



This report is the result of the consultation on systemic racism in the arts, culture and media sectors in Montreal, conducted by DAM from November 2017 to November 2018.

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# 1. Towards a cultural equity process

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Though Montreal is a key cultural city in Quebec and across Canada, the road to ethnocultural inclusion and fairness is still long. Issues stemming from systemic racism are apparent in all segments of society, including the arts, culture, and media industry.

The discrepancy in cultural content and representation of racialized minorities in line with sociodemographic realities across Quebec and in Montreal is a striking example. In 2016, 13% of the Quebec population (Statistics Canada, 2016) and 32,9% of the Montreal population (Ville de Montréal, 2016) identified with one or more visible minority groups listed in the Statistics Canada categories.

Addressing racial discrimination in the cultural industry is not only crucial for those working in this industry (e.g., artists, cultural workers, media professionals) but also crucial for society. The challenges behind imagining inclusive narratives that take into account racialized individuals and communities reveal the many obstacles in the industry, thus hindering a cultural equity process.

This is much more than a general principle: All cultural organizations and institutions must undertake the cultural equity process by implementing an action plan that restores access to resources, opportunities, and visibility to those who are denied it (Canada Council for the Arts, 2018). The unequal distribution is “often a result of historic realities of conquest, colonialism, cultural domination and systemic exclusion” (Canada Council for the Arts, 2017, 5).

*DAM believes that cultural equity must acknowledge Quebec’s plural identity and go through an active and deliberate process implemented by organizations and institutions in the cultural industry, supported by various levels of government.*

The Canada Council for the Arts defines cultural equity as “a concept which affirms that the traditions, aesthetics and expressions of all cultures have equal value” and “seeks to correct the inequalities experienced by individuals of different cultures by first identifying historical and current power imbalances between cultural groups and by recognizing and respecting fundamental characteristics which distinguish these groups from each other.”

DAM believes that cultural equity must acknowledge Quebec’s plural identity and go through an active and deliberate process implemented by organizations and institutions in the cultural industry, supported by various levels of government. This process must rebalance the cultural ecosystem through customized, appropriate measures that meet the specific needs of arts, cultural workers, and media professionals facing systemic obstacles stemming from racialization.

A cultural equity process is vital, for cultural rights for all depend on them (Fribourg Declaration, 2007). The Fribourg Declaration enables us to “surpass the problem of artistic, organizational, and economic principles some organizations hide behind to avoid explaining the lack of representativity and addressing issues from a rights perspective.

These are the rights artists have to practise their art, pass traditions along; rights of all citizens to relate to the cultural offer; and legitimately and concretely support the definition of a common cultural project in Montreal” (Robillard and Pruneau 2017). Media outlets have a cultural role in building a common identity and spreading that identity within a collective psyche. A cultural equity process applies to both cultural and artistic and media organizations and institutions.



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## 8. DAM Recommendations

With regard to categories of systemic obstacles, a colonial relationship in the industry is still prevalent, preventing a cultural equity process. Hence, we must decolonize the arts, culture, and media sectors. DAM calls on all cultural and media institutions and the three levels of government to

- ▶ acknowledge the existence of systemic obstacles related to ethnocentric references, “otherness,” and false representation of racialized persons and communities which are the result of the heart of an inherited and unfair racial system that excludes them from the arts, cultural, and media sectors;
- ▶ acknowledge resistance from racialized persons and communities, as well as awareness efforts carried out by artists, cultural workers, media professionals, citizens, activists, and on-site organizations during anti-racist fights for many years;
- ▶ acknowledge the 2015–2024 International Decade for People of African Descent proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 68/237, and commit to taking concrete measures to give full effect to people’s cultural rights;
- ▶ commit to a cultural equity process from an inclusive, anti-racist, and decolonized perspective as suggested in the following recommendations, taken from solutions offered by participants during the consultation, which will define the concerted action plan DAM seeks to implement with partner organizations and institutions following this report.

In addition, DAM calls on anti-racist activists to continue their awareness-raising efforts in the industry and for the public through workshops, congresses, round-table discussions, audio-visual broadcasts, newspaper columns, articles, and so on.

Consultation exercises are crucial and essential, for they provide a voice to racialized individuals who can propose solutions that may be applied to effect a concrete change in their professional realities. Testimonies from individuals facing racial discrimination in the industry brought to light many established reflections concerning actions to take to eliminate racism. Since racism is systemic, we must first zero in on macro-level solutions to guarantee that cultural institutions and organizations reflect Montreal and Quebec.

After considering the solutions participants provided during the consultation, DAM has come up with a list of recommendations based on six approaches :

**Awareness / Representation / Recruitment / Funding / Mediation and integration mechanisms in the arts / References and redress mechanisms**

## AWARENESS

DAM RECOMMENDS :

1 that cultural and media institutions and organizations organize anti-racist training sessions for their work teams, boards, and committees. The training sessions would include the intersectional approach, as well as dialogues to encourage a collective and individual thought process on sharing privileges in a social justice perspective.

2 that media institutions become aware of the social impact false representation has on racialized individuals and communities; that journalists be aware of their unconscious biases and privilege to have a platform; and that journalists reassess their role in educating the public on matters and realities of systemic racism.

3 that the artistic, cultural, and academic sectors commit to deconstructing ethnocentrism and to decolonization (e.g., artistic expressions, aesthetics, techniques, languages and parlances, cultural mixing, stylistic mixing, concepts surrounding excellence and contemporaneity, selection criteria), and be aware of cultural appropriation, as well as narratives and stories belonging to racialized individuals and communities.

## REPRESENTATION

DAM RECOMMENDS :

4 that cultural and media institutions and organizations set a quota system or a “conscience threshold”<sup>1</sup> to enable an increase in representation for a fair representation of racialized individuals in decision-making positions—e.g., boards, supervisors, juries and assessment committees, selection panels, programming or steering committees—and in work teams. This process must enable swift change, based on renewal dates for these authorities.

5 that faculties, schools, departments, and institutes in the arts, culture, and media sectors set a quota system or “conscience threshold” to enable an increase in representation that leads to a fair representation of racialized individuals among teaching staff and student bodies, and in decision-making and advisory boards.

6 that cultural and media institutions and organizations provide a fair representation to depict ethnocultural realities in Montreal, as well as a positive representation of racialized individuals and communities to avoid reproducing stereotypes and prejudices, and create inclusive artistic, cultural, and media programming.

7 that screenwriting, direction, production, and broadcasting sectors adhere to the principle of consistent portrayal in a character hailing from a racialized community (i.e., a character from a racialized community must be played by an actor of the same community) and positively diversify roles given to racialized actors to prevent race from becoming central to their careers, i.e., colour-conscious casting<sup>2</sup>.

8 that art-, culture-, or media-related professional associations and unions implement recognition systems and equivalence mechanisms to acknowledge the value of professional experience and skills gained overseas, and that these associations and unions be representative of ethnocultural realities in Montreal and Quebec to defend the rights and interests of racialized actors in the industry.

<sup>1</sup> Proposed by Jérôme Pruneau, the “conscience threshold” refers to the conscious and individual development on behalf of each person in a decision-making or power position, based on a social responsibility to consider according to an existing and known sociodemographic. Depending on the sociodemographic, the appropriate strategy must be implemented to include a specific number of racialized individuals in its institution—as close as possible to the sociodemographic measure. For instance, the “conscience threshold” in a Montreal organization board of 10 people must lead to a proactive measure that includes at least three or four people on the board. These three or four individuals would represent the “conscience threshold.”

<sup>2</sup> See Recommendation 24.

## RECRUITMENT

DAM RECOMMENDS :

**9** that cultural and media institutions and organizations implement effective, fair recruitment measures, such as the Employment Equity Regulations, in addition to transparency mechanisms in the recruitment process.

**10** that the recruitment process come with an active search process for candidates from racialized communities and incentives for applications by said candidates.

**11** that cultural and media organizations and institutions recruit racialized individuals for permanent positions in all existing departments to guarantee that individuals are represented in all fields of expertise (e.g., production, broadcasting, communication, promotion, management, research, mediation), artistic disciplines (e.g., media, digital, and visual arts, film and television, theatre, circus, tales, dance, literature, fashion, and music), and media circles (e.g., posters, print media, television, radio, new information and communications technology, social media, and film).

**12** that cultural and media institutions and organizations comply with the hourly rate to pay all professionals, and that the hourly rate be displayed for transparency.

## FUNDING

DAM RECOMMENDS :

**13** that funding bodies increase grants and earmark more funds for grants given to racialized artists and presentation, service, and production organizations working for racialized artists.

**14** that funding bodies come up with incentives (e.g., bonuses) for cultural and media institutions and organizations with inclusive measures for racialized individuals in their programs and projects, and who show transparency in the process.

**15** that cultural and media institutions and organizations provide grants for first-time, well-paid jobs or optimize said jobs, and that these bodies provide specific funding for a first art project made in Quebec.

**16** that specific institutions designed for businesspeople (e.g., PME MTL, Emploi-Québec, Entreprendre ici) develop or strengthen entrepreneurial programs for artists, i.e., freelance artisans and cultural workers.

**17** that all three levels of government provide grants for artistic creation, alternative media development, and inclusive digital and television platforms designed by racialized individuals and communities to guarantee that these platforms give rise to the desired social transformation.

**18** that cultural and media organizations subsidize copy editing and proofreading services to foster inclusion of allophone immigrants, thereby acknowledging their professional skills, and that said programs include alternatives for applying for grants.

**19** that all three levels of government fund leadership training and mentoring programs and projects in skill transfer for designing art, cultural, and media projects for individuals from racialized communities. This will be done in an intersectional perspective (e.g., racialized women from underprivileged communities) to ensure ongoing representation mirroring Montreal demographics.

**20** that all three levels of government provide greater funding in service organizations to increase support for racialized artists.

## MEDIATION AND INTEGRATION MECHANISMS IN THE ARTS

DAM RECOMMENDS :

**21** that cultural and media organizations and institutions strengthen and increase integration projects for racialized artists in the industry.

**22** that presentation, service, and production organizations increase their mediation services to encourage racialized artists to present their projects and networking activities to give said artists greater exposure in the industry.

**23** that cultural and media organizations and institutions make an inventory of talents from racialized communities in each area of expertise, artistic discipline, and media discipline.

**24** that production organizations implement a colour-conscious casting process.

**25** that each Montreal-based theatre hold auditions for racialized actors.

**26** that cultural organizations and institutions establish an advisory committee for selection agents to achieve inclusive programming.

**27** that cultural and media organizations and institutions set up an implementation committee and a concerted action plan for a cultural equity process.

## REFERENCES AND REDRESS MECHANISMS

DAM RECOMMENDS :

**28** that media institutions draft a thorough ethical charter applicable to team members and colleagues. The charter would highlight individuals' social responsibility to counter underrepresentation and false representation of racialized individuals and communities, as well as provide sanctions for racist discourse, bringing with such action complaint and whistle-blowing mechanisms.

**29** that cultural and media organizations and institutions provide for disciplinary proceedings against staff members on grounds of racial and religious discrimination for racialized individuals and communities.

**30** that the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion (MIDI) publish a directory of existing resources for individuals facing racial discrimination.

**31** that the Quebec government launch a public inquiry into systemic racism for all areas of society, including the art, culture, and media sectors. At the end of that inquiry, a proposed law against racism would be tabled in the National Assembly.

*“Not white enough”*

*“Imbalance of power”*

*“Why do we have to make noise [to be considered]?!”*

*“Position yourself”*

*“As a result, visible minorities are caught in the cross fire and are expected to choose sides. The side you choose and the extent to which you assimilate will determine your treatment.”*

*“It creates a tension in my mental space in a way that stops me from being fully productive. I feel like I need to stop what I am doing to change a bad impression someone could have of me. Until that point the action is positive. But later on, when you try to engage friendly to remove stigmas, the person come to react even more badly by saying worst things, the experience of trying to make good become useless.”*

*“Take me or leave me”*

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