



Implicit Bias Challenge

What is the Implicit Bias Challenge?

In inaugurating the SFDA's Office's very first Implicit Bias Challenge, District Attorney Gascón asked units within the office to think critically about the role of implicit bias in the work of a prosecutor's office and to submit a collection of images to identify and combat our implicit bias perceptions.

What is Implicit Bias?

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "implicit bias" is a term of art referring to relatively unconscious and relatively automatic features of prejudiced judgement and social behavior. The most striking and well-known research has focused on implicit attitudes towards members of socially stigmatized groups, such as African-Americans, and the LGBTQ community.

Why the Implicit Bias Challenge?

The idea for the challenge came after an office-wide training on implicit bias that District Attorney Gascón arranged for all office employees and staff to attend. During the training, an expert presented neuroscience research showing that visual markers—race, age, class, perceived sexual orientation, and gender, among others—can trigger internal processes in our brains to create positive emotions for some groups, and negative or no emotions at all for others, affecting whether we exhibit care or cruelty, or show empathy or apathy towards members of those groups.

District Attorney Gascón recognized the role of implicit bias in our work, and the tremendous impact our work has on the communities we serve. As a result, he arranged for a second training to ensure that everyone in the office had multiple opportunities to attend. He also formed an office-wide implicit bias workgroup, open to all staff, to discuss next steps about elevating the dialogue around implicit bias within the office. Through this group, the idea for the challenge was born: identify unconscious biases and reframe them, using art, in a more thoughtful and accurate light.

The Entries

A total of 11 teams submitted varied and diverse entries. Each unit chose a subject matter and, through different types of art, deconstructed the stereotypes negatively associated with it. Entries included a sensory display about physically peeling away biases, photos of inmates showcasing their humanity, and a stunning display of community members creating art, just to name a few.

The Implicit Bias Challenge Art Showcase

In celebration of the amazing work of the different units and the many artists and community members who participated in the challenge, the SFDA's Office held its first Implicit Bias Challenge Art Showcase at the beautiful 111 Minna Gallery. The event provided a space for members of the community and the office to engage and further the important dialogue around implicit bias.

