

# Targeted Candidate

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*by Thembinkosi Goniwe*

Dear Emma Bedford,

Please consider my concerns regarding your advertised Trainee Curator at the SANG. I am wondering how many potential candidates "from historically disadvantaged groups" that would apply given the stipulated required "Minimum qualification: BA Degree in Fine Arts or History of Art"? I am thinking of young black art practitioners who have no university or college qualification as required, for example graduates from Community Art Projects (now Arts and Media Access Centre), Ruth Prowse, FUNDA, etc - from community driven initiatives or organisations!

The question then, who really is your targeted candidate "from historically disadvantaged groups", if those without formally recognized qualifications seem to be calculatedly excluded regarding unaddressed politics of 'qualification'? Maybe this recruitment should be clear about its targeted candidate. Be frank about inviting or soliciting formally trained (university/college) graduates. If that being the case, then remove such patronising stigma: "historically disadvantaged groups"! For some black students with university/college degrees in Fine Arts are not from disadvantaged families; some are from middle and upper class families who do not neatly and un-problematically fit into the categorization:"historically disadvantaged groups".

The stipulated requirement of a "BA Degree in History of Art" is rather pretentious or misplaced given the lack of black students with such qualification; let alone how many black students in South African universities/colleges are currently registered or majoring in the history of art discipline!

My point should be clear: there is need to specify who are targeted candidates for this Trainee Curator at SANG? This points to the question of transparency and sincerity of such recruitment processes and their anticipated outcomes.

Some explanation or rather a debate is important on this important move the SANG is making to address the "serious shortage of qualified, trained or experienced art curators in South Africa from historically disadvantages groups". While questions regarding who is both qualified and experienced to train or mentor whom at the SANG are pressing and thus demand response, for now I will pause here, of course hoping to hear your response to the above concerns.

Regards,

Thembinkosi Goniwe

[Writer's note: This is a slightly edited version of a letter I wrote in response to an email Emma Bedford sent out soliciting recommendation of "any suitable candidates" to apply to a "Mentorship Programme for a Trainee Curator of Contemporary Art at Iziko South African National Gallery". My letter is a comment on the contents of the advertisement.]