

ARTFORUM

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150 ARTISTS, ARTS WORKERS SIGN OPEN LETTER CALLING TO #DISMANTLENOMA



The New Orleans Museum of Art.

More than 150 artists and art workers signed an open letter demanding the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) dismiss its leaders and address and reform its institutional culture, Hyperallergic reports. The letter was released yesterday in honor of Indigenous Peoples Day, which the missive's authors described as important "only so far as its

meaning encourages colonial institutions like NOMA to reflect on the persistent and ongoing nature of their settler violence.”

The #DismantleNOMA initiative took root this past June, when a group of former NOMA staff members alleged abuses at the museum including surveillance of and violence against BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) workers as well as wage suppression and verbal abuse in the form of racial slurs. The initiative’s founders additionally took issue with the institution’s permanent installation of a re-created plantation parlor, arguing that its presence was harmful to the Black population that makes up the majority of the museum’s audience.

Yesterday’s letter, whose signatories include Ebony G. Patterson, Nayland Blake, and Xaviera Simmons, asks the museum to “take the first step toward restoring its relationship with the New Orleans community it claims to serve by immediately implementing the thirteen changes put forth by #DismantleNOMA.”

Among the reparations called for are a public apology to BIPOC staff who have experienced discrimination, the hiring of more BIPOC curators, an investigation into the origins and history of ownership of all African and Indigenous objects in the museum’s collection, a policy ensuring all of the institution’s workers a living wage, and increased support for local BIPOC artists and institutions.

The letter additionally asks artists and arts workers “to place strict conditions on their collaboration with NOMA—to starve it of creative labor, time, energy, membership, admissions fees, etc., until all of #DismantleNOMA’s demands are met in full.”

Responding to the missive in a statement, NOMA contended that it is “committed to being an anti-racist institution” and that it has detailed the steps it will take to achieve that status in a “comprehensive Agenda for Change.”