place to start and will begin to make a difference.	<p>It was pretty telling in an All-Hands meeting last year that employees spoke up to how hard it has been made for people to advance in the agency. While the person who spoke up was a White woman, those difficulties have certainly been felt by people of color just the same and even more. A fellow employee once told me the Archives was "the most racist agency" in the government. Of course, the only way the employee could have known this would have been to have worked at every agency. Still, are many other employees given the same impression? And if so, what can be done to change that? And outside of that person's opinion, it is known that the Archives is one of the least desirous agencies to work for. I also know that the grades at NARA tend to be lower on average than other Federal agencies. I wonder if these things may be giving employees the impression of racial bias in the agency. This is concerning; but the real questions are:</p> <p>1) Is NARA willing to listen, rather than just pay lip service to complaints?</p> <p>2) What will be done about the impression of the agency on its employees (and potential employees)?</p> <p>3) When will something be done?</p>	Communications / Chief of Staff / HR	<p>We need more managers & supervisors to follow through on some of the question from the All-Hands.</p> <p>Create a space on the ICN for answered questions from the All-Hands (How can we address the lack of staff participation on the ICN due to lack of computer access or time).</p> <p>More programs need to be implemented.</p> <p>Change the language in the job announcement (break in down in simple terms).</p>
Recruitment & Retention	Make the hiring process fair, explain to people why they were not advanced and offer these people advice on how to improve their application in the future...in short, INVEST IN YOUR EMPLOYEES.	This task force needs to investigate the legality of past hiring decisions.	Training/HR. EEO.	Conduct an audit of the hiring process to find out if hiring officials are not abusing the system. Need to prevent biased hiring.

Employee Experience Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Leadership Training	Leadership does not take the initiative in incorporating DEAI initiatives and lacks training in this area.	Managers and supervisors should participate in leadership training surrounding DEAI issues in order to learn how to proactively support DEAI initiatives instead of suggestions continually coming from staff. Would be most effective to have this training annually to ensure there is continuous learning and accountability happening, instead of it just being a box to be checked.	Training / Human Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Training that teaches M&S to recognize and treat their employees fairly. •More leadership training, people skills. •Make leadership accountable by making sure that have DEAI specific training as part of their performance evaluations. •Follow through on actually starting initiatives, and assess how they are doing.
Career Advancement	I've heard people say, "I will not get the job because "Person" is also interviewing and they are *insert race* so they'll have an advantage since they need to balance out the numbers in higher positions."	Have a routine "employee in the spotlight" highlighting an employees accomplishments with the agency and otherwise, educational background, awards, etc. to reduce the stigma or false thought that affirmative action type of promotions happen. This will humanize those around us while also getting to know our fellow coworkers.	Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have regularly monthly All-Hands for all offices and sections to highlight successes. Training on how the hiring process works.
Retention	Request that the task force look into the legalities of questionable hiring practices. One gets the impression by seeing the evidence; if one is simply a White person, one can advance his/ her career at NARA. This is why highly talented people of color, after seeing this at play over the years have left to pursue their careers at other agencies. I know that I have spoken to these people of color (being one myself) and encouraged them to leave NARA and go on to pursue their careers away from this agency. I would say that the records for the people who have been hired in the Archivist 1420 series within research services at A1 and A2 must be examined for at least the past decade	The task force should be brought immediately into the hiring process itself, to make sure management does not abuse their authority and create an atmosphere and culture steeped in favoritism, racism, intimidation and misandry.	Training/ HR/ EEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Training that teaches managers & supervisors to recognize their employees •Provide more leadership training focused on improving people skills. •Conduct an audit on the hiring process. •Building relationships with management (M&S need to be aware of why someone wants to leave) •Talk with Human Resources to explain NARA's hiring process. •Each office should model Chief of Staff and Communications Office by having monthly All-Hands and have Gold Star Awards (spot awards) where employees can nominate/recognize their fellow employee •Open door policy with leadership •Add outreach and mentorship towards Supervisor/Manager appraisals. Have someone like an auditor or IG to go through and make sure job postings are fair. •More career ladder positions

Race-Based Harassment Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Transparency	Allow all staff members to apply for the positions and select staff members randomly until the desired number of participants is reached. Barring staff members who have received low ratings previously also eliminates a group of staff members who may have concerns regarding fair treatment within the National Archives Agency. Evaluation issues regarding professionalism, dress, or perception of the employee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workplace culture takes into account favoritism in the workplace solution (Outside of project scope). - Provided informative techniques or opportunities where employees can make improvements on evaluations - Review appropriate terminology 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide sample evaluations to management regarding terminology and how to avoid discrimination of comparing employees focusing on the employee's personal appraisals. - Seek input from multiple people [supervisors, coworkers, peers?] on evaluations instead of having one person write the entire evaluation.
Recruitment / Retention	Allow all staff members to apply for the positions and select staff members randomly until the desired number of participants is reached. Barring staff members who have received low ratings previously also eliminates a group of staff members who may have concerns regarding fair treatment within the National Archives Agency. Evaluation issues regarding professionalism, dress, or perception of the employee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide members who are not selected for details or permanent positions with feedback on how to make improvements for future endeavors. - Having diversity and various departments in the hiring panel - Race in the hiring application should be redacted temporarily for HR and anyone on the hiring panel in order to ensure qualifications are strictly based on their experience or education. It is understandable to track it for statistical data, and the redaction of race would be removed after the interview with the panel. 	Collaborating with HR to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for new and retaining a diverse staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide members who are not selected for details or permanent positions with feedback on how to make improvements for future endeavors. - Have diversity and various departments in the hiring panel. - Work with Human Resources to provide staff with information. - Race in the hiring application could be redacted temporarily for HR and anyone on the hiring panel in order to ensure qualifications are strictly based on their experience or education qualifications. The redaction would be removed after the applicant goes through the hiring panel.

Race-Based Harassment Team Tables				
Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
Culture / Transparency	Should there be a focus on both sides of the story equally for racial harassment incidents. Create a three-way conversation soon after the incident. A direct supervisor should not be the main person to mediate the dialogue of the discussion like a third party should be involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full transparency and openness to the staff about how to proceed incidents of racial harassment. Racial harassment can be experienced by anyone from various backgrounds. (Refer to the glossary for further definitions) - Have an open dialog with both parties and witnesses to ensure accuracy of information for EEO cases. - Investing in training for communication or inclusive of other cultures through guest speakers or training may be beneficial. 	EEO	<p>EEO process and how to report racial harassment incidents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 45-day timeline to report racial harassment cases to the EEO, which can be done through directly contacting them or talking to management. During an EEO case, both sides are heard equally and listened to directly and the EEO is a non-biased third party who does not take sides between any parties involved. EEO cases have individualized intervention plans and work with all parties involved including witnesses.
Policy / Structural	The action would allow employees who have experiences with microaggressions to alleged racial discrimination to have a space to go without triggering a formal process via one's supervisor, the EEO, or the RESOLVE program. This "space" would, ideally, increase understanding and above all, be informal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A successful space such as this would allow employees to feel heard and empower them by providing options to them for possible next steps, along with understanding of policies. - An informal setting would make everyone feel comfortable and approachable - Neutral or impartial staff who are easily accessible and trained to deal with racial harassment in the workplace should be at every National Archives location. 	EEO	Safe Zone located in all NARA facilities

Race-Based Harassment Team Tables

Primary Theme	Issue/Concern submitted by Staff	Suggested Solutions from Staff	Collaborating SME/Office	Recommendations and Thoughts
<p>Culture / Transparency</p>	<p>Envisioning something not unlike the Ask a Manager column here: https://www.askamanager.org/archives Since there were so many questions after the more recent presentations on race where people asked "Is this harassment?" Or "I had this experience, who do I talk to about it?" (And more). The reason for having a format like a column is also similar to History Hub https://historyhub.history.gov/welcome, and we also have seed questions to grow a community. If you start</p>	<p>Creation of a digital platform dealing with racial harassment similar to Ask a Manager or History Hub.</p>	<p>IT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make an online FAQ page that staff are able to reference. - Create an advice column for racial harassment to create conversations and open dialogue. - Continue using the ICN and posting articles and creating open conversations. - Provide information to staff in a digital environment where resources are readily available.

Appendix VII: Archival Description Subgroup's Detailed Report

The charter for the Archivist's Task Force on Racism establishes an Archival Description Subgroup and charges this group with providing recommendations for addressing anachronistic or offensive terminology in legacy descriptions in the National Archives Catalog, including how we present our information to the public and how NARA's description standards and lifecycle authority control policy as documented in the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG) addresses this terminology.

The charter states that we will identify recommendations for NARA's internal and external systems, policies, processes, and procedures in support of an equitable environment. The recommendations should seek to provide an inclusive organization for all employees and customers.

The Archival Description Subgroup is approaching our recommendations from the viewpoint of the user's experience in using the Catalog.

Recommendations

A1. Develop an alert for online users regarding potentially harmful content in the NARA Catalog.

In December 2020 the subgroup worked with Office of Innovation (V) staff to identify the number of occurrences of certain harmful search terms in the Catalog. The subgroup developed a sample list of 25 offensive terms based on internal sources such as the EEO Office's "[Briefing on Commonly Used Terms for EEO and Harassment](#)" and external sources such as the American Psychological Association's [Style Guide on Bias-Free Language](#) and the Asian American Journalists' [Guide to Covering Asian America](#). V staff then searched Catalog metadata for these terms. The results indicated that most terms appeared in the OCR or digital object; however, a sizable number occurred in descriptive fields like Title and Scope and Content. This section considers how NARA can alert users to potentially offensive language in records and legacy descriptions to improve public transparency and accountability.

Providing an advisory notice to users gives us an opportunity to mitigate harm and contextualize the records. It creates a space to share with the public our ultimate goals for reparative description, demonstrate our commitment to the process, and address any barriers that we may face in achieving these goals (i.e., the size and scope of the Catalog and the ever-evolving knowledge we gain regarding what is harmful). It should also be a space that empowers the public to exercise their ownership of the records by allowing for feedback or comments that are guaranteed a response or review by a NARA staff member, or that involves some other system of flagging records for harmful content. It is our hope that this space can be one of transparency, but also vulnerability, to say that we, as an institution, acknowledge mistakes we have made in the past and the harm they have caused, unintentionally or not, and we are committed to doing and being better as we move forward.

Benchmarking

Many government, academic, and private archival repositories include a statement about potentially harmful content in historical records on their websites or in their online catalogs. For example, among our government peers:

- The Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has a [historical language advisory](#) on its website and a banner with a link to the advisory on its [collection search page](#). The language advisory states that

the LAC does not want to erase from the historical record but will add descriptive information to give background on the records.

- The National Archives of Australia features a more specific content warning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on its [website](#) and [record search page](#).
- The Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives applies a statement about offensive terminology to online finding aids on a more ad-hoc basis, according to the particular content of the collection; the [Guide to the Aleš Hrdlička Papers](#) is but one example.

Most of these statements explain that records' content is reflective of the views of the creator and the era in which the records were created, and do not represent the views of the repository.

Staff Comments

Out of 19 staff comments that the Task Force received specifically about legacy descriptions, 10 comments recommended implementing a standardized disclaimer, banner, or warning in the Catalog about potentially harmful content. Some comments included examples of warnings that could be used:

- "Click further for sensitive content."
- "This series contains records that have been flagged as including potentially offensive terminology or images. Researchers should bear this in mind when accessing."

One comment suggested creating a "list of warning statements on potentially harmful content" that could be "customized as necessary," depending on the specific content of the records.

Transparency was also a key theme among staff comments, and several staff members recommended publicly documenting changes made to Catalog descriptions.

Subgroup Recommendations

Immediate/Short-Term

To address potentially harmful content in the Catalog in the short term, we recommend that NARA:

- Add a banner to the Catalog with a general warning about harmful language—both in digitized records and legacy descriptions; and
- Create a web page on Archives.gov about NARA's commitment to addressing harmful legacy descriptions.

We recommend that the Catalog banner not include descriptors like "historical" or "outdated" when referring to racist and otherwise harmful terminology because the federal government currently uses terms that are racist and otherwise harmful. Instead, similar to other institutions, we recommend that NARA's content warning instead emphasize that records reflect the context in which they were created and that we preserve them in their original form to facilitate research.

We also recommend that the content warning mention that NARA is committed to reviewing legacy descriptions for harmful content and include a link to the newly created web page describing these efforts. This web page should list NARA's mission and values, include FAQs and videos to explain the nature of reparative description work, indicate how the public can comment on and contribute to this work, and publicly address NARA's limitations regarding retroactive description work. In particular, this page should emphasize that realigning ourselves with a more empathetic approach to description will take time, patience, and trial and error.

To further promote transparency and engage with the public and our peers, we recommend that NARA present about the Task Force's work at upcoming professional conferences, such as:

- [Society of American Archivists](#) (2021 Annual Meeting theme: “Together/Apart”)⁵⁹
- [American Association for State and Local History](#) (2021 conference theme: “Doing History/Doing Justice”)⁶⁰
- [International Conference on the History of Records and Archives](#) (2021 conference theme: “Archives and the Digital World”)
- [Oxford Brookes University International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences](#) (2021 conference theme: “The Opportunities of Crisis: Resilience and Change in World History”)

Finally, we recommend that the Archivist direct or appoint the appropriate body to carry out these recommendations as detailed in [Recommendation A8](#).

Continuous/Long-Term

To demonstrate an ongoing commitment to public transparency and accountability in description work, we recommend that NARA establish a workflow by which the public can report harmful legacy descriptions for review. We also recommend that NARA continue to use existing blogs (e.g., AOTUS Blog) to present updates and discuss challenges about this work.

Internally, we recommend that NARA commit to having one or more staff positions dedicated to reparative description work. We also recommend that the Archivist direct or appoint the appropriate body to develop and establish policies that provide for an ongoing examination of descriptive language and document changes made to these policies. Again, see [Recommendation A8](#) for more.

[\[Return to report, A1\]](#)

A2. Clarify creator-supplied titles as distinct from NARA-created titles in the Catalog so that users understand when the title is original to an archival record and when it is created by NARA staff.

A researcher using the National Archives Catalog has no sure way of determining whether the language they see (as noted in [Recommendation A1](#)) derives from NARA or the record creator. In its current form, the data structure of the Description and Authority Service (DAS)—and thus the public-facing Catalog—does not support distinguishing creator-derived data (part of the permanent federal record) from description added by NARA staff. While the LCDRG provides some guidance for making such distinctions, standard practice can vary depending on the level of description. For example, the LCDRG [advises](#) that “Unlike created titles at the File Unit Level, those at the Item Level should **not** be placed in brackets.” Relying on punctuation conventions to indicate the source of the metadata—brackets, quotation marks, etc.—and applying them inconsistently can create confusion for users, especially those with little or no experience with archival practices.

The confusion around metadata derivation exacerbates the issue of racist and otherwise harmful language in Catalog records. In order to sustain responsive (re)description efforts, NARA should be more transparent about the origins of descriptive metadata in the Catalog. By better distinguishing creator-supplied descriptive metadata from archivist-supplied description, we can assure stakeholders that the former has not been changed or obscured, while also allowing for the iterative nature of the latter.

⁵⁹ The Archival Description Subgroup, along with Dominique Foisy-Geoffroy of the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), submitted a proposal to SAA’s 2021 Annual Meeting committee to present about reparative description work at NARA and the LAC. Our proposal was accepted, and we are slated to present virtually in August 2021.

⁶⁰ The Archival Description Subgroup has submitted a proposal to AASLH’s 2021 conference committee to present about our work. Our proposal was accepted, and we are slated to present in September 2021.

Benchmarking

Stanford Special Collections and University Archives' [Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Cataloging and Archival Description](#) and Drexel University Libraries' [Statement on Harmful Content in Archival Collections](#) serve as two useful models for considering how to distinguish between creator-supplied descriptive metadata and archivist-supplied description. Both statements explain that archival descriptions can be written by archivists or can be derived from language that the creator used, if the latter provides important historical context. Both statements emphasize that the repository will use quotation marks around language supplied by creators or other historical sources so that users can identify it. The Stanford statement also explicitly addresses censorship, stating that the university does not censor materials for potentially harmful content but rather provides additional context as needed.

Additionally, the [Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia's Anti-Racist Description Working Group](#) recommends including a processing note to document updates to archival description that address racist terminology. The idea of promoting transparency through the documentation of archival interventions continues to be explored in professional literature, such as in Jennifer Douglas' "[Toward More Honest Description](#)," Kirsten Wright's "[Archival Interventions and the Language We Use](#)," and Jessica Tai's "[Cultural Humility as a Framework for Anti-Oppressive Archival Description](#)."

Staff Comments

Multiple staff members emphasized the importance of NARA's mission to safeguard the authenticity of historically valuable federal records. Some staff members were specifically concerned about altering records with harmful content. From one submission: "As archivists we must avoid altering records even if they may contain offensive language. We must protect the authenticity of the original records."

To be clear, we absolutely agree about the importance of NARA's mission and records' authenticity, and we are **not** suggesting that original records themselves be altered. As the Task Force charter lays out, we are only recommending a reexamination of NARA-created *descriptions* of records. However, this concern has highlighted the fact that often creator-supplied data is used verbatim in descriptive elements such as Title and Scope and Content Note, and it is not always clear what the source of the data is, particularly for Item descriptions.

Several staff members suggested ways to help the public distinguish between legacy descriptions and records content. These suggestions included tracking changes to legacy descriptions and making this information publicly available, creating a web page that explains why NARA does not alter records, and training staff and Citizen Archivists to identify and transcribe racially and culturally insensitive language and find alternative language for tagging.

Staff also mentioned that harmful language often appears in document titles or photograph captions, which archivists draw on for descriptions. These comments support the need to reconsider how NARA approaches mandatory descriptive elements such as the Title field.

Subgroup Recommendations

Immediate/Short-Term

In the short term, NARA should publish a web page (as described in [Recommendation A1](#)) that includes an explanation of why NARA does not alter records. The Citizen Archivist Dashboard should also be updated to include specific guidance on how to approach tagging and transcribing records that contain harmful language.

By means of the Reparative Description Working Group described in [Recommendation A8](#), NARA must standardize the practice of clearly and consistently identifying the source of descriptive data, indicating to Catalog users of varying levels of experience whether the data is derived from a creating entity or devised by NARA staff. Any updates to the LCDRG and related documentation will be made in coordination with the Lifecycle Data Standards Board.

During and after this process, the working group will engage NARA staff by providing opportunities for discussion and training on how to implement new guidelines. Staff must be made aware of the group's progress, as well as any changes made, through multiple means of communication (e.g., NARA notice, division meetings, ICN posts, etc.).

The working group will also determine whether additions or changes to NARA data entry systems (e.g., DAS) are required to support the new standards. If such changes are deemed necessary, the working group must be party to or consulted in the process of discussing future budget allocation for these systems.

Continuous/Long-Term

In the long term, NARA must also continue to champion transparency in government and consider the implications of long-term reparative description efforts. Areas for consideration include:

- Tracking changes to Approved descriptions (i.e., not just by whom and when, but also what was changed and why), either through added functionality in DAS or revisions to an existing LCDRG element.
- Revising the Record Group 64 records schedule to include DAS and the National Archives Catalog (the current schedule refers only to ARC and ARC Web), and/or reconsider disposition of archival descriptions as “Temporary” until superseded or deleted once deaccessioned.

[\[Return to report, A2\]](#)

A3. Review the list of racist and otherwise harmful terms that have been identified in the Catalog, and create a roadmap for addressing them.

NARA must address racist and otherwise harmful language in legacy descriptions. This issue presents itself in various ways within the Catalog. Harmful terminology such as racial epithets and other offensive language appears in titles, descriptions, and other metadata. A contributing factor is that it is not always clear in the Catalog description what language is creator-supplied and what is NARA-supplied (see more about this in [Recommendation A2](#)). The subgroup is in no way recommending altering original records as part of this effort, but instead recommending that harmful language in descriptions be changed where appropriate and properly contextualized where it should not be changed.

Benchmarking

Governments, archives, and museums all over the world are acknowledging the harm done by their institutions in continuing to use harmful and anachronistic language in descriptions. In many of the statements made, institutions outlined how they plan to address this issue in their existing descriptions and alleviate it going forward. The [Library and Archives Canada \(LAC\)](#) implemented a policy by which end users can contact the LAC if they encounter language in a description that they believe the LAC should review, while also stating that “The items retain their original descriptions to ensure that attitudes and viewpoints are not erased from the historical record.” The Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) includes a [“Harmful Language Statement”](#) on their Black Women’s Suffrage Digital Collection, which

features a section titled “How are librarians and archivists working to address this problem and help users better understand this content?” The section describes how professionals are contextualizing descriptions, revising standards such as the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), and listening to users. Another section, “How can I report harmful content?,” describes how users can bring harmful language to DPLA’s attention and how it may be addressed.

[Yale University](#) addressed these issues by creating the Reparative Archival Description (RAD) task force that provides guidelines to “remediate existing archival descriptions and create anti-oppressive archive description in the future.” Yale works to contextualize original creator and/or steward language in description notes to address language that should not be changed. Duke University’s [Statement on Inclusive Description](#) focuses on questioning and altering LCSH and Library of Congress Classification (LCC) through their participation in the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). Duke also refers to implementing technology that would ensure that “subject terminology in all metadata, regardless of how it enters the catalog, is mapped to language that is inclusive” and being more language-inclusive by “including descriptive metadata in the original script for works in languages that do not use the Latin alphabet.”

The University of North Carolina Libraries removed some harmful language/terms from their catalog and replaced them with “[racist slur]” so as not to lose historical context; see, for example, the [finding aid](#) for the Thaddeus Ferree Papers on the North Carolina Federal Writers Project. However, the university kept terms such as “Negro” or “Colored” because these terms “provide important historical context about the materials and who created them.” Drexel University Libraries’ [Statement on Harmful Content in Archival Collections](#) notes, “When we discover unacceptable language in collection descriptions, we will update them to remove any language that could harm researchers or that is offensive to the people being described.” They also describe in what scenarios harmful language in a description may be retained and how they will decide which terms to use going forward, and introduce their flagging system for records that contain harmful words/images.

Staff Comments

Staff anticipated challenges related to legacy description volume and suggested several approaches to addressing them. Some staff recommended implementing a flagging system that would allow staff and researchers to report racist and otherwise harmful descriptions in the Catalog as they come across them; this suggestion was often paired with the recommendation to include a generic, Catalog-wide banner or statement about potentially harmful language. Other staff members recommended a more systematic, iterative approach; for example, NARA could develop a living vocabulary of anti-racist terms to replace outdated, racist terms and/or a standardized rubric for staff to use in evaluating racist terminology. Staff specifically suggested focusing these efforts on photo captions, which they indicated were among the “worst offenders.”

Subgroup Recommendations

Immediate/Short-Term

As a potential quick fix to some of the more egregious uses of inappropriate language in the Catalog, we recommend establishing a high-level and agency-wide approach to finding and correcting racist and otherwise harmful terminology. Using the Catalog Application Programming Interface (API), it is possible to identify where these terms appear in the Catalog, and that data can be used to address specific problem areas. The subgroup, with the help of V staff, ran a test of some harmful words and created a [spreadsheet](#) of where they appear in the Catalog (for more information, see about how the data was collected in [Recommendation A1](#)). We recommend using this data, along with additional searches

identified by the future Reparative Description Working Group as described in [Recommendation A8](#), to target racist and otherwise harmful language in small groups of records that designated staff can address through short-term projects. Identifying and correcting some of the Catalog-wide racist and harmful language could be work-from-home projects, cross-training projects, intern projects, etc. Some sample projects could include:

- Addressing the inconsistent way the word “negro” has been dealt with in the Catalog.
- Fixing the shortening of “Japanese” to “Jap” in Catalog titles of records related to photos of Japanese American incarceration.⁶¹

Though some of the identified issues will be short-term projects, this data should also be used to identify problems that may take longer to resolve. Staff involved in these projects should receive training on how to make informed decisions about correcting and contextualizing harmful language in legacy description.

We also recommend exploring the idea of implementing a find-and-replace feature, using the Global Operations Feature in DAS, that would allow for searches across all descriptions and replacing and/or adding a value. We recognize this would likely be more complicated than a simple find-and-replace, and any effort should have dedicated staff member(s) to double-check the context of the term in the description before changes are made.

Continuous/Long-Term

Imperative to correcting this issue in the long term is establishing a permanent Reparative Description Working Group to develop and implement a systematic approach to changing language as detailed in [Recommendation A8](#). This group should create a NARA internal description content guide that incorporates and cites the [Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia Anti-Racist Description Resources](#), among others; see the [Guidelines for Inclusive and Conscientious Description](#) from Harvard University's Center for the History of Medicine as an example approach. This working group would need to provide training and standard operating procedures for staff and make available a point of contact for staff who have questions. Guided by this future working group, we recommend implementing a policy of ad hoc corrections to descriptions and engaging DAS Points of Contact (POCs) to track ad hoc changes within custodial units. DAS POCs could occasionally meet with the permanent working group to identify trends and recurring issues.

Going forward, NARA must make a commitment to using groups' preferred terminology for Topical Subject Authority Records. We recommend reviewing current authority records, making preferred terms the main term, and adding outdated terms to the “Use for” section. NARA should work with BIPOC and other groups to determine the appropriate terminology; see [Recommendation A6](#) for more recommendations related to working with stakeholder communities. We also recommend reviewing ways to make authority records more relevant in Catalog searches. We suggest a review of fields in the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG) in order to determine the most efficient way to clarify confusion around creator-supplied description versus NARA-supplied description used in Records Groups, Series Groups, Files, Items, and Objects. As an example, the subgroup discussed how adding a field for “Creator Caption/Creator Title” could maintain the historical context of the material while allowing NARA to create a caption/title with appropriate language and terms.

NARA could involve Citizen Archivists in its long-term efforts to correct racist and otherwise harmful language. We recommend creating a method by which end users can notify NARA of racist or inappropriate language they find in descriptions. Such a program would empower our users to interact

⁶¹ Note that after the initial release of the Archival Description Subgroup's report, which included this example, the Still Pictures Branch corrected these descriptions. This shows that updates to harmful language can be accomplished swiftly within a defined set of descriptions.

with the records that we hold in trust for the public and encourage them to see that, in our democracy, records belong to the people. NARA has existing guidance for interaction with Citizen Archivists, and additional guidance could be provided on the difference between transcriptions/OCR and descriptions used by NARA. Some examples of how this program might look include:

- A flagging system in the Catalog so that Citizen Archivists can alert staff of racist and otherwise harmful language. A flag could place warning language on the Item itself, and the flag could then trigger an additional flag on the Series, File Unit, and Item descriptions.
- A lower-tech consideration could be a dedicated email address to which the public could send harmful descriptions; see the [Library and Archives Canada](#) as an example of this approach.

See more about potential Catalog changes in [Recommendation A4](#).

[\[Return to report, A3\]](#)

A4. Improve the Catalog’s basic technology and user interface to improve the overall discoverability of records.

For many people throughout the country, and indeed the world, the National Archives *is* the Catalog.

The National Archives Catalog and its related systems are the digital gateway to our records for an Internet’s-worth of end users. And yet, the Catalog is still not agile or robust enough to provide an experience for remote customers that is comparable, let alone superior, to the traditional in-person reference dialogue. This has a negative impact on all of our customers, particularly on those for whom structural racism, marginalization, and broken trust imparts a feeling of being unwelcome in the physical spaces or email inboxes of a federal, predominantly White institution. These issues are further compounded by the current global pandemic and whatever lasting repercussions the months-long closure of (and ongoing, limited on-site access to) NARA research facilities will have on the remote access needs of our stakeholders.

If NARA’s priorities continue to inadequately support its public access systems and the staff who maintain them, we will continue to fail to “Make Access Happen” for our most hard-to-reach customers. Evaluating the Catalog for its deficiencies in terms of customer service, determining the most effective improvements, and then supporting any necessary changes with funding, reliable contracts, and sufficient staffing must be a priority if NARA is going to meet (and hopefully exceed) its own strategic goals, as well as live up to its mission and vision statements to “cultivate public participation” and “be known for cutting-edge access. . . and unprecedented engagement.”

Benchmarking

In terms of providing context within online public access catalogs, numerous governments and repositories have created banners that feature a historical language advisory with specific content warnings. Statements typically explain that the content of the records is reflective of the views and times of the creator, not the repository that houses them. Specific institutions are listed in [Recommendation A1](#).

To engage stakeholders directly, [Princeton University](#) has implemented a “Suggest a Correction” button on their finding aids site, which initiates a review by staff that could result in providing additional context and/or replacing problematic terminology.

Staff Comments

In terms of specific suggestions relating to the Catalog, several staff members described implementing a Catalog-wide banner about racist language in archival records and a flagging feature for reporting harmful descriptions.

While commenting on or making suggestions for dealing with issues of harmful and racist language, staff often pointed to the quality of the Catalog user experience as an obstacle to resolving these issues effectively. Several staff members remarked that the Catalog is “just not user-friendly,” searching it is “very difficult,” and it is “unwieldy/not particularly helpful for the average researcher.” More to the point:

“With a catalog [that has so many issues,] I really don't see us improving access to the records of underrepresented groups. Not because we don't want to or can't find ways to do so, but because our technology inhibits us. A new catalog is certainly a very expensive and aggressive solution, but the reality is—any work we do to improve access on the systems we have without actually improving the systems themselves is going to be a waste of resources.”

These pain points are felt not just by staff involved in reference services but also the offices charged with managing and maintaining the Catalog. In its [FY 2020 Annual Report](#), the Office of Innovation noted, among its many accomplishments, the ongoing struggle in dealing with “numerous performance and stability issues” with the Catalog, which in turn “affects all of our finding aid efforts as well as our ability to execute on NARA's digitization policy across Archives.gov and Presidential Library websites.”

Subgroup Recommendations

Immediate/Short-Term

NARA already has a tagging feature in place for use by staff and [Citizen Archivists](#) that, with proper guidance and consistent application, could be used to flag harmful language and images in the Catalog. NARA might also explore how the public could use this feature to suggest appropriate terminology to replace harmful language. The [Citizen Contribution Policy](#) would need to be adapted to include guidance for flagging harmful language or images. That said, a new “Suggest a Correction” type of button on each description should also be considered.

Continuous/Long-Term

For the Catalog itself, NARA's long-term strategy should take into consideration the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the proposed closure of NARA facilities such as the National Archives at Seattle, on the goals established by the agency's current [Strategic Plan 2018–2022](#), and specifically on remote access to permanent federal records. This must include seeking end user feedback from all stakeholders, and allocating additional resources to support the evolution and improvement of the Catalog.

As with all of the recommendations made by this subgroup, due consideration must be given to how NARA staff can be supported when new features are added, or existing features are repurposed, which may possibly lead to an increase in reference inquiries and/or affect the nature of the requests. The pipeline from the point of receipt to the reference staff should be reviewed to ensure inquiries are routed efficiently to the appropriate office, and staffing levels should continue to be evaluated for their ability to handle the volume of requests.

[\[Return to report, A4\]](#)

A5. Explore and develop processes to correct under-described and over-described records in the Catalog.

Language matters: We recommend addressing not only harmful language that is present in the Catalog, but also the language that is *not* there.

Discoverability refers to the degree to which records are findable in the Catalog. NARA's records related to BIPOCs are more difficult to find because they are under-described, while our website and Catalog over-describe the records and achievements of White men by using more extensive, superlative, and subjective language. NARA needs to rectify generations of racist recordkeeping practices that have marginalized BIPOCs and made them footnotes in the historical record.

Benchmarking

NARA staff have already created a number of helpful guides to [Research on Ethnic Heritage](#), including guides for researching [African Americans](#), [Chinese Americans](#), [Hispanic/Latino Americans](#), [Japanese Americans](#), [Native Americans](#), and [Irish Americans](#). Other institutions also have dedicated projects to dealing with the under-description of Black people and other marginalized groups. For example, the Perkins School for the Blind Archive makes multiple references to discoverability, including adding racial information to descriptions, consulting with community groups, and prioritization of digitization projects of records relating to communities of color, in their [Role of Archives and Anti-Racism statement](#). The Duke University Libraries' Resource Description Department has issued a [Statement on Inclusive Description](#) in which they pledge to incorporate other controlled vocabularies in order to make records of marginalized voices more accessible.

Staff Comments

Staff recognized that racism is not only perpetuated by using harmful terms to describe underrepresented communities but also by failing to describe communities using appropriate terms; as one staff member noted, this demonstrates a "white-centric approach" and contributes to historical silences and erasures of non-White groups. Staff recommended drawing on internal and external resources to better identify and describe records related to underrepresented communities.

Internally, staff suggested creating more subject-based finding aids and utilizing the DAS Subject field more frequently to highlight records related to underrepresented groups; staff also recommended focusing digitization efforts on such records. Externally, staff suggested using Citizen Archivist Missions and the Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) cooperative to enhance discoverability of records of diverse communities.

Subgroup Recommendations

Subgroup research showed under-description and over-description issues in NARA's authority records, finding aids, Catalog descriptions, and online resources, among others. Because actions will be needed throughout the agency to address these issues, we recommend a public, high-level, agency-wide commitment to this work and the creation of an ongoing task force empowered to change and update NARA policy and set benchmarks for progress on addressing racism (see [Recommendation A8](#)). One high-level recommendation that covers both over- and under-description is to update the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG) for creating subject authority records so the records are more consistent.

Immediate/Short-Term

To address under-description in the short term, NARA can create Citizen Archivist Missions dedicated to tagging or transcribing records related to marginalized communities. NARA should connect with the communities to ensure that the missions utilize preferred terminology. NARA can also design short-term telework opportunities and cross-training projects for staff around enhancing legacy description, researching series and entries suitable for enhanced description, augmented processing, and digitization. Some example projects include:

- Transcribing oral histories and tagging/transcribing digitized records related to BIPOCs.
- Flagging cards of BIPOC nurses in [Carded Service Records of Hospital Attendants, Matrons and Nurses, 1861–1865](#).
- Linking subject authority records for historically significant BIPOCs to all related records and correcting them where necessary (e.g., Harriet Tubman).
- Populating subject authorities with basic biographical/historical information.
- Recommending and researching new subject authority candidates.

To address over-description in the short term, NARA should fully reassess the content of [OurDocuments.gov](#), [Docsteach.org](#), and other NARA online content and rewrite or discard material where necessary. OurDocuments.gov features transcripts and historical context of “100 milestone documents of American history” but often uses adulatory and excessive language to document the historical contributions of White, wealthy men. For example, a [search of Thomas Jefferson](#) in OurDocuments.gov brings up 24 results. He is described in this [sample lesson plan](#) as a “visionary” who took “vigorous action” to strengthen the “will of the nation to expand westward.” The plan does not mention that his policy of westward expansion forced Native Americans off their ancestral land, encouraged ongoing colonial violence, and laid the groundwork for further atrocities like the Trail of Tears. By comparison, [searching Harriet Tubman](#) returns one result. The only sentence in which she appears notably lacks the reverence found in the document about Jefferson. It describes the role of Black women in the Civil War, “the most famous being Harriet Tubman, who scouted for the 2nd South Carolina Volunteers.” The content on OurDocuments.gov appears in Catalog search results under the “Web Pages” heading, so it deserves the same reevaluation as other Catalog descriptions.

Continuous/Long-Term

To address under-description of records related to BIPOCs in the long-term, NARA can reassess the More Product, Less Process (MPLP) approach and support augmented processing whenever possible. Work will need to be done at the processing level, as many such records are not digitized. Certain series may contain records relating to underrepresented communities without being described as such; archivists may even be unaware of them if the records were minimally processed. We also recommend that NARA dedicate more staff time across the agency to describing records related to BIPOCs and create subject-based finding aids across offices. We recommend expanding the existing [Research on Ethnic Heritage](#) guides, creating additional guides, and extending these projects further into field and presidential records. These could make excellent work-from-home or cross-training projects.

We also recommend that NARA focus future digitization initiatives on records related to underrepresented communities. First priority should be given to communities NARA has already made promises to and with whom it has yet to follow through, namely the Alaska Digitization Project. See more details about the Alaska Digitization Project in [Recommendation A6](#). NARA should seek out grants and partnerships specifically to assist with digitization of marginalized communities’ records. These efforts should focus on smaller, lesser known series. See the [Daughters of the American Revolution partnership](#) for an example.

We suggest that NARA create and disseminate guidelines to staff, as determined by the future permanent Reparative Description Working Group (see [Recommendation A8](#)), on how to describe records in a way that encourages discoverability. Some examples include:

- Standardizing the practice of staff including information about people’s identities, when known, in descriptions. Include White/male/cisgender so that these are not assumed to be the “normal.”
- Standardizing the practice of using terms that groups use to describe themselves, so these individuals will be better able to locate records.

To address over-description in the long-term, NARA can implement further staff training per the guidance of the permanent Reparative Description Working Group (see [Recommendation A8](#)) and create clear guidance on over-description to prevent this issue in the future. We also recommend a review of how and why subject authority records are created. The existence of subject authority records and biographical description in Scope and Content notes seems linked to museum exhibits and presidential libraries, meaning that White men are disproportionately described.

[\[Return to report, A5\]](#)

A6. Ensure that external stakeholders participate in decision-making for description and digitization.

As the nation’s recordkeeper, NARA occupies a position of power and privilege with respect to marginalized communities, and we recognize that we start from a position of broken trust. As part of correcting past wrongs and (re)building trust, it is NARA’s responsibility to cultivate and sustain relationships with underrepresented and marginalized communities and incorporate their recommendations about language into archival descriptions. Communities *being* described should have agency in and be the authorities on *how* they are described. NARA has the responsibility to seek out and take care in using community input on an ongoing basis. It is important that we make it clear to external stakeholders that (1) we are not expecting them to do the work on our behalf; (2) they will be compensated for their time and expertise; and (3) when and wherever possible, they will be credited and acknowledged for their contributions.

Benchmarking

Stakeholder engagement and inclusion ties directly into two specific [NARA Transformational Outcomes](#): “A Customer-Focused Organization” and “An Open NARA.” Specifically, we state that we will “create structures and processes to allow our staff to more effectively meet the needs of our customers” and “open our organizational boundaries to learn from others.”

Moreover, process transparency and community engagement are part of the Society of American Archivists’ [Core Values of Archivists](#) and [Code of Ethics for Archivists](#), which are profession-wide standards. They are also key parts of numerous guides to anti-racist description, including but not limited to:

- Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia’s [Anti-Racist Description Resources](#) (see “Community Collaboration and Expanding Audiences”)
- First Archivist Circle’s [Protocols for Native American Archival Materials](#) (see “Building Relationships of Mutual Respect” and “Providing Context”)
- Harvard University’s [Guidelines for Inclusive and Conscientious Description](#) (see “Identity & Naming” and “Audience & Accessibility”)

Many peer institutions already make community collaboration and engagement an essential part of their description workflows. See, for example, the Library and Archives Canada's *Indigenous Heritage Action Plan*, [Section 5.2: Engagement and collaboration](#).

Staff Comments

Staff suggested collaborating with external stakeholders, including members of underrepresented groups and Citizen Archivists, to identify and evaluate racist descriptions in the Catalog. Specifically, one staff member recommended that NARA build external engagement with underrepresented groups (e.g., Native American communities) into digitization projects to ensure that records are appropriately identified and described prior to digitization.

Subgroup Recommendations

Immediate/Short-Term

We recommend that NARA consult with members of marginalized communities to ensure that we use appropriate language and terminology in descriptions. Some community groups have already developed guidance on terminology. For example, [Densho](#), a nonprofit that preserves and shares the history of the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans, has a [glossary of terms](#) that asks people to think critically if euphemisms, words, or phrases from earlier eras should be used today in descriptions. Similarly, the Japanese American Citizens League has developed the [Power of Words Handbook: A Guide to Language about Japanese Americans in World War II](#), and the [Archives for Black Lives](#) in Philadelphia has developed [guidance](#) for using the term "Black" based on the feedback of Black archivists, authors, and journalists.

In addition to consulting with communities, we recommend that NARA consult with staff at other archives, libraries, and museums and with professional archival organizations on best practices for updating legacy descriptions. As our benchmarking shows, other organizations are currently exploring or are already engaged in reparative description work, and NARA could learn from their experiences. NARA may want to explore the idea of developing a survey that could be sent to members of the [Society of American Archivists](#) (SAA), specifically their [Archives and Archivists of Color Section](#); members of the [Council of State Archivists](#) (CoSA); and other groups asking them for examples of terminology they see as harmful and requesting their recommendations for addressing offensive terminology in archival descriptions going forward.

As mentioned in [Recommendation A1](#), we also recommend that NARA invite public comments on recommendations for updating legacy descriptions. NARA's newly created web page on legacy descriptions should include ways that the public can comment on and contribute to this work.

Finally, in the interest of rebuilding trust that we have previously broken with communities, we recommend that NARA uphold our commitment to the [Alaska Digitization Project](#). When NARA closed our facility in Anchorage, AK, in 2014, we made a promise to Alaska, the Native Peoples of the Pacific Northwest, and the American public to digitize the most in-demand records from this facility and make the digitized material available online. NARA requested input from stakeholders on the records that should be prioritized for digitization and combined this feedback with historical reference requests, preservation concerns, and access restrictions due to personally identifying information to create a list of priority records to digitize.

Beginning in 2017, the National Archives at Seattle tailored this list to the most requested records from 2015 and 2016 and began digitizing and indexing them. However, out of 8,648,848 total cubic feet of

records from the former Anchorage facility, only 765.344 cubic feet have been digitized to date (835.745 cubic feet are restricted). This project is an excellent example of a situation in which we over-promised and under-delivered. Particularly when considered alongside the National Archives at Seattle's upcoming closure, our failure to deliver on our stated commitments has led to cynicism and mistrust among the public—specifically Indigenous communities, as described in Megan E. Llewellyn and Sarah A. Buchanan's 2020 [article](#), "Will the Last Archivist in Seattle Please Turn Out the Lights: Value and the National Archives."

The Alaska Digitization Project has never been fully funded despite promises made by Congress members and NARA. NARA must fulfill its obligations by staffing, equipping, and funding the digitization of the Alaska records.

Continuous/Long-Term

We recommend that NARA develop and sustain relationships with marginalized communities to (re)build trust and demonstrate the agency's commitment to addressing racist and otherwise harmful language in the Catalog. Such relationships would provide NARA with invaluable feedback. These efforts should be organized and continuously maintained by a centralized body such as the Reparative Description Working Group described in [Recommendation A8](#), with the understanding that more relationships will be created as our work expands to other areas of reparative description, including but not limited to language that is ableist, sexist, or homophobic.

We must remember that while we approach this effort with the best intent, NARA is an agency of the federal government, a system that so often causes harm. We are the recordkeepers of a nation, and our records chronicle a history of violence against the very communities we now wish to engage. We are not entitled to these relationships and may very well find that our proposals are declined, respectfully or otherwise. Those who choose to collaborate with us must be appropriately compensated, and the ongoing relationship should be treated with care and consideration for the traumatic histories of both the individual and the community.

[\[Return to report, A6\]](#)

A7. Provide language translation in the Catalog and other Archives.gov sites.

Our customers speak many languages and our records use many scripts, yet the NARA Catalog and website reflect the United States' legacy of colonialism and cultural erasure. We have not consistently transcribed, translated, or tagged records in languages other than English, and we have made no major shifts to address the needs of non-English and low-English-proficiency speakers.

NARA has Spanish-language web pages on [Archives.gov](#); patrons can start with the [En Español landing page](#). But most of Archives.gov and the Catalog are not bilingual in Spanish, a language spoken by almost 20 percent of people in the United States. In 2016, 30.9 percent of all Latinx who were five years of age or older said they spoke English "less than very well" ([U.S. Census Bureau/American FactFinder 2016: B160051](#)). Catalog users do not have the option to perform an Advanced Search by Language, and keyword searching produces many false hits. Additionally, because untranslated records often cannot be served to the public, NARA's inaction has created a backlog of non-English-language records that are functionally classified.

Until recently, the use of [diacritics](#) and non-English scripts on Archives.gov and in the Catalog has been sporadic, at best; see, for example, [this description of photogravures](#), in which an apostrophe substitutes for an accent mark. The En Español page mentioned above has no diacritic tilde above the “n” in Español. Searching for an entry using the Cyrillic Искусство (Russian for “art”) produces a [false hit](#) for a record that does not even include the term. Additionally, authority records do not support non-English scripts or diacritics.

Benchmarking

NARA is committed to serving all users, not just those for whom English is their primary language. The NARA Mission Statement says, “Public access to government records strengthens our democracy by allowing Americans to claim their rights of citizenship, hold their government accountable, and understand their history, so they can participate more effectively in their government.” NARA [Strategic Goal #1](#), “Make Access Happen,” affirms that “‘public access’ is NARA’s core mission and is a higher calling that gives purpose and meaning to our work.” To achieve this goal, NARA must “develop new ways to help citizens find our records through the online National Archives Catalog.”

The web pages mentioned above show that NARA has already taken steps to become more bilingual, but those are just a beginning. Other countries are far ahead of us. Library and Archives Canada’s [website](#) is fully bilingual, in accordance with the country’s laws. Canada’s population includes about 20 percent native French speakers, a percentage comparable to the number of Spanish speakers in the United States. The Archives of New Zealand’s [website](#) incorporates Māori-specific information and communication as well.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton issued [Executive Order 13166](#), Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency. It states that “each Federal agency shall examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP (Limited English Proficiency) persons can meaningfully access those services consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency.” Additionally, agencies were directed to “take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.” It is time for NARA to take these steps.

Academic libraries and archives are also taking action around language access. Duke University Libraries’ [Statement on Inclusive Description](#) pledges to start including descriptive metadata for records in non-Latin alphabets and begin remediating legacy metadata with non-Latin scripts as well. Ohio State University libraries have been incorporating Unicode into their library systems and software in order to support description of, and searching in, multiple languages for almost 20 years.

Staff Comments

Several staff members suggested that NARA create a Subject Matter Expert position for Latin American records (for which fluency in Spanish would be critical), and one person noted that since funding has been approved for the creation of the [National Museum of the American Latino](#), the position would be timely. Several others suggested using Citizen Archivists to transcribe documents in other languages or add tags in other languages to English-written documents.

Subgroup Recommendations

Immediate/Short-Term

We recommend that NARA have Description staff identify the volume of records in languages other than English in the Catalog. We can use that data to develop a project (possibly a cross-training opportunity) to

describe non-English-language records and improve existing descriptions. See explanation of under-described records in [Recommendation A5](#).

NARA should change the [Language element](#) in the [Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide \(LCDRG\)](#) to emphasize that, although the element is not mandatory (since English is implied), it must be included if the records are not in English. The element should also include a statement such as, “To improve identification and description of records in other languages, they should be translated and tagged as soon as possible.”

NARA should recruit multilingual staff and Citizen Archivists to tag English-language records with non-English tags. This would enable us to apply tags in a variety of languages. We are already asking people to tag and transcribe our [Chinese Heritage Records](#), but we need to expand our scope to include other languages, especially Spanish.

NARA should host crowdsourcing-style events during which multilingual staff and Citizen Archivists can translate records from specific series. Staff can then add the translations to the Catalog.

Continuous/Long-Term

The Reparative Description Working Group (as described in [Recommendation A8](#)) needs to oversee a long-term effort by NARA to make the Catalog and website more Spanish/English bilingual. Spanish is the most prevalent second language spoken in the United States. We need to make technological changes to the Catalog to improve description and access to records in languages other than English, such as adding the ability to search by Language in the Advanced Search. The website and Catalog needs to more fully support non-English scripts and diacritics.

The Reparative Description Working Group should initiate a long-term project to identify all non-English records in NARA holdings and create timelines for improved access and translation.

Translation of non-English records in our holdings into English should become part of our reference services. Options include using automated language translation software (similar to [GlobalDoc/LangXpert](#)) and having bilingual staff or Citizen Archivists verify the transcriptions, or hiring a GSA-approved translation service contractor (such as [Lighthouse](#)) to transcribe the documents.

As with all of our recommendations, NARA needs to dedicate resources to making these changes internally and not rely on Citizen Archivists to sustain our efforts. To that end, we recommend the creation of positions dedicated to translation and language access, including a Subject Matter Expert-type position for Latin American records, with the requirement that the person be bilingual.

[\[Return to report, A7\]](#)

A8. Develop a dedicated working group to ensure the above issues are continually addressed as a program rather than a one-time project.

NARA must make a public commitment at the highest level to reparative description and lay an operative, institutional foundation to implement official policy and ensure a continuity of efforts. This commitment cannot be dismissed internally or externally as a flash-in-the-pan reaction to contemporary but chronic political and social events. Identifying and ameliorating harmful terminologies in government records is complex and nuanced, cutting across the records lifecycle from creators to describers, and there is no singular fix; some terms are the preferred language of the government or NARA.

Continuity will ensure that this is a program, not a project, with an ongoing commitment that can keep pace with social change.

Benchmarking

As part of our efforts to develop recommendations, the subgroup met with Dominique Foisy-Geoffroy, senior advisor to the Office of the Deputy Librarian and Archivist of Canada. Though the discussion centered primarily on the development of a banner and disclaimer for their catalog, Mr. Foisy-Geoffroy explained that the banner and disclaimer, which took approximately 18 months to develop and implement, was only one piece of a larger 28-part action plan on matters relating to Indigenous communities. The ultimate goal was “to lay the groundwork for continuous engagement and to keep the issue at the forefront of LAC staff’s minds, so the effort would become ingrained and institutional rather than a one-off project.” Mr. Foisy-Geoffroy advised that the development of relationships with communities and progress on collaborative efforts must be completed on communities’ timelines, not ours.

Subgroup Recommendations

As our subgroup worked to identify themes, problems, and actionable recommendations, one thread stood out as arguably the most important and impactful: that this Task Force is only the beginning. Though we identified easily actionable recommendations that could constitute “quick wins” for our agency, ultimately our goal should not be quick fixes. We should instead aim to weave diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice into the very cultural fabric of our institution. What we are proposing is nothing short of transformational, which we know requires us to be “[agile and responsive to change, \[accept\] risks, \[reward\] innovation, and \[seek\] continuous improvement.](#)” Though the “modern environment” envisioned in 2018’s [Strategic Plan](#) was primarily focused on changes in technology, we know now that, looking forward, our vision for the future must prioritize justice and equality as well.

Immediate/Short-Term

We recommend that the Archivist of the United States (AOTUS) make a public statement declaring a deep institutional commitment to identifying and resolving issues related to harmful legacy language in Catalog records. This statement should acknowledge where we have fallen short, pledge to invest in improvements, outline specific projects or goals and, whenever possible, include a timetable to ensure accountability.

Continuous/Long-Term

We recommend the creation of a dedicated Reparative Description Working Group or office, with Subject Matter Experts or other staff whose primary duties are to develop and carry out the long-term recommendations made by the Task Force and its subgroups. Ensuring the continuity of reparative/iterative description efforts across work units is vital, and a centralized office or liaison is necessary. In addition, reparative descriptive metadata needs to be incorporated into the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide, as a stand-alone chapter and as additional guidance for each existing element, and relevant staff will need to be trained accordingly and kept apprised of any future updates. NARA should also explore ways to offer reparative description guidance to other federal agencies at the point of records creation and step into our role as a leader and innovator in the federal government (“[Out in Front](#)”).

Though we envision this person, office, or working group reporting directly to AOTUS, the commitment to proactive, sustained change needs to also be integrated into offices and metrics at all levels of the agency. The issues of reparative description, (re)building and earning trust from marginalized communities, hiring from said communities, and other goals outlined by the Task Force on Racism and its subgroups need to rise to the level of a stated Strategic Goal: Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and

Justice. The Strategic Goal and its objectives should be reflected in critical elements of performance for staff in any position where proactive efforts can and should be made towards the stated goals.

Ultimately, structural change must involve the federal government as a whole. The Library of Canada succeeded in its endeavors because the work was part of a call to action by the government of Canada's [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), which specifically included a [directive for the Library and Archives Canada](#). NARA should explore engagement with the current administration in ways that support reparative description and provide a clear directive to seek justice at all levels of our work.

[\[Return to report, A8\]](#)

Select List of Anti-Oppressive Archival Description Resources

Guides to anti-oppressive language and archival description

- Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia Anti-Racist Description Resources: https://archivesforblacklives.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/ardr_final.pdf
- Protocols for Native American Archival Materials: <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/index.html>
- Guidelines for Inclusive and Conscientious Description, Center for the History of Medicine: Policies & Procedures Manual, Harvard: <https://wiki.harvard.edu/confluence/display/hmschommanual/Guidelines+for+Inclusive+and+Conscientious+Description>
- Library and Archives Canada (LAC) guidance for writing culturally sensitive titles: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/initiatives/Pages/Indigenous-related-archival-materials-title-descriptions.aspx>
- Bias-Free Language, American Psychological Association: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language>
- Mukurtu, for Indigenous Communities to manage and share digital cultural heritage; includes labels that can be attached to Indigenous records in other collections: <https://mukurtu.org/>
- Midwest Archives Conference Style Guide: Section "Bias-Free Language," pg. 7: <https://www.midwestarchives.org/assets/MACStyleGuide2020.pdf>
- UNC Wilson Libraries, "Conscious Editing Initiative": <https://library.unc.edu/idea/projects/conscious-editing-initiative/> and <https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Dean,%20Jackie.pdf>
- Temple University Libraries SCRC Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Archival Description and Cataloging: <https://library.temple.edu/policies/scrc-statement-on-potentially-harmful-language-in-archival-description-and-cataloging>
- American Psychological Association's Style Guide on Bias-Free Language: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language>
- Asian American Journalists' Guide to Covering Asian America: <https://aaja.org/2020/11/30/covering-asia-and-asian-americans/>

Resource lists

- Resource list create by Tufts DCLA, "Additional Reading: Potentially Harmful Language in Archival Description":

<https://dca.tufts.edu/about/policies/Additional-Reading-Potentially-Harmful-Language-in-Archival-Description>

- Language in archival descriptions changes, University of Waterloo, Canada (with resources and examples):
<https://uwaterloo.ca/library/special-collections-archives/news/language-archival-descriptions-changes>
- Language used to distort history: <https://densho.org/sitesofshame/glossary.xml>;
<https://densho.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Terminology.pdf>; and
<https://manzanarcommittee.files.wordpress.com/2020/06/powerorwords-revised-jacl.pdf>
- Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives: An Incomplete List of White Privileges in Archives and Action Items for Dismantling Them infographic:
http://www.gracenbrilmyer.com/dismantling_whiteSupremacy_archives3.pdf
- Disrupting Whiteness in Libraries and Librarianship: A Reading List:
<https://www.library.wisc.edu/gwslibrarian/bibliographies/disrupting-whiteness-in-libraries/>
- SAA's Inclusive Description resource list:
<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/description-section/inclusive-description>

Statements

- Harmful Language Statement from the DPLA/Black Women's Suffrage web page:
https://blackwomenssuffrage.dp.la/harmful-language-statement?mc_cid=8db35b82b0&mc_eid=2f5f83c492
- Statement on Language in Archival Description, Princeton University Special Collections:
<https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/statement-language-archival-description>
- Stanford Special Collections and University Archives' Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Cataloging and Archival Description:
<https://library.stanford.edu/spc/using-our-collections/stanford-special-collections-and-university-archives-statement-potentially>
- Statement on Harmful Content in Archival Collections, Drexel University:
<https://www.library.drexel.edu/archives/overview/HarmfulContent/>
- Archives & History Statement of Recommitment, the Alabama Department of Archives & History:
https://www.scribd.com/document/466721133/Archives-History-Statement-of-Recomittment#from_embed?campaign=SkimbitLtd&ad_group=126006X1587343X1eed8a670a77050fc5950a151a3c0a39&keyword=660149026&source=hp_affiliate&medium=affiliate
- University of Waterloo:
<https://uwaterloo.ca/library/special-collections-archives/collections#Language>
- List of Statements on Bias in Library and Archives Description, compiled by Cataloging Lab:
<https://cataloginglab.org/list-of-statements-on-bias-in-library-and-archives-description/>
- Peabody Museum, Harvard University: <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/collections>
- National Archives UK, research guide with a warning about offensive language (see second paragraph):
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/indian-indentured-labourers/>
- Library and Archives of Canada Historical Language Advisory:
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/about-us/about-collection/Pages/notices.aspx>. See the main search page of their catalog and all results pages linked to that notice:
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/collectionsearch/Pages/collectionsearch.aspx>
- National Archives of Australia's page about First Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) includes a warning about inappropriate content:

<https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/first-australians>. The main catalog page also includes the warning:

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/BasicSearch.aspx>

- National Library of Australia: Trove (a collection aggregator) enlists a “Cultural Advice Notice” for First Australians pop-up on initial access of the web page that allows users to opt out of seeing certain content.
 - See: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>
 - See also “Cultural Safety for First Australians”:
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/help/using-trove/cultural-safety-first-australians>
- The Smithsonian’s National Anthropological Archives (NAA) includes standard language about offensive terminology in collection materials in their finding aids (seemingly on an ad-hoc basis). Example: <https://sova.si.edu/record/NAA.1974-31> (see the last paragraph of the Scope & Contents Note)
- Perkins School for the Blind: The Role of Archives and Anti-Racism:
<https://www.perkins.org/history/archives/blog/the-role-of-archives-and-anti-racism>
- University of Hawai’i at Mānoa’s Statement on Racial Justice includes a paragraph about the use of enhanced description to make “languages of the Pacific region and thereby the people who speak them” more discoverable:
<https://manoa.hawaii.edu/library/news/statement-on-racial-justice/>
- Texas Archive of the Moving Image, “Martyrs of the Alamo,” About the Video description contains warning statement about racial slurs and negative stereotyping:
https://texasarchive.org/2014_00414
- Library of Congress, About This Collection, African-American Band Music & Recordings, 1883 to 1923: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/african-american-band-music/about-this-collection/>
- Yale University Library, Statement on Harmful Language in Archival Description:
<https://guides.library.yale.edu/specialcollections/statementondescription>
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Southern Historical Collection: finding aid: Thaddeus Ferree Papers on the North Carolina Federal Writers Project, 1935–1941 (see Processing Note):
<https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/04258/>
- Temple University Libraries: Special Collections Research Center, SCRC Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Archival Description and Cataloging:
<https://library.temple.edu/policies/14>

Articles (paywalled)

- “Cultural Humility as a Framework for Anti-Oppressive Archival Description,” by Jessica Tai (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library):
<https://journals.litwinbooks.com/index.php/jclis/article/view/120>
- “Diversity’s Discontents: In Search of an Archive of the Oppressed,” by Jarrett Drake:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01576895.2019.1570470?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=raam20>
- “Towards Protocols for Describing Racially Offensive Language in UK Public Archives,” by Alicia Chilcott:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333683267_Towards_protocols_for_describing_racially_offensive_language_in_UK_public_archives (Available through Proquest via VPN/Citrix/offsite upon request: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2237713710>)
- “Archival Interventions and the Language We Use,” by Kirsten Wright
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2225493105>

- “Unicode: Support for Multiple Languages at the Ohio State University Libraries,” by Laura Tull and Dona Straley:
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/07378830310509745/full/html>

Articles (open)

- “Archival Assemblages: Applying Disability Studies’ Political/Relational Model to Archival Description,” by Gracen Brilmyer:
<http://gracenbrilmyer.com/Brilmyer-Archival%20Assemblages-2018.pdf>
- “Moving Toward a Reparative Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices,” by Lae'l Hughes-Watkins:
<https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=jcas>
- “Archiving Hate: Racist Materials in Archives,” by Melissa J. Nelson:
<http://melissajnelson.com/explore/information-management/archiving-hate-racist-materials-in-archives/>
- “RadTech Meets RadArch: Towards a New Principle for Archives and Archival Description,” by Jarrett M. Drake:
<https://medium.com/on-archivy/radtech-meets-radarch-towards-a-new-principle-for-archives-and-archival-description-568f133e4325>
- “How Digital Image Archivists Ought to Approach the Task of Curating Objects with the Potential to Cause Trauma,” by Kate Holterhoff:
<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/11/3/000324/000324.html>
- “Three Decades Since Prejudices and Antipathies: A Study of Changes in the Library of Congress Subject Headings,” by Steven A. Knowlton:
<https://www.sanfordberman.org/biblinks/knowlton.pdf>
- “Digitizing and Enhancing Description Across Collections to Make African American Materials More Discoverable on Umbra Search African American History,” by Dorothy Berry, from The Design for Diversity Learning Toolkit, Northeastern University Library, 2018:
<https://des4div.library.northeastern.edu/digitizing-and-enhancing-description-across-collections-to-make-african-american-materials-more-discoverable-on-umbra-search-african-american-history/>
- “Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice,” by Randall Jimerson:
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9f65/f11f0de213bd509bcebb7cfdbfb1e2e5a147.pdf>
- “‘Wrong Then, Wrong Now’: Disney+ Strengthens Disclaimer About Racism in Older Films Including Dumbo, Peter Pan,” by Isabel Togoh:
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/isabeltogoh/2020/10/16/wrong-then-wrong-now-disney-strengthens-disclaimer-about-racism-in-older-films-including-dumbo-peter-pan/?sh=4e565707a49e>
- OCLC Hanging Together Blog: “Creating Metadata for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion”:
<https://hangingtogether.org/?p=6833>

Conference panels

- S24—Implementing Inclusive (Re)Description at Predominantly White Institutions:
<https://archives2020.sched.com/event/dNmf/s24-implementing-inclusive-redescription-at-predominantly-white-institutions>
- ICHORA [International Conference on the History of Records and Archives] Virtual Conference keynote address from Dr. Tonia Sutherland (University of Hawai’i at Mānoa): [Data, Death, and Dignity: Reflections on Archives and the Digital Afterlife](#)

- From [ICHORA2020 website](#): “This talk considers the social and cultural tensions created by the proliferation of publicly available digital records and data relating to the deaths of Black people in the United States. Engaging questions at the intersection of archival studies and digital studies, and disrupting the narrative that Black people’s lives are disposable, Sutherland presents several cases that interrogate and challenge the ways that deceased Black people have been commodified from the analog era through the digital era. Focusing on the entanglements of documentary practices and Black lives, Sutherland calls attention to the tensions between monetized clicks and the emotional agency of images; the impulses, ethics, and consequences of digital resurrection; the fight against the silence and erasure of oblivion; and laying datafied bodies to rest in a time when the Internet is understood to be an expression of forever. In this talk, Sutherland examines marked tensions and liminal spaces—between memorialization and commodification, between digital permanence and historical oblivion—building and shaping her arguments from a deep exploration of and engagement with Black digital remains.”
- “Confronting Biases: Their Impact on Collections, Research, and Scholarship”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTPgZmUUTE4>
 - “Panelists will discuss issues of antiracism, how inherent bias affects what information is made available through libraries and other cultural heritage institutions, and what can be done to mitigate biases.” Information about the panel:
<https://news.uark.edu/articles/54916/panel-confronting-our-inherent-biases-their-impact-on-collections-research-and-scholarship>
- Sunshine State Digital Network, “Introduction to Conscious Editing Series”:
<https://sunshinestatedigitalnetwork.wordpress.com/2020/09/16/introduction-to-conscious-editing-series/>

Select Sources about BIPOC Experiences at NARA

- Oral History Project Interviews, 1985–1986: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/2555881>
- Oral History at the National Archives:
<https://www.archives.gov/about/history/oral-history-at-the-national-archives>
- NARA’s Pieces of History blog had a series of articles highlighting past African American employees in February 2016: <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2016/02/>
- “Sara Dunlap Jackson: Archivist Extraordinaire” NARA Pieces of History blog
<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2015/03/19/sara-dunlap-jackson-archivist-extraordinaire/>
- “Harold T. Pinkett and the Lonely Crusade of African American Archivists in the Twentieth Century” by Alex H. Poole
<https://meridian.allenpress.com/american-archivist/article/80/2/296/24414/Harold-T-Pinkett-and-the-Lonely-Crusade-of-African>

Harmful Language Search Spreadsheet

Warning: This document contains racial slurs and otherwise harmful terms. [\[Return to reading\]](#)

Key:

- TF: the Archivist’s Task Force on Racism; specifically, the Archival Description Subgroup
- V: Office of Innovation
- Cannot be searched head-on with accuracy: A basic Catalog search returns too many unrelated results. See, for example, footnote 63.

Term	No. of Total Occurrences (TF)	No. of Total Occurrences (V)	Title Field (TF)	Title Field (V)	Scope & Content	Shot List	Public Contributions	OCR/Digital Object Estimated Count	Other Fields
Afro-American/ Afro-Americans	1,298 ⁶²	4,207	194	197	152	0	0	3,851	7
Chinaman/ Chinamen	1,425	2,194	23	22	6	2	446	1,718	0
Chink/ Chinks	Cannot be searched head-on with accuracy ⁶³	3,739		6	8	4	57	3,664	0
Colored	Cannot be searched head-on with accuracy ⁶⁴	4,163,023		302,788	3,319	374	22,334	3,834,101	107
Crippled	5,480	5,480	152	152	236	23	782	10,886	7

⁶² Many occurrences were found in organizational names.

⁶³ In Record Group 79, this term was often used in a construction/building context (e.g., “a chink in the wall”). In Record Group 22, this term was often used as a shorthand for “Chinese pheasant.”

⁶⁴ Searching for this term returns too many instances of “color.”

Term	No. of Total Occurrences (TF)	No. of Total Occurrences (V)	Title Field (TF)	Title Field (V)	Scope & Content	Shot List	Public Contributions	OCR Digital Object Estimated Count	Other Fields
Deaf and dumb	419	1,665	25	26	66	6	42	1,518	7
Disabled	22,746	152,259	1,018	1,022	1,043	59	1,677	148,436	22
Elderly		33,851		801	795	206	719	31,030	30
Eskimo/ Eskimos	2,609	9,102	414	412	158	64	1,769	6,685	14
Gook/ Gooks ⁶⁵	Cannot be searched with head-on accuracy	2,627	183 ⁶⁶	182	135	1	34	2,268	7
Half-breed/ Half-breeds	798	28,760	47	47	56	0	352	28,301	4
Handicapped	13,853	46,501	1,079	1,001	263	12	1,899	43,273	53
Idiot/Idiots	1,520	4,398	9	7	20	0	249	4,122	0
Illegal alien/ Illegal aliens	2,085	4,333	112	112	48	0	67	4,106	0
Jap/Japs ⁶⁷	14,079 ⁶⁸	45,806		1,285	202	30	2,298	41,962	29

⁶⁵ We recommend searching outside of Record Group 85, as this term can be a syllable in many East Asian names.

⁶⁶ All were parts of names in Record Group 85.

⁶⁷ We recommend using regular expressions to exclude false hits—e.g., search for Jap[^a] to return hits for Jap/Japs, but not Japan/Japanese (for use with Python script; AFAIK regex is not supported in Catalog searches). Abbreviated titles for concentration camp photos often cut off at “Jap,” which created a slur where there is not one in the original metadata.

⁶⁸ We obtained these results using the search parameters described in note 67.

Term	No. of Total Occurrences (TF)	No. of Total Occurrences (V)	Title Field (TF)	Title Field (V)	Scope & Content	Shot List	Public Contributions	OCR/Digital Object Estimated Count	Other Fields
Mongoloid	30	57	0	0	0	0	7	50	0
Negro/ Negroes ⁶⁹	24,864	51,308	3,843	3,491	1,868	423	8,537	36,879	110
Negroid	79	127	2	2	1	1	18	105	0
N****r/ N****rs	758	1,268	14	14	14	0	176	1,064	0
Oriental/ Orientals	8,133	14,798	433	432	731	37	644	12,930	24
Retarded	11,853	20,576	163	134	36	10	961	19,428	7
Slave/ Slaves	26,439 ⁷⁰	153,626		7,106	3,082	17	4,473	138,838	110
Squaw/ Squaws	2,440	9,047	193	193	109	1	200	8,538	6
Transsexual	95	164	0	0	1	0	0	163	0
Wetback/ Wetbacks	107	217	5	5	3	0	48	161	0

Sources:

[Briefing on Commonly Used Terms for EEO and Harassment \(Erica Pearson's presentation\); American Psychological Association Style Guide on Bias-Free Language; Asian American Journalists' Handbook](#)

⁶⁹ We recommend that a search for this term also be conducted in authorities, as the term appears in at least one authority (e.g., "War Department. Department of Virginia and North Carolina. Department of Negro Affairs. 7/15/1863?–1/18/1865").

⁷⁰ Note that a search for "enslaved" yielded 1,954 results.

Appendix VIII: Museum Subgroup’s Detailed Report

The Museum Subgroup was charged with investigating how NARA can ensure a racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity of representation, viewpoints, access, and outreach in our exhibits, education, and public programs. The following pages outline immediate and long-range recommended measures in four categories: Staff, Customers, Exhibits, and Outreach.

At the center of all of the Subgroup’s recommendations is a single concept: **active engagement**. With a focused and sustained effort to actively engage with staff and customers, we believe that NARA can successfully create a culture that is ready to welcome a diverse audience. By creating a work culture that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and inclusive (DEAI), NARA will be better prepared to make its holdings more accessible and more engaging for our country’s historically marginalized, underserved, and diverse populations. We are unanimous in our belief that the data directs us towards recommendations for NARA to develop itself from within and establish a workplace that actively works against historic and systemic racism before attempting to welcome a larger audience to the Museum experience.

1. Staff

It was clear in our review of other cultural institutions that were successful in broadening their audience/outreach that they devoted significant energy to their internal readiness before devoting resources to external outreach. Focusing on the Staff first will ensure that NARA staff will better mirror the public they serve, reflect NARA’s commitment to ending racism, and take actions to address and end perceived racial inequities within the agency. These recommendations will enable NARA to create exhibits, programs, and public spaces that reflect multiple perspectives and are more inclusive and welcoming. To achieve a “Focus on Staff” at NARA, we recommend the following:

- ***Listen and Take Meaningful Action in Response to Museum Staff Input:*** A regular forum for meaningful conversation between NARA and Foundation leadership and staff will enable NARA to check in with individuals who may be resistant to change, gather feedback, and promote responses to concerns that are meaningful and actionable. For these conversations to lead to change, we recommend that they take place in smaller groups that will promote deeper sharing and listening rather than large open forums (e.g., the ICN, with its accessibility issues, or all-staff meetings that tend to be one-way communication forums). To promote even richer discussion, the subgroup recommends seeking external discussion leaders with training and understanding in combating structural racism to lead peer-to-peer conversations. We also recommend the development of anonymous feedback mechanisms that will promote earnest conversations around sensitive subject matter, without the fear of reprisal. [\[Return to report, M1\]](#)
- ***Recruit and Retain BIPOC:*** Diversity of museum staff, volunteers, and contractors will ultimately support the goal and communicate the message that visitors and staff find an equitable environment throughout NARA. To achieve this goal, we must address barriers that may discourage or prevent BIPOC from securing staff, internship, and volunteer positions through the following actions:
 - Create an endowment or scholarship fund for paid intern and docent positions for BIPOC.
 - Leverage federal programs such as AmeriCorps VISTA and Work Study (where applicable) to provide opportunities to build skills in the archival and museum profession. Promote and strengthen NARA mentorship and growth opportunities such as the Capstone Program, Details, Cross Training, and the Leadership Experience Program.
 - Simplify and standardize the application process for volunteers.
 - Develop targeted recruitment strategies for BIPOC.
 - Foster connections with organizations in underserved communities to build a new generation of stakeholders and expand interest in National Archives Museum careers.
 - Review position descriptions to consider if necessary job qualifications align with salary and benefits.
 - Define relevant qualifications for position descriptions that do not create unneeded and possibly discriminatory hurdles for candidates.
 - Create positions with career ladders in mind, outlining a ladder in the position description.

- o Consider if there are multiple pathways to appropriate qualification for an advertised position.
- **Provide Training Focused on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion:** Making NARA spaces inclusive, equitable, and accessible for its diverse employees and audiences means ensuring that all NARA employees are educated and able to meaningfully engage with one another and the public. The Subgroup recommends creating DEAI-focused training opportunities that begin with onboarding and continue throughout a NARA employee's career. The training should be regularly updated to reflect ever-evolving terminology and practices that promote inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. [\[Return to report, M2\]](#)

2. Customers

Focusing on the Customers will enable NARA to be responsive to the needs, interests, and perspectives of diverse audiences and potential audiences. NARA must regularly and actively engage with and listen to the public—specifically the public we do not currently attract—and apply what we learn when planning new or improving existing programs, exhibits, and public spaces. To achieve a “Focus on the Customer” at NARA, we recommend the following:

- **Conduct Regular Exhibit and Program Evaluation and Audience Research:** Create an L-level museum evaluator position or earmark funds to contract an experienced professional and empower them to ensure that all substantial NARA exhibit projects are informed by input from BIPOC and evaluated to assess fulfillment of exhibition goals. The museum evaluator will oversee and coordinate research, interviews, focus groups, and collaboration with communities throughout the exhibit development process. By making comprehensive museum evaluation and visitor advocacy a regular feature of the exhibit development process, our exhibitions will reflect the experience and recognize the role of all people who have lived in what is now the United States. [\[Return to report, M4\]](#)
- **Strengthen Customer Feedback Instruments:** Create standardized survey methods that allow for more robust data collection and centralized response. Regularly review data and update survey questions to best reflect evolving terminology, standards, and trends. We believe these actions may require the use of a neutral, outside vendor or contractor.
- **Acquire Information from Underserved Communities:** Engage in conversations through focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one conversations with underrepresented audiences to better understand the barriers that restrict access.
- **Analyze and Share Findings Across the Agency:** Create an agency-wide archive of evaluation and survey results and social media feedback. Though this archive should be a search tool available to all NARA staff, analyses of evaluations and surveys and the trends revealed through such analyses should be distributed regularly by NARA Communications.
- **Monitor Social Media and Review Sites:** Engage in meaningful, standardized, and regularly scheduled review of existing third-party review platforms and social media—such as, but not limited to, Yelp, Tripadvisor, Twitter, and Facebook—to learn about visitor experiences and their perceptions of NARA museums. [\[Return to report, M3\]](#)

3. Exhibits

Focusing on Exhibits will enable NARA to create content and spaces that reflect the diverse nature of both NARA's holdings and the public. NARA must raise up the voices of BIPOC by highlighting BIPOC lives and experiences in all exhibits we show and break down barriers to BIPOC access to our exhibits by increasing outreach, providing translations, and extending our digital resources. To achieve a “Focus on Exhibits” at NARA, we recommend the following:

- **Fill Gaps in the Record:** Federal government archival records contain gaps, silences, erasures, and distortions of marginalized peoples, especially BIPOC. Exhibit developers must seek to overcome these obstacles when selecting archival records for display. When NARA records fail to adequately or accurately document the experiences of BIPOC, we must seek alternative methods

informed by the latest scholarship, such as recontextualization and external loans. [\[Return to report, M5\]](#)

- **Reimagine the Rotunda:** Seek funding through the Mellon Foundation’s Monuments Project or other partnerships to work with artists and community groups to rethink, recontextualize, and revitalize the Rotunda. The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026 is an opportune moment to unveil a reimagined signature space. By recontextualizing the murals and architectural elements and installing a new exhibition, NARA could create a more inclusive and historically accurate tribute to the nation’s founding. Memorials to the contributions of women, Indigenous Americans, and enslaved peoples will be a central element of the project. These might take the form of sculptures commissioned for the Rotunda’s empty niches, projection-mapping, or other innovations. [\[Return to report, M6\]](#)
- **Address Accessibility:** Broaden access to our exhibits by providing non-English language translation and ADA-required accommodations, like recorded audio descriptions and closed captioning. Use audience research to determine which languages are spoken in each museum locality and provide downloadable translations and adaptive technologies that visitors may access on their own devices to address language and disability barriers. Build partnerships with experts and other organizations that serve audiences with various accessibility needs. Think in terms of “universal design” when creating exhibits, programming, and content for the public. All areas of the museum facility should be accessible, both for the public and for staff. Create a NARA Task Force on Accessibility to identify accessibility barriers. [\[Return to report, M7\]](#)
- **Devise Standards for the Presentation of Difficult History:** Develop standards and guidelines for the presentation and interpretation of holdings to prevent censorship or avoidance of potentially disturbing subject matter. Priorities include sensitivity in the selection of display items and allowing visitors to engage with upsetting content in an informed way through the use of content warnings, disclaimers, or removable covers for sensitive content. A style guide should denote anti-racist terminology (e.g., use of “enslaved people” rather than “slaves”) and should be regularly revised as language changes. NARA should turn to comparable institutions that are already engaged in combating structural racism for examples of standards and guidelines for presenting difficult history. [NOTE: Library Directors are aware of ongoing examination of existing policy in this area, but more communication and education are necessary for this to take full effect.] [\[Return to report, M8\]](#)

4. Outreach

Focusing on Outreach will play a critical role in heightening audience engagement and perception of the agency for BIPOC. To attract a diverse audience that reflects the U.S. population, improve the museum experience, and foster a reputation as a welcoming and relevant experience for all visitors, we recommend the following outreach activities:

- **Develop Long-Term Strategic Alliances with Partner Entities in BIPOC Communities to Enhance Outreach Across All NARA Locations:** NARA as a whole has limited resources, staff, and time. It is therefore imperative that serious thought and consideration be given to long-term strategic alliances with external partners across all NARA sites—and particularly those with staff in R and L. External partnerships present an opportunity to not only enhance agency offerings but also grow audience development and engagement with communities not normally seen or represented in program attendance. Examples include opportunities for symposiums to highlight record collections, panel discussions on current event topics, and film series that correlate to holdings or films that are currently in NARA collections. External partnerships should also be mutually beneficial, supporting audiences beyond NARA programming. [\[Return to report, M10\]](#)
- **Develop a Unified Communications/Marketing Message that Resonates with BIPOC Audiences:** To recognize and be flexible in regard to changing societal values and social movements, NARA must establish a unified communications strategy with regard to outreach to BIPOC audiences, partners, and stakeholders by prioritizing marketing campaigns targeted at historically underserved communities. This could be accomplished through NARA-wide initiatives or themes that focus on specific aspects of U.S. history and culture or by celebrating significant commemorations and anniversaries that are developed and implemented in a cohesive manner

and incorporate the stories of BIPOC individuals. Through these initiatives, NARA can feature programs or records related to particular communities, histories, or interests; connect programming to local education standards so educators will be motivated to bring student groups; and develop relationships with BIPOC communities and partners. In addition, NARA must plan to incorporate into the *Me to We* national civics education project a goal of attracting diverse audiences. [\[Return to report, M9\]](#)

- **Establish a Clearly Defined Virtual Outreach Program, Specifically Targeting BIPOC:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff across the agency have been forced to switch most of their operations to online and virtual work. The shift of the Archives Sleepover to a Virtual Pajama Party saw a tenfold increase in registrations (from 60 to 600+), and the movement of the Young Learners programs (an interactive museum education program that introduces younger audiences to famous historical individuals) to a virtual environment also resulted in a significant increase in participants (from the typical 15–25 on-site participants to 2600+ views on YouTube). Given the popularity of these recent virtual programs, NARA should develop additional virtual programs designed to reach marginalized communities who may otherwise not be able to attend in-person events. A long-term recommendation for this goal would include an outreach team dedicated to working with BIPOC communities and organizational work that actively combats systemic racism. [\[Return to report, M11\]](#)

Conclusion

The commitment to make NARA's exhibits, educational services, and public programs inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible will be an ongoing effort and must become a core tenet of all NARA work. Creating a culture of listening is an immediate step NARA can take to make strides towards ensuring a diversity of representation, viewpoints, and accessibility. The Subgroup recommends in the short-term that:

- NARA leadership continues to seek and listen to staff input around racism within the agency, through the use of various tools (e.g., local site discussion groups, feedback tools, surveys).
- NARA seeks and listens to current and potential customer input by engaging in conversation through focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one conversations with underrepresented audience communities to better understand the barriers that restrict the use of agency resources.

These immediate steps will set NARA up to continue with the long-range initiatives outlined in this document. Implementation of these recommendations will require resources and dedication at all levels of the agency. We believe each of these long-range initiatives will require:

- **Policy:** Enact agency-wide policies to ensure customer-focused information is regularly collected and analyzed. Establish working groups to review the information on an ongoing/scheduled basis. Empower groups to recommend policies to improve customer relations to agency leadership.
- **Accountability:** Set measurable goals for museum attendance and customer satisfaction for BIPOC. Hold upper management accountable to these goals.
- **Staff and Resources:** Commit to providing adequate staffing and resources to meet the above goals. Ensure that staff who work directly or indirectly with visitors have a base knowledge of the importance of anti-racism and DEAI through regularly updated training.
- **Communication and Openness:** Create opportunities for museum staff in like positions across the agency and Presidential Libraries to share wins, lessons learned, etc.
- **Community of Cultural and Historical Institutions:** Recognize the value of the efforts and standards of other institutions. Form strategic alliances with external museum practitioners, working to dismantle racism.

Museum Subgroup Supplement

Draft Proposal to Reframe and Revitalize the Visitor Experience in the Rotunda

Submitted by: Alice Kamps, Curator, LO

February 18, 2021

Reimagine the Rotunda

Background

Architect John Russell Pope designed the National Archives Rotunda as a shrine to the founding documents of the United States. Its neoclassical architecture ties American democracy to ideals of Ancient Greece and Rome. The oculus, marble columns, bronze medallions, and other architectural elements speak of significance, permanence, and security. Dominating the curved walls of the space, allegorical murals pay tribute to the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The exhibition in the cases beneath the murals is consonant with the worshipful atmosphere created by the architecture. Through facsimile documents, images, and text panels, the exhibit explores the origins, meaning, and relevance of the founding documents in largely celebratory language.

Although the content in the cases flanking the founding documents was installed less than a decade ago, the Rotunda and the view of history it presents are products of the 1930s. Its reverential, quasi-religious treatment of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights does not adequately reflect a full history of the founding of the United States. And as we are learning through the comments of staff and visitors, some find the Rotunda's language and imagery exclusionary. In a survey circulated by the Museum Subgroup of the Archivist's Task Force on Racism, one respondent commented that it is tone deaf and oblivious to use the term "Charters of Freedom" to refer to "documents that institutionalized slavery." Another reported a Black senior congressional staffer rejected the term outright. "Those aren't my Charters of Freedom," he said. For him and many others, these documents represent the entrenchment of chattel slavery, denial of rights to women, and triumph of European colonists over the original inhabitants of North America.

Contemporary Context

The United States is currently reckoning with its past in unprecedented ways. The Black Lives Matter Movement has heightened interest in the history of systemic racism and fueled calls to remove or recontextualize monuments. Recent publications on the history of inequality have found large audiences. The *New York Times* 1619 Project, which proposes an alternative founding date and explores the lasting effects of slavery, has been the subject of nationwide interest and debate. Books such as Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's monograph *Stamped from the Beginning* and *400 Souls: A Community History of African America*, debuted in the number-one position of the *New York Times* Best Seller List. Centuries-old Confederate monuments have been removed, and streets and institutions have been renamed.

These developments have not been universally celebrated. Five prominent historians published an opinion piece in the *New York Times* refuting some of the claims made by the 1619 Project. And standing at a lectern in the Rotunda, former President Donald Trump excoriated the special edition of the *New York Times*. His administration later established a group called the 1776 Commission, since abolished, to promote patriotic education. But the backlash was in part a response to the popularity of the 1619 Project. Schools in all 50 states have adopted curriculum materials based on the project. As Northwestern University African American Studies historian Leslie Ann Harris argued in *Politico*, "Over the past half-century, important foundational work on the history and legacy of slavery has been done by a multiracial group of scholars who are committed to a broad understanding of U.S. history—one that

centers on race without denying the roles of other influences or erasing the contributions of White elites. An accurate understanding of our history must present a comprehensive picture, and it's by paying attention to these scholars that we'll get there."

As an institution dedicated to helping people understand U.S. history through access to government records, the National Archives must embrace the past in all its complexity, exploring both triumphs and tragedies. While there is much to revere and honor about the government established by the founding documents and the men who created them, we must also honor and memorialize non-White, non-male, and non-European Americans whose hard work, struggles, and sacrifices helped build the country. We must bear witness to the dislocation and genocide of American Indians, the enslavement of Africans, and the denial of women's equality. If the Rotunda is to be a place that welcomes and serves all visitors, it must present a full and accurate history of the founding documents.

Approach: New Language, New Artwork, New Exhibition

Reimagining the Rotunda can be achieved without radically altering this magnificent architectural space. To begin, National Archives staff and volunteers should adjust the way they speak to visitors, situating the design of the Rotunda and the vision of the United States it represents in historical context. With attention to word choice and sensitivity to various audiences, it is possible to invite conversation about the ways that our understanding of the founding era has evolved over the last 80 years. In addition, new sculptural elements, an updated exhibition, and revisions to the catalog, brochure, website, and educational materials could transform our approach to the space without fundamentally altering the Rotunda itself. Finally, the Archives must either retire the expression "Charters of Freedom" or expand its meaning to encompass additional documents (like the Reconstruction Amendments, 19th Amendment, and Civil and Voting Rights Acts) and display them with equal honor and reverence.

Preliminary Concepts

1. Sculpture

There are four niches in the walls of the Rotunda that the architect likely intended to be filled with sculptural figures. These empty spaces are ready-made platforms for new memorials. The groups currently missing from the story told by the Faulkner murals—women, American Indians, and enslaved people—are potential subjects for new memorials. To design these new monuments, the National Archives might commission a diverse group of contemporary artists to create site-specific work for one or more of the alcoves reflecting a variety of interpretations of the founding documents. The commissioned works might be on exhibit as a series that rotates annually, culminating in a large ambitious installation to celebrate the sesquicentennial anniversary of the printing of the Declaration of Independence.

2. Murals

The National Archives should consider options to address the problems presented by the Faulkner murals. While these massive paintings are historically significant and loved by many, others find them oppressive and exclusionary. "The murals," said one respondent to the Museum Subgroup's survey, are "an homage to White America." One possibility is to commission additional murals for the walls in the Rotunda Gallery. Another is to stage dance or performance art in the space that invites dialogue about the ways that the United States has mythologized the founding era.

3. Exhibition Cases

Replacing the exhibition within the cases to the right and left of the founding documents could be done efficiently and with relatively little expense. The following are recommendations for new content for those displays.

- A more expansive view of the “founding” that acknowledges the contributions of Native Americans, Enslaved Africans, and women. This might include important stories like the influence of the Iroquois Confederacy’s democratic principles and political system on the Constitution of the United States.
- Elucidation of references to slavery in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the slaveholding interests of many of the founders, and the compromises made to appease Southern states.
- Acknowledgement of opposition to slavery at the time of the American Revolution: enslaved Africans’ struggles to attain freedom, the existence of the abolition movement, and the recognition of the contradiction inherent in the proclamation of ideals like “equality” and “freedom” by the same people who promoted continuation of Indian removal and chattel slavery.
- Invitation to discuss and reflect on contradictions inherent in the soaring rhetoric of the time and the reality of the experiences of those who were not White men of property.
- Celebration of advancements toward freedom made by individuals like Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and Susan B. Anthony.

Funding, Partnerships, and Timing

In late 2020, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation launched the Monuments Project, “a five-year, quarter-billion-dollar commitment by the Mellon Foundation, to support efforts to recalibrate the assumed center of our national narratives to include those who have often been denied historical recognition.” The National Archives Rotunda, the nation’s monument to its founding documents, would appear to be a prime candidate for the Monuments Project or similar efforts. Working with a partner like the Monuments Lab, a public art and history studio based in Philadelphia, would ignite and strengthen the initiative; as would collaboration with artists, community groups, and contemporary historians. In addition to partnering with outside agencies, the project should be informed by audience research and public engagement in the development process. Including members of the public in the project will also help the Archives forecast and address reactions and concerns to the changes. The rollout of the project should be carefully choreographed and publicized. An ideal time to unveil the final “reimagined Rotunda” would be the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. However components of the project, like the website, could be launched earlier.

Conclusion

Reimagining the Rotunda will stir controversy. Many Americans have embraced an idealized story of the nation’s founding as part of their personal identities. Those who interpret changes to the Rotunda as a challenge to passionately held beliefs may respond negatively. To avoid alienating a segment of our audience as we work toward a more inclusive approach, we must be careful to present the project as a means of adding to, rather than repudiating, the celebration of the nation’s origins. We must emphasize the idea that the traditional story of the founding fathers is not the whole story. There were women, Indigenous Americans, and enslaved people who contributed. Freedom wasn’t fully chartered by the three documents in the Rotunda. It took many additional documents, court decisions, and movements to approach that goal. It is time for the National Archives to embrace the complexity of this story, to encourage discussion of our difficult and divided history, and to acknowledge, welcome, and include the entirety of We the People in the experience of its signature space. As one staff member commented, the Rotunda “should ideally connect all Americans to NARA and the history of the U.S., not just white Americans.”