



Gender
Equity in
Museums
Movement

March 2, 2020

I think we were all stunned by the *New York Times*' article detailing the harassment by Joshua Helmer at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Erie Museum of Art, and the subsequent petition calling for his dismissal that spread like wildfire across the museum community. The rebuke was sharp and swift – Helmer out, statements from PMA staff saying his predatory behavior was just “the tip of the iceberg,” and at least one additional report documenting his questionable decision-making around deaccessioning in Erie.

We know Helmer's behavior is not isolated. Our own research bears out that 62% of museum workers (female, male, and nonbinary) have witnessed or been the subjects of gender-based discriminatory practices. And, certainly, the fact that #MuseumMeToo was trending on social media during the peak of the Helmer story is a clear indication that many, many people in the museum workforce have been or are being touched by harassment every day.

This is exactly why the Gender Equity in Museums Movement (GEMM) came into being.

Operating on the premise of “be the change you want to see in the world,” GEMM recently launched a [pledge](#) asking museum colleagues far and wide to make a personal commitment to ending sexual harassment in the workplace. To date, nearly 600 people have signed the pledge and, for that, we are heartened. But that's just the tip of the museum workforce iceberg. (The Pledge's contents appear on the following page.)

We at GEMM call upon you, as the leader of an important professional association, to do two things to advance gender equity and diversity as a foundational building block of professional advancement among your members:

- actively promote signing and sharing of the [GEMM Pledge](#) among your members.
- require gender equity and diversity policies and related language for any organizations pursuing standards and/or certification programs or renewing their status in these programs.

We ask you to take a strong and visible stance against inequity in all its forms among member organizations and their boards of trustees/directors.

The #TimesNow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Anne W. Aronson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gender Equity in Museums Movement (GEMM) asks you to make a personal commitment to ending sexual harassment in the museum workplace by signing this pledge.

We believe everyone on the gender spectrum is a strong and valuable resource for museums and heritage institutions. In 2018, a survey of museum employees stated 55-percent of the 500 respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment. Organizations continue to make strides by providing sensitivity training to their staff and board members, and laws continue to be enacted to punish the organization for being inactive and the perpetrator. However, we know that in certain moments in time, we all need to play our role in making society a better place, to no longer play the quiet bystander.

GEMM believes museums and heritage organizations must make their workplaces safe spaces. It is important to hold ourselves and the museum field accountable.

Please read, consider, and sign the pledge below.

I promise:

- To create and nurture workplaces free of sexual assault and understanding of consent.
- To practice zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence.
- To intervene in situations of harassment.
- To educate myself and my professional community on issues surrounding sexism in our unique workplace.
- To refrain from sexist and disrespectful language and to speak up against it.
- To provide a safe place to work.
- To be open to dialogue about museum workers' concerns and needs.
- Please take the pledge and join us in our commitment to affect change and promote transparent museum workspaces.
- This is a public resource for the museum world, identifying individuals who've taken the GEMM pledge. It is our hope that those who sign, will hold one another accountable, and those looking to join the museum community will know of safe spaces from which to begin.

This document is not legally binding, nor will it protect any individual. Please email GEMM with any comments and / or questions.

I CONFIRM THAT ALL INFORMATION GIVEN IS TRUE, COMPLETE AND ACCURATE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Citation Link: nikhil trivedi & Aletheia Wittman (2018), "Facing Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Feminizing Museum," Journal of Museum Education, 43:3, 209-218, DOI: 10.1080/10598650.2018.1488126.