

# WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE (DON'T) TALK ABOUT WOMEN IN MUSEUMS

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**American  
Alliance of  
Museums**

Champion Museums. Nurture Excellence.

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# Slide Notes

- We are here to **EMPOWER** you with information and stories from our research.
- To help **you MAKE CHANGE** toward gender equity in your career and/or institutions
- And to **SPARK A MOVEMENT** towards gender equity, with the help of **EVERYONE** in the room.

# Some Stats

## Joan and Anne

- Survey: 455 responses
- Focus Groups: 30 individuals
- One-on-One Interviews: 35 individuals
- Viewers of Women|Museums Posts: 5,800+

## Jessica

- Survey: 550 responses (women in the arts in 2015)
- One-on-One Interviews: 12 women leading arts institutions in DC/MD/VA
- Website visits: 6000+ [www.equalarty.com](http://www.equalarty.com) (between Jan 2015-now)

## Marieke

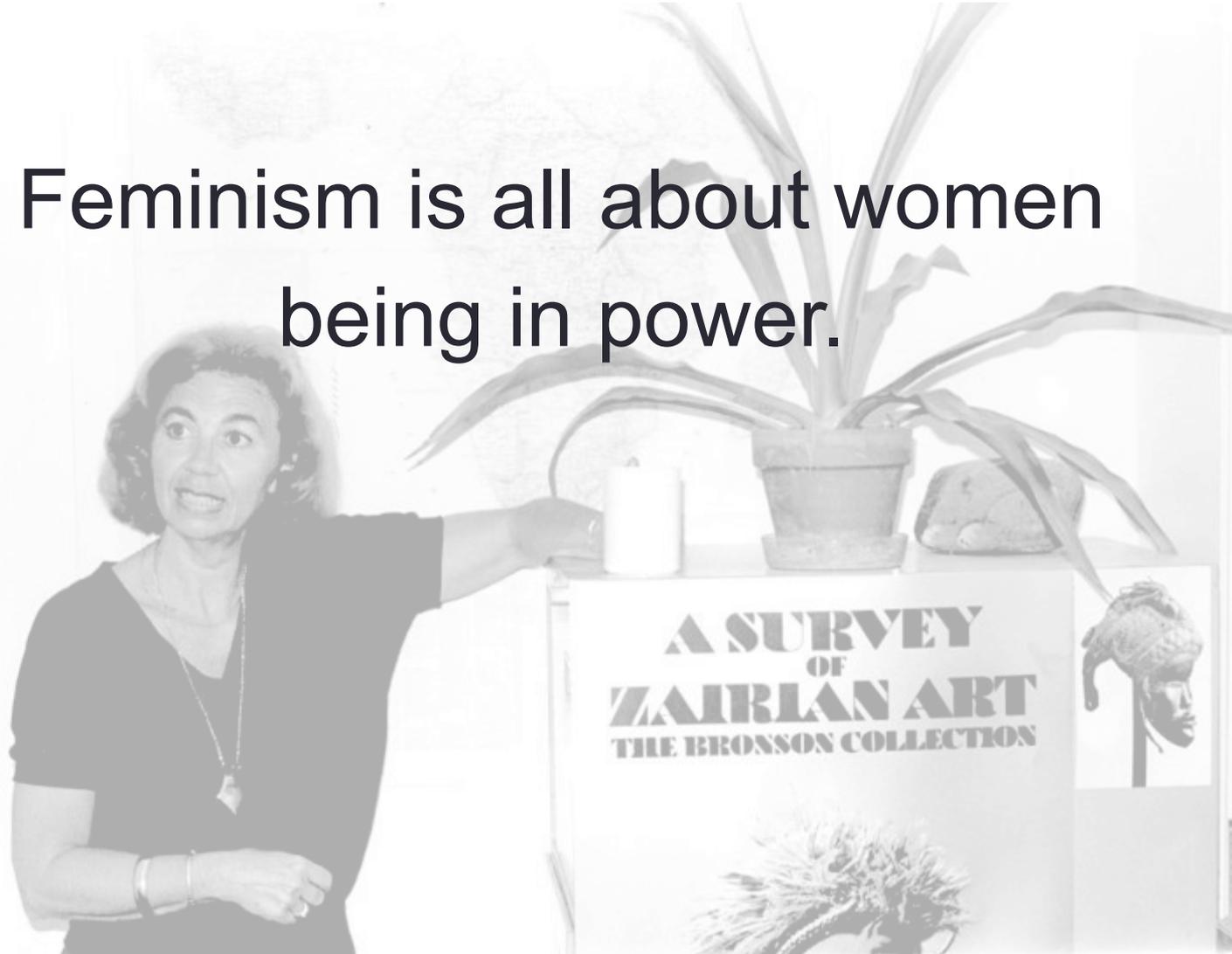
- 2 Surveys: 2014 & 2016 (new surveys now released annually)
- Responses: 650+
- Informal/anonymous chats: Countless and on-going

# Slide Notes

- All four presenters have done extensive research about or around this topic in various capacities. Joan and Anne are putting together a book on the topic of women and museums. Jessica did her graduate capstone research about gender equity in leadership positions in the arts, and Marieke continually surveys folks about museum working environments for her website, Joyful Museums.
- Through all of this research, the presenters have collectively spoken to or heard from over **1600 people**, mostly women, about these topics.

# Myth #1

Feminism is all about women  
being in power.



# Slide Notes

False.

**“Feminism is the radical notion that women are people”** - Marie Shear

When we talk about women in museums, we are talking about equity for *people* in the museum world. And women are people.

Women make up nearly 50% of the population and about 48% of the workforce. They should be treated the same as their male counterparts.

Lots of people don't know what "Feminism" really means.

A pink-collar field is not a feminist issue. In a recent survey conducted by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation we learned that while 94-percent of the 1,222 respondents believe “that men and women should be social, political and economic equals,” 44-percent of them described themselves as either “not a feminist” or “anti-feminist.” So while the word feminist may have worn out its welcome, the sentiments it comes with have not nor has the need for change.

All gender identities have a place.

Problems won't be solved just because there is a woman at the top.

## Myth #2

The contributions of women in museums are evident.

Photo: WPA worker instructs children in mounting the day's catch of insects at the Children's Museum in Brooklyn, N.Y.; (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

# Slide Notes

- Many people don't fully understand the contributions of women as museum founders, philanthropists, volunteers, and professionals. Frequently forgotten are women like Louisa Bird Cunningham and her daughter Ann Pamela, Laura Bragg, Joan Maynard, Susan Stitt, Jane Glaser, Ellen Dorothy Schultz Quillin, and Kendall Taylor, as well as organizations such as the Colonial Dames and the Junior League. The point here is that we in 21<sup>st</sup> century museums owe an incredible debt to earlier generations of female museum pioneers. Women in the museum field provide us with a legacy of successful preservation efforts, a commitment to public engagement, an early embrace of modernism, the creation of the first children's museums, and breaking the audience color barrier. And that's just the beginning.
- In addition to their unheralded history, women in the museum field also made changes backstage in the world of museum work. In 1973 Susan Stitt helped found AAM's first and only women's caucus in Mexico City. A year later the Caucus had six regional representatives who drafted resolutions regarding the field's discriminatory practices. After that, silence until the early 1980's and '90's when women's voices were heard sporadically in protest up until 2015 and the advent of Museum Workers Speak, and Kaywin Feldman's AAM speech May 27, 2016.

## Myth #3

The salary disparity between male and female museum workers is a thing of the past.

Photo: Doris Mable Cochran (1898-1968), herpetologist in the Division of Reptiles and Amphibians of the United States National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History), 1954; [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

# Slide Notes

- False.
- Indeed, the pay gap is shrinking and getting more equitable. And there are even some recent studies showing that women of top for-profit organizations are getting paid *more* than men, because they are so hard to come by.
- But in the museum world – and very much so in the art museum world – women earn on “**average 79 cents for every dollar a man earns**”. (From **AAMD 2014 study**)
- The gap widens significantly at the top institutions. And is true among women all across the arts sector, not just museums.
- So what can be done? We need to continue **talking about salary disparities**. Money seems to be a taboo subject, especially among coworkers. It’s time to change that and start talking about it. Find out what people in your positions make. Don’t be afraid to **negotiate**.
- There is still a pay glass ceiling. In its 2014 report the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) stated that the larger a museum’s budget the less likely an art museum
- is to have a female director. The situation at large history and science museums is regrettably similar: the larger the budget the more likely leadership positions are male.
- Contributing factors include: lack of HR departments, not disclosing salary ranges in job postings, not teaching negotiations skills.
- Salary is only a part of the compensation package
- From one of the Joyful Museums surveys: “I am lucky to have a lot of flexibility around childcare, but I constantly feel like I'm perceived as not working as hard as everyone else because I'm not physically in the building more. If there was an understanding that time at your desk does not equal productivity/value to the institution, it would be a huge weight off my shoulders and would enable me to focus more.”

## Myth #4

There are so many women in the museum field now that gender equity will happen on its own.

Photo: Office scene in Delgado Museum (now New Orleans Museum of Art), 1937;  
Uncredited WPA photographer [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

# Slide Notes

- We have many people say to us that the museum field is dominated by women when in point of fact the Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that the field is fairly evenly split between men and women. Women do cluster into certain job titles, departments, and types of museums, so that it may seem as though there are more women overall in the field than there really are. That said, the field is at a tipping point – a pink collar tipping point. On the face of it, one might think that once women become 51%, 60%, 70% or 80% of the field, all issues with gender would be solved. A field dominated by women does not mean it ceases to have issues with equal pay, with maternity/paternity leave, with childcare needs or with sexual harassment. And economists warn that a field dominated by one gender makes the overall economy less efficient and the stigma around women's work makes it difficult to hire.
- Kaywin Feldman mentioned yesterday at the keynote address, **while 45% of the jobs in art museums are held by women, only 2 lead the largest encyclopedic museums.**
- Gender equity isn't just about numbers, it's about that *equity* part and being treated fairly. That means better policies for pay rates, maternity leave, childcare options, etc.
- Some interesting stories came out of this topic during research for the Equalarty project: the topic of **mean girls**. As more and more women make their way into the field, it seems more and more of them are not being supportive of others. Many respondents told terrible stories about this in the Equalarty survey, nothing things like "Women can be the worst supporters of other women". The CEO of Pepsi-Cola recently shared a story about how women can be so mean to other women because they think "Ha.. She failed, that means I'll be able to take her place"

# Myth #5

It's not about gender anymore.

# Slide Notes

- This myth is a quote from a longtime museum professional. She believes the museum world has moved on, and is now focused on diversity---that what is important is race, ethnicity and class. We don't disagree, but we believe diversity and gender are not mutually exclusive.
- In a perfect world the museum workforce would reflect the communities it serves. Children, families, and individuals would engage and learn from staffs as diverse as they are. But acknowledging the lily-whiteness and frequent privilege of our field does not mean its issues with gender have disappeared. If the field tried to consciously solve its gender problem, it would not hinder the battle for a more diverse workforce.

# Myth #6

Change only happens  
from the top down.

Photo: Viola Shelly Shantz (1895-1977), a Biologist, and Systematic Zoologist and Curator of the North American mammal collection of the Bird and Mammal Laboratories housed in the National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution Archives [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

# Slide Notes

FALSE!

- Not all of us are managers, but we can all be leaders, no matter where we are in the org chart.
- Great managers value new ideas and seek them out. --if you have one of these, awesome.
- Average managers don't know how or why to make change, but are open to your ideas if you take initiative. Start thinking of ways to do this.
- Poor managers are scared of change. If you have one of these, you need to work extra hard to find ways to introduce new ideas.
- Bottom line: we have to do something. If you aren't doing something, you are a part of the problem.

What you can do:

- Talk with your colleagues inside and out of your museum about issues. Ask how they handled your current situation in the past. Get ideas of what worked/didn't work.
- Ask your work buddy to hold you accountable. Determined to be more positive? To speak up more in meetings? To take on a new role? Your work buddy loves you and wants to help. Just like you want to help them!
- Stay positive. There will be setbacks and uncomfortable moments. Know this going in, don't devolve into grip sessions, and stay focused on your goal of making change not just for you, but for your coworkers (now and in the future).

Specific examples to promote gender equality in the workplace:

- Speak up more in meetings
- Acknowledge the input of women in meetings
- Put salary ranges in job postings
- Call out sexist behavior.
- Put men on workplace improvement committees
- Get harassment training (ask your regional association to sponsor, or partner with a nearby non-profit)
- Say no and see what happens! Women are exhausted because we take on more and are supposed to be okay with it.

Examples of actions others have taken to improve workplace culture:

- Appreciation (in any form)
- Free food
- Shared experiences, like field trips
- Fixing bad staff meetings
- Saying thank you.