

Alliance of American Museums DEAI Award - Joanne Jones-Rizzi

Video script

Over three decades in museums, Joanne Jones-Rizzi has redefined the relationships between exhibitions, programs, and culture.

Joanne has devoted her career to working on systemic change within museums so that we can find ways to welcome people who do not yet think of museums as *their* cultural institutions.

As the Science Museum of Minnesota's vice president of STEM Equity and Education, Joanne leads a team that connects the museum's work to a broader community, finding ways to make the museum available – and meaningful – for everyone.

Exhibitions [Section title is for organization only]

The issue of race, racism, and identity is a thread woven through Joanne's entire body of work.

Her career in museums began at the Children's Museum of Boston, where she co-developed *The Kid's Bridge*, an exhibition about identity, ethnicity, and race; and *Boston Black: A City Connects*, which celebrates the remarkable diversity of Boston's Black community.

Joanne joined the Science Museum of Minnesota in 2005 for the *RACE* exhibition project. Created in partnership with the American Anthropological Association, *RACE* was a first-of-its-kind exhibition that used a powerful combination of traditional interpretation techniques and carefully-cultivated community conversations to shape the national dialogue about the ways race and racism impact our systems of inequality.

RACE premiered at the Science Museum in 2007, then went on a ten-year tour of more than 50 museums around the country. More than four million people have experienced this exhibition, delving into race and racism to discover a story of science with deep and lasting societal influence.

In addition to Joanne's portfolio of powerful exhibit work, she has led the Science Museum in its efforts to be a catalyst for change. Joanne's guides a team that develops programs that help people of all backgrounds and income levels see themselves in science.

The Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center gives young people from underserved communities a chance to put science to work to create real change in their communities.

The KAYSC has created a pathway that supports leadership development, and its young people exit the program inspired to be change agents and leaders in their communities.

Under Joanne's guidance, access programs have connected nearly 80,000 people from low-income communities to the Science Museum in the past year.

This spring, Joanne leads the Science Museum into the future with a newly-adopted equity and inclusion statement that captures the museum's vision to use STEM as a tool to advocate for justice and equity.

The statement is one of the first of its kind for a science center in its boldness and honesty. It states the organization's commitment to lift up the voices of people who have been overlooked or excluded; to inform policy by illuminating inequality; and to start important conversations about topics related to equity, inclusion, and access to STEM.

Joanne's passion for equity and access has earned her national recognition as an advisor to museums on how to develop mutually empowering partnerships with communities of color. She supports organizations in their efforts to have open, honest, and difficult conversations that move our society forward to be equitable and inclusive. Her guidance and example have demonstrated to her colleagues that all change starts from within.

Joanne's work has positioned the Science Museum as a safe and supportive setting for important dialogue about how science and culture offer powerful perspectives for addressing critical community issues.

As a champion for inclusion and equity in all facets of museum work, Joanne embodies the main ideas of the *RACE* exhibition: we are far more alike than we are different. In talking to one another and in elevating voices that have historically been suppressed by the noise of an unjust system, Joanne has shown us that we can work together to lift up our communities.