

Targeted Candidate II [Iziko's response to Goniwe]

This text was originally published online by ASAI in 2006 [\[LINK\]](#)

by Jatti Bredekamp et al

[On 1 September 2006 Jatti Bredekamp, CEO of Iziko Museums, responded to Thembinkosi Goniwe's concerns about the South African National Gallery's notice for the position of trainee curator. Goniwe's intervention was initially communicated by email to Emma Bedford of the SANG on 28 July (See "Targeted Candidate"). Bredekamp copied Iziko's response to 27 persons, most of whom received Goniwe's original mail. On 4 September I emailed Bredekamp requesting permission to reproduce Iziko's response online. Later that day Khwezi Gule added his voice to the debate, followed by Mokgabudi Amos Letsoalo, who had been one of the first to comment on the issues raised by Goniwe. Subsequently Mark Hipper joined the debate. The discussion of Iziko's response went online on 11 September, without Bredekamp's letter since I had not received a reply to my request. Some of the respondents to the debate were familiar with Iziko's letter, having been on the initial list of recipients of the email exchange; others were not. Permission to post Iziko's response online was finally granted on 16 October 2006. MP]

Dear Thembinkosi Goniwe

With reference to the above, I wish to respond on behalf of Iziko to your open letter of 28th July to Emma Bedford of Iziko's Art Collections Department.

The lengthy debate started by your letter provides an opportunity to engage with the issues raised. For me, there appear to be two specific issues in relation to the advertisement for a Trainee Curator of Contemporary Art - namely, the qualifications required and the terminology used. While we recognise that knowledge of the history and theory of art is a basic requirement for training in curatorship in an art museum, equivalent qualification in the subject, from institutions other than universities, will be considered.

Although different perspectives on the use of the term 'historically disadvantaged' are valid, it should be emphasized that merit and 'historical disadvantage' are not mutually exclusive. Our advertisement used this term to accord with the requirements of the transformation grant received from the national Department of Arts and Culture. However, the issue of terminology is complex and there is little consensus on preferred usage. We welcome debate and suggestions on more appropriate terminology.

These concerns are part of broader issues of transformation in the education, museum and heritage sectors. Iziko supported Emma's application for funding to the Department of Arts and Culture for the mentorship position as a step forward in addressing the serious problem of demographic imbalance in art museum curatorship.

The debate also stimulated a discussion on a number of other matters that could be barriers to transformation. As you know, many public forums have taken place at Iziko South African National Gallery in the past and I affirm the need for Iziko to engage in an open and transparent way with its public and diverse stakeholders. It was agreed that our

Education and Public Programmes Department will organise a public forum, focusing on wider issues of transformation in Iziko.

We appreciate your willingness to initiate debate and to express your views openly and frankly. The number of participants and viewpoints expressed in this debate - both positive and negative - confirmed the importance of Iziko South African National Gallery as a cultural institution in the process of transformation. We remain committed to continued engagement.

Kind regards
Jatti Bredekamp
CEO: Iziko Museums