



Grantmakers in the Arts  
2003 Conference

## THE EDGE

### Proceedings from the Conference

October 19-22, 2003  
W Hotel  
Seattle, Washington

### THE EDGE BETWEEN CULTURES PRESERVING THE CULTURAL PATRIMONY OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

*Off site: Wing Luke Asian Museum*

While the stock market plummeted, foundations' funds declined, and individual donors found it hard to make their pledges, communities of color have continued in their attempts to play catch-up. Ethnic-specific museums across the country are collecting and preserving historical and artistic materials that have long been neglected by mainstream institutions. What are the challenges that these institutions face as they seek to acquire collections? What are the culturally-specific strategies that have been most effective? What stories may go undocumented if there are not immediate efforts to collect the related art and artifacts? This session will examine challenges of representing the stories of all Americans in our nation's museums.

*Moderators:* Claudine Brown  
*Nathan Cummings Foundation*

Rebecca Lowry  
*Humboldt Area Foundation*

*Panelists:* Fath Ruffins  
*National Museum of American History*

Carlos Tortolero  
*Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum*

Gloria Lomahaftewa  
*Heard Museum*

Ron Chew  
*Wing Luke Asian Museum*

*October 20, 2003, 3:00 p.m.*

**BROWN:** Thank you for coming.

In conversations that I've had with some of my own grantees, as well as others, about collecting and culturally specific museums, the first issue that comes to the table is that there are not adequate resources. I became acutely aware of this during my tenure at the Smithsonian Institution when the Alex Haley estate became available. I started getting calls from people who were saying that there are chapters from the Autobiography of Malcolm X that were not published that will be in this auction, and we don't know anyone who has the money to purchase them. And a number of things could happen.

One is they could be purchased by someone who would choose not to allow the public access. Two they could be purchased by someone who might choose to purchase them and then destroy them because they don't want that piece of history made available to the larger public.

As it turned out, an African American collector, who was an entertainment attorney, was able to buy those particular chapters of that manuscript. But it made it clear to a number of us who have worked in museums that culturally specific museums simply did not have the assets to acquire great collections when they came available. If you cannot buy the collections, then sometimes you just cannot tell the stories. And the collections are often at risk.

What we have done today is ask a number of individuals to come forward and talk about the issues that their institutions face and some of the solutions that they have considered. There are no real solutions being applied at this particular moment in a very global way; but this is a moment where the field is having a discussion, and your participation in the discussion is very much welcome.

Let me tell you who is here with us today. On my far right is Carlos Tortolero, and Carlos is the founding director of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago. His museum includes not only a large and beautiful museum, but also a children's museum and a radio station. It is an integral part of the community in which it resides. Carlos has a background as an educator, a counselor, and a teacher in the Chicago Public School System. He also serves on the board for the Smithsonian Institution Center for Latino Initiatives.

Sitting next to Carlos is Fath Davis Ruffins. Fath has been a curator at the Smithsonian Institution since 1981, and she has assisted other museums in acquiring collections and created exhibitions

for the Smithsonian and for other institutions. She has also done a lot of writing about the collecting of African American material and is working on a book that will deal with community museums.

Next to Fath is Ron Chew, who is our host today, and he is the director of the Wing Luke Asian Museum, where we are currently located. He has a background as a journalist. He has also sat on the advisory board of the Museum Loan Network.

Then last, but certainly not least, is Gloria Lomahaftewa; and that last name, Lomahaftewa, means looking for a good life. She is the assistant to the director for Native American Relations at the Heard Museum. She is Hopi and Choctaw, and she is a graduate of Northern Arizona University. She is also an educator.

I would also like to introduce you to Rebecca Lowry, who is the Program Officer at the Humboldt Area Foundation, who helped us put together this session.

The format for the session is that I've asked each person to take five minutes to tell you a little bit about what they do and how it relates to collecting in these institutions. After that, I'm going to ask a few questions. Then we're going to have a broad discussion, because we really want your input in what we're doing. This is not going to be talking heads, nor is it going to be passive. We expect your full engagement in what we're about to undertake.

So, Carlos is going first. I'm going to ask him to slow down; Carlos speaks really rapidly.

**TORTOLERO:** God has a sense of humor is all I can say. Okay, let me tell you about the museum. We are the largest Latino arts organization in the country. We are also the only Latino museum that is accredited by the American Association of Museums. We also have, as Claudine mentioned, an all-youth museum. We have a radio station that is operated all by young people, and it's about eight years old. It's been doing very well for us. We also have a great performing arts program and educational projects.

Our collection consists of 3,800 objects, and each item is digitally shot and computer catalogued. As part of our most recent expansion, we created a state-of-the-art, temperature-controlled vault for the artwork in our collection.

It is very interesting to note that one of the things most asked of us over and over again at conferences is, do we have a collection? I have attended AM conferences, I have attended AMD conferences, in which participants know that we



are an accredited museum; and yet they still ask us, "Do you have a permanent collection?" Think about it. Would one ever think to ask the Met, the Getty, SAM, here in Seattle, if they have a collection? Despite that, they always ask us if we do. So my standard response to these questions has been, yes, we do. Do you have one?

Being a museum of color, one has to face a variety of attitudes. Most major museums still don't understand or value the important role that First Voice institutions play in the cultural arena.

The biggest problem that major museums have is acknowledging the fact that museums of color are also cultural gatekeepers. The United States cannot afford to have only a Euro-centric view of the world. Culturally, politically, and socially we need to have different voices in our society. Despite all the talk, all the attention to diversity, all the money that has been spent on diversity, quite frankly our society has not changed much in the last twenty years.

Let's face it. Museums and the arts have historically been very elite. This is not a criticism. It is not a complaint. It is just acknowledging a reality.

Museums of color have been seen by many major museums as a threat because we bring to the table something that they never could. That is a First Voice perspective. That does not imply that major museums should not present or should not collect work by people of color. Of course they should! But by creating institutions of color and collecting the work of people of color, First Voice institutions are expanding the scholarship in the museum world.

This is not about creating an either/or situation in which we're the good guys and they're the bad guys. It's not about that. It's about creating a more diversified museum field.

Two other issues that my museum has confronted since our inception are 'is our art good?' And, 'can you financially and administratively manage your institution?' Interesting again, these concerns are never raised with mainstream institutions. It does affect funding for institutions like mine. Then there's always a perception of people of color that we are the other. That we are, in some ways, exotic. I'm the most boring person in the world. I don't know how anybody thinks we're exotic, but people think we are.

Collecting for museums of color is more than a museum responsibility. It is something that the museum does, not because we want to be like the big museums, not because we want to be accredited by the American Association of

Museums. We preserve and collect to ensure that our cultural history will continue.

It is more than a fiduciary responsibility. In fact, it is a kind of spiritual responsibility. Please note, I'm not saying it in a religious way here. What I am saying is a kind of spiritual obligation that we owe to the past, present, and future members of our community.

I think that it's fantastic that we are hosting this session in the Wing Luke Museum. I think that this institution very eloquently illustrates what collections means to museums of color. Please, please don't leave it to the Washington Museum! It is truly a cultural treasure. The method in which they present and use the collection is superb.

Museums of color have collections that range from pieces that are very expensive to pieces in which there is no monetary value. Unlike much of the art world, you will find that institutions of color are not driven by the marketing aspects of collecting. We collect so many things that might not be valuable to Christie's or Sotheby's, but are valuable to us in a very different way.

Let me tell you a quick story. We had this person come to see me about diversity of the museum field. He spent an hour with me, and everything I said went in one ear and out the other. He had a grant to do this, he was just writing down things, but wasn't paying a bit of attention to me.

So we walked around the museum, and in our permanent exhibition gallery, he stopped in front of a painting by José Clemente Orozco, the best painting that was done by Orozco. Next to it was a black and white photograph. He stops and says, "You know what? There's no way in my institution we can do this." I said, "What do you mean?" "There's no way that our curators would allow a photograph next to a painting unless that black-and-white photo enhanced our understanding of that painting." So I told him, "I spent an hour trying to tell you how important it is to us, for us as museums, to integrate, and yet, you can't even integrate art objects." That's how far we have to go, folks. That's a long, long way. I'm going to stop now.

**BROWN:** Great. Gloria, can you go next, please?

**LOMAHAFTWA:** I work at the Heard Museum. The museum was established in 1926, and we're coming up close to our 75th anniversary. The collection presents primarily cultural materials from Southwest tribes as well as other tribes throughout the United States. We also have some materials that were collected by the Heard family during their world travels from other countries.



It's a very diverse collection. But the emphasis over the years has been primarily the Southwest peoples.

The museum is based in an urban setting, and the governing entity is primarily non-Native people. So the perspective of the institution, even though it presents about Native peoples and culture from the Southwest region, the people themselves whose cultures are being interpreted, don't really see it as their museum. Partly it's because the materials that are housed and exhibited at the museum are presenting about people that continue to use these objects. It's a double-edged sword in a way.

We attempt to educate the general public about the Southwest people. We've been trying to develop exhibits and programming that would be more inviting to the local native community. We've worked to outreach into the communities, and work more closely with them as to what their interests would be, what they would like to see in a museum that's not in their community area.

We've looked at presenting more of the contemporary arts, not so much of the cultural arts. Because cultural arts include some things that are historical, that the museum has in its collection; and they are materials that at times are very difficult for the people to look at.

Most museums throughout the United States that hold collections of cultural materials of religious origin will present them in a way that is disrespectful to the people from which they come. The museums don't know what those objects mean and they're not knowingly doing it. Working with tribes and trying to effectively present the objects has been a real struggle.

One of the issues that we have to deal with is the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, which is dealing with repatriation of cultural materials, materials of cultural patrimony, religious ceremonial materials, as well as human remains. We work with the tribes whom we have materials of, in trying to be more inviting and open and making it a more pleasant visit for the tribes when they come in to look at the collections.

Because under the law, they can request to visit a museum to look at the collection of materials from their people. When we have the tribal visitations to the collections, I try to make it as pleasant a visit as possible and be as open as possible in allowing them to look at everything that's there that may be from their people.

Not everything is identified, because some of the private collections that were gifted to the museum didn't know what they had. They didn't know where they came from, or they just thought a pair of moccasins were very pretty, or a piece of pottery, or clothing, and didn't know the origin of the culture from which they were obtained.

Some of the curators that are there, and myself as well, are not as familiar with the diversity of all the tribes as far as the different types of beadwork styles, clothing styles because they're not from the Southwest area.

So those objects that are not identified, are the ones that we try to get help in identifying. If they are objects of cultural patrimony or religious or ceremonial objects, then we know how to work with them.

With the tribal visits, we've also tried to gain information of how to best house the materials. There are materials that are very sensitive, that are not to be viewed by individuals outside of the culture – or even individuals within the culture if they're not part of that religious society that the object may be a part of. So we try to work with the tribes in how to effectively store them in an appropriate manner.

That's basically what I work with.

**BROWN:** Fath.

**RUFFINS:** Hello. First I wanted to say, I'm a historian, so I primarily work in an arena that may include "the arts," but it's not limited to the arts. When we talk about cultural patrimony, although the arts in the most narrow definition are certainly part of that, it's not limited to that. That creates complexities when looking at culturally specific institutions.

Many smaller First Voice institutions have a diversity of collections, not simply art collections. Therefore, the way that they need to be supported in these various collecting arenas can be quite different. To put it the most blunt way possible, historical materials often do not have a market. The process of collecting them, what one has to do to acquire them, to keep them, and to keep them safe, to define them is a very different process than when you're working in an art world that has defined markets and has a tradition of criticism.

When you look at collections of culturally specific institutions, it's very important to understand the overlay between art and history, which plays itself out in different ways when you look at different kinds of communities. I think the Wing



Luke Museum is a really interesting example of how you can have multiple kinds of collections in these institutions.

I want to reinforce the idea that you need a diversity of collecting experiences. My own research suggests that had not African American institutions begun collecting African American art and historical materials in the middle of the 19th century, there are many collections that we would not have today.

So the collections of Morland-Spingarn at Howard University, the art collections at Atlanta University, Fisk University, Hampton University, the historical collections now called the Schomburg Collection in the New York Public Library – if those people or institutions had not collected them on their own, often without very much support, for years, we wouldn't have those collections now.

Therefore, culturally today, it's enormously important that we preserve First Voice institutions. Because this is exactly what they're doing. In our present, they are making the kinds of choices to document their own communities that naturally emerge from inside those communities. To not support those institutions means that a hundred years from now there's a lot of material that we would not have. There's material that might be collected by any of these institutions that might not be collected by the Museum of American History for a variety of reasons. Yet, we need all those levels of collecting. That's another crucial connection to understand.

In terms of stabilizing institutions, another thing my research suggests is that connections with other institutions can be an important side of stability, as in an art collection that's part of a university. Or in some cases, historically, in the African American community, collections began as church collections and then eventually evolved their way into being collections that were held by museums. They are alternate collecting sources that serve to feed what we would traditionally call the museum community.

The last thing that I want to say, because I say it in almost every institution related to collecting now, is we really have to think digitally about collecting. What do I mean by that?

There are certain kinds of collections which are themselves digital. Today, for instance, if you're collecting someone's jazz record collection, they may well have computer documentation they've made about that collection. Or they may have film that they shot, or AV that they recorded.

Thinking about digital applications, both for preservation and for sharing information is important. As we move into the future, there's a lot of information that needs to be stored. At times it means that the information is stored, and in some cases the original material may be gone. In other cases, the information may be itself the original material, such as in oral histories. This is something that a number of these museums have done as an enormously important job – oral history – as a crucial element of documentation, and as a set of collections in itself.

I'll lastly say that part of the reason First Voice institutions are of such great importance has to do with the fact that larger institutions, the Smithsonian, for example, or the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, often have histories – the Heard I would include in this – which make it difficult to interface directly with cultural communities. It may not be impossible, but they make it difficult to interact with those communities. Therefore, if you only have the major institutions collecting, then these histories of perhaps rapacious, in some cases, collecting, can stand in the way of making contemporary collections.

And for all of you who work with donors – I work with donors all the time – people give you things because they believe you love their things. If you can't convince them that you love their things, they won't give them to you. That material would not be preserved if these other institutions didn't exist.

**CHEW:** A few words of prologue, since we are at my institution. I wanted to welcome all of you here. Several of you were here about a month ago or so, and I wanted to acknowledge that. I hope that you do have a chance to look around a little bit later on.

There is going to be a short performance piece which arose out of some of the oral histories that we've gathered, which I'll speak to in just a minute. I was going to split my time with another person on staff, Cassie Chinn, who's going to show you a little audio-visual show that should take about two minutes to give you a sense of what goes on here at the museum.

A word about the museum itself. We're located in the Chinatown International District area, which is an unusual area in the United States. It's the only area in the continental United States where the Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, African Americans, Italians, Native Americans came together and built one neighborhood, one community. So it's a very unusual place, and this institution reflects that history. We also are the only Pan-



Asian American community-based museum in the United States, which reflects, again, the uniqueness of that experience.

We continue to be challenged all the time, and the fact that we survive continues to be a miracle in some ways. Back in the sixties, they built a freeway, which you can see from that side of the institution, which cut off and destroyed half of the neighborhood. Back in the seventies they built the Kingdome, which some of you may have seen imploded several years back, and that also resulted in the closure of over half the hotels down here.

More recently you may know that there are two stadiums. We have the new Seattle Seahawks stadium and a new baseball stadium right on the edge of the neighborhood. So they decided to double the impact with that. The fact that this neighborhood continues to exist as a cultural entry point and source of pride is a miracle in and of itself.

I also wanted to mention that there was an earthquake two years ago, called the Nisqually Earthquake, which impacted this area a great deal, because a lot of the buildings here are un-reinforced masonry structures that are very, very old. There's a lot of damage. If you have a chance to walk around this neighborhood, you'll still see scaffolding around, essentially put up so that some of the businesses can continue to operate while people find money and resources to remodel buildings.

When the earthquake happened, we had, even in this small space, four school tours going on. It was a terrible situation, it was a fairly long earthquake; some of you who were here remember that. What ended up happening was part of the façade of the building next to us collapsed onto our roof. So we had 3,000 bricks on top of our building, and holes torn in our roof, and there was rain, I believe, the day following that.

Our collection, by the way, is in the back, and on the upper level. We were concerned about how to preserve that collection.

An interesting thing happened then, because the community came into our institution and helped us save the collection. These are people off the street whose parents had been interviewed for oral histories, or grandparents. They came and literally helped Bob, our collections manager, and others, siphon water out of the collection, move the collection out of harm's way. A roofing company down the street came in the middle of the night and repaired our roof. So it was an amazing show of support.

But I mention that to show we're not alone. I suspect Carlos has had a number of those situations where the community has stepped forward and said, "This is ours, this is important. In the midst of everything else that has happened, there's something else that is important to us." And so this institution speaks to that.

At the core of our institution's collecting policy is this notion of building relationships with people in the community to gather their stories. While other more mainstream institutions are focused on the physical objects, in our mind the gathering of the stories and the building of the personal relationships are really at the core of what is important. We use those relationships to then trigger borrowing relationships, lending arrangements, whenever we need artifacts for a particular use. So it makes us more portable, and quite frankly, given our limited resources, we don't have to bring all the stuff into our collection.

Unfortunately, with the passing of the WWII generation and that whole time period that we're in, a lot of stuff is flooding in our direction because there's no other place for it to go. The big challenge, which I know a number of folks mentioned, is where are the resources to help in that process of storing these things that otherwise would not be valued by other, more mainstream institutions as an important part of the historical, cultural, artistic legacy? Where do we find resources to make that work happen? I think the clock is ticking very quickly on that.

We see that even within our community, with our artists. I've visited homes where the artists have passed away, and their widow is moving off to a retirement home, and most of the artist's works are sitting in the basement, collecting dust. They've never been framed. They've never been shown. Some amazing stuff! And so this stuff really is at peril of being lost.

With that, Cassie, do you want to come up and take over for me?

**CHINN:** My name is Cassie, and I'm the director of exhibits and collections. Ron asked me to come and share a little bit in regards to this database, which is entitled a Densho database. This database was created by another organization. We're the only place in the nation, however, that has their database available for the public to use, although recently they were able to put a portion of the database on their Web site. Densho stands for "to pass on the next generation." That echoes some of what has been said here today.



There are over 200 hours of video taped interviews with over 100 Japanese Americans who were interned during WWII. And there are over 1,000 photos. We have tour groups who come, and they're able to hear the actual stories from people who were interned, and I wanted to give you an example of that.

So the docent will come and sit them down. Oftentimes our docents actually come from the community. They might have a grandfather or a grandmother who was interned themselves. They'll share about that story, and then they'll also share stories from other individuals. So here's an example of Aki Kurose, who talks about the day Pearl Harbor was bombed.

*[Tape plays]*

**KUROSE:** Well I had just come home from church, and we kept hearing, "Pearl Harbor was bombed. Pearl Harbor was bombed." And I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. My geography was not very sophisticated.

I had no idea, and my father said, "Oh, there's going to be trouble!" And I said, "Well, how come?" you know. He said, "Well, Japan just bombed Pearl Harbor. And we're at war with Japan." But I thought, "Why should it bother me?" You know. "I'm American." And then he said, "You know, we are aliens. My parents. We don't practice citizenship. So they're going to do something. You know they'll probably get taken away."

But at that time my parents had no feeling that we would be removed because... So they were saying my brother would have to take on the responsibility to keep the family together, 'cause we may be removed, put in the camp, or whatever.

And, and uh, then when I went back to school that following morning, you know, December 8th, one of the teachers said, "You people bombed Pearl Harbor." And I'm going, "My people?" you know.

All of a sudden, my Japanese-ness became very aware to me, you know. And then that... I was no longer, I no longer felt, "I'm an equal American." I felt kind of threatened and nervous about it.

And then the whole time, we were now given the orders, and getting prepared to go to camp...

**CHINN:** So from their own first-person voices, students and other visitors come and they hear about these incredibly powerful stories. About two weeks ago, we'd been working with over sixty Japanese American internees. We were talking to them about what should happen at the Minidoka site, which is the site in Idaho where most of them

were incarcerated. And they said, "It's about the stories. It's about collecting these stories and passing it on to the next generation." That's what we've found has been incredibly important.

The oral histories as well, as Ron mentioned, have built that relationship of trust. You spend that special moment in time, sharing that story, and showing value to that story, and then that trust leads to donating of artifacts, or photographs, or archival documents to our collections. That's been incredibly important.

Also having the database here. We also have a collections database, which is located behind you, and I invite you to look at that too. It offers that opportunity for visitors, community members who might not have a traditional museum affinity to see, "Oh yes, that's the stories that's valued. Those are the types of things they're looking at collecting." And they will be more willing to donate and realize, "Oh, I have something of value that also can be collected and preserved."

We do that through our exhibits as well. I'd invite you all to take some time to look at our exhibits. We have a special changing exhibit behind you, which is on Asian Pacific Americans in sports. We collected over fifty oral history interviews to create that exhibit. The objects on display, for the most part, are on loan from families, they've brought them out of their closets. They want to share them with the public, share that story, and then share them with younger generations who come through.

In our smaller gallery is an exhibit on Hip-Hop and Asian Pacific Americans. We collected over thirty oral histories for that exhibit. It recreates a Hip-Hop bedroom. During the two and a half weeks of installation, members from the Hip-Hop community came and saw what was going on. Then they got an idea, "Oh, these are the types of things you're looking for. I have that at home." They'd go home, take things from their own bedrooms, and then bring them down here. So that exhibit grew out of over forty different individuals loaning their own personal objects to create the ideal Hip-Hop bedroom.

**BROWN:** I'm going to pose just a few questions because I'm really eager for you all to participate in this discourse. There has been a question raised fairly frequently as to whether or not relatively new community-based institutions should be collecting at all. There are some who suggest that they are fairly new institutions and that they don't have adequate resources to take care of collections.



Taking care of collections is a big issue for all museums. Most major museums have boxes and boxes of material that they've never even inventoried or accessed. Carlos, could you say something about your feelings on whether or not these institutions should be collecting?

**TORTOLERO:** Of course they should collect. Have you ever talked to people who are in charge of museums? They don't brag about their endowment. They don't brag about their attendance. They brag about what's in their collections. It's super important.

Also, there is a connection with people who either give you art objects, because often down the line they also give you funds. It is a very good fundraising strategy, I would say, to also collect. I think we should collect and have to collect. It is difficult. It is difficult.

**BROWN:** Fath had some thoughts about collecting strategies and how collectors should be cooperating with each other. Can you say something about that?

**RUFFINS:** Just two observations. There are a number of new institutions that are growing now, that are forming themselves explicitly not to collect. Collecting is a profound responsibility, and that the institutions that want to collect, should collect.

But there is an alternative mode within the country, such as an institution that I'm guest curating an exhibition for. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati has defined itself as a non-collecting institution. They see themselves as an access point for information, but are not seeing themselves as a collecting institution.

In that particular case that may be visionary, or it may be short-sighted. It may be more like the Holocaust Museum. The one in Washington was not originally intended to be a collecting institution, yet discovered that there were so many people in the community that wanted to give them objects, that it turned them into a collecting institution when they hadn't originally planned to be. So there are some complexities around the issue of collecting.

Institutions that want to collect, and that see collecting as a crucial aspect of their mission then stepping forward to do that is a crucial thing. There are some kinds of collaborative collecting strategies that need to be pioneered in the future, sometimes between big institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution and a culturally-specific institution.

Thinking about collecting more regionally or within the context of, say, your city, there may be institutions of a different size within a city or within a region which could collaborate in collecting in what I would call a more ethnographic way. Thinking about collecting as having many different layers and having different institutions collect different kinds of materials but in a collaborative project. This may, in the future, be as important for big institutions as small, because the Museum of American History also has limited funding and limited collection storage. To get an object in a big collection now would be very difficult. Pioneering collecting strategies with some other institutions – particularly culturally-specific institutions – might allow for new kinds of relationships that then document these communities at depth. I'll give you one example.

When you talk about oral history collecting, oral histories have a physicality. There are master tapes; there are researcher tapes that need to be made and re-made over time. It may be that an institution that already has very well defined storage for that kind of material should hold the masters, and there's some kind of a relationship which allows for the re-supply of the research materials. Of course, there's all kinds of digital sharing, but this is just an example of sharing that isn't primarily computer-based but allows for access points to the collection at numerous levels.

**CHEW:** One thing I was going to mention that I think would be worth thinking about, and we've been moving somewhat in this direction ourselves, is the notion of what if we don't necessarily collect it, or if another museum doesn't collect it, or some archive doesn't collect it? It seems to me there's a responsibility that we have to teach those skills that we have that relate to preservation, to families, to community organizations, so that there is that option that they can care for it as long as they are able. Because you always want to keep it in the larger context of the community as long as it's possible.

That's at the heart of our collection policy, if we have those relationships, we don't necessarily have to own it. Nobody necessarily has to own it. Maybe you have these continuing relationships with families that enable you to create some database so you know where the stuff is. Hopefully for those databases to be more evolved regionally and nationally so that people know what everyone has. It seems to me that's just a lot more practical way to operate.

**BROWN:** I want to pose a question for Gloria. In traditional museum collecting, one of the





things that happens is that you cultivate a donor. In cultivating a donor, sometimes you do an exhibition of works that are in one donor's collection. At the point that a museum with an authoritative voice does that exhibition, then it often enhances the value of the collection.

It's also one of those situations that raises ethical issues because one donor is not going to put up money for another donor's exhibition of his own private collections. You have that ethical issue in play.

If you have a board that consists of donors or collectors, what kinds of tensions arise when they are people who have collected the material culture of one people, and they are concerned about the objects as collectors. When the people who made the objects have a different set of concerns about the objects, what are the tensions that arise between those two factions in an institution?

**LOMAHAFTEWA:** Those individuals on the board of the Heard Museum that are collectors, most of the objects that they collect today are contemporary culture, contemporary arts, contemporary native arts. There is a distinction that's different than the historical cultural arts.

Up to a certain period, and depending on where the objects were found, there are some materials that cannot be collected according to the law. If they are taken from anthropological or historical sites, in Arizona, whether they would be on private land or federal land, you can't collect them.

For an individual, a collector on the board who would have materials like that, it's difficult for them to gift those types of objects to a museum because they have to prove that they did not collect them after the law was passed. So there's a difference. Most of the individuals that do collect contemporary arts today are the cultural fine arts.

**BROWN:** Are reservations considered federal property?

**LOMAHAFTEWA:** It's federal land, but if they buy it directly from an artist, native artist, and it has been produced recently, then there's no problem with that.

**AUDIENCE:** I have a question. In the context of museums, such as the Heard Museum, for instance, are there agreements with the local tribe in regulating the transmission of certain information? For instance, with photographs of certain sacred activities or certain religious sects, is there a formal agreement regulating the transmission of that culture?

**LOMAHAFTEWA:** The Heard Museum has developed working relationships with a number of the tribes in the Southwest. As a result of the passage of NAGPRA, the materials that are in the collection that we are aware of that are religious or ceremonial materials, materials of cultural patrimony, we will defer back to the tribe as to whether or not some of these objects may be exhibited because of the context in which they are a part of the culture.

As far as oral history, songs, that relate to objects that the Heard Museum may wish to exhibit, we will go back to a tribe and ask for permission to present that type of information. If they say no, then we don't do it.

Also we will receive requests from outside of the museum, whether it be writers, researchers, students, and they ask for specific information or even photographs from different tribes. We'll have them defer back to the tribe first, receive written permission to obtain this information that we may have in our collection, before we'll release it. If they give the approval, then we'll do it. Otherwise, we won't.

**BROWN:** The last question I want to raise is an issue of trust. Fath raised the issue that people give to the institutions that they love, and Ron referenced building relationships over time. I want you to say something about what instills trust and makes people choose your institutions as places where they would want their objects to be. Why don't we start with Carlos?

**TORTOLERO:** The thing we always do is that we make sure they have a chance to come see the whole museum – you know, they see the space, they see who comes in, they see all the schoolchildren – and show them that if they give us this piece of artwork that so many people are going to share with them and enjoy it. I hate using the word but, "buy" into everything we're doing at the museum. Not just me talking to them or somebody else talking to them, but them seeing the whole operation. I think that's very, very important.

Also the fact that we are a smaller museum, not a big museum, we are going to say the chances are much greater that we are going to display them than the big museums. They won't be in the basement. That's always a good thing as well. Because it is a competition, it really is.

**CHEW:** Two things that I was going to mention. One is that the length of the relationship and the quality of the relationship really affects whether the trust is built. I know oftentimes institutions



have some kind of diversity initiative of some kind, and then they come in, and there's an exhibit project, a community advisory board. Then it vanishes. That's not a relationship that's going to endure over time.

We find that it's over the process of a continuing relationship over many projects over time that that trust is built up. Museums traditionally have been overeager in trying to size-up what is out there and then waiting in the wings to try to snatch something. I think that's counterproductive.

The other thing that's very important is for the institution to reflect its constituency. So for us it's very important that we have people from the neighborhood and from the Asian community who are part of the staff. We look at that as an actual skill set, resource, that's valued as we hire. The relationship-building skill is something that we also value as much as, if not more, than the subject expertise that oftentimes museums look for. So those are very important.

**BROWN:** Gloria, do you want to respond?

**LOMAHAFTWA:** Building on what Ron has indicated as far as constantly reaching out into the communities, we have twenty-one tribes in Arizona, and there are twenty-two tribes in New Mexico. Those are our primary focus tribes that we are working towards developing strong working relationships with. We don't have any type of written agreements with them, but in trying to reach out to them when we're developing exhibits that relate to their people, we've been able to develop working relationships that have been very open.

**LOWRY:** Does anyone have any questions?

**AUDIENCE:** Over the last couple of decades there's been a proliferation of ethnically-specific museums around the country. This raises two questions for me.

One has to do with the sharing of information. For example, among Native American tribes before reparation, for reparation of various artifacts, there were very few tribal museums. But now, since they've gotten the artifacts back there, there's a host of tribal museums across the country.

Is there any way to find out who has what? Is there any movement to get some consolidation of data, so that people who are interested in scholarship or just interested in various kinds of themes among what might be held by tribal museums or Asian American museums or African American museums or Hispanic or Latino

museums? Is there any movement to consolidate the databases so you can find the stuff?

Second question has to do with personnel. With the growth of all the museums, is there the expertise in museology, the skills in archiving, in maintaining collections, etc., and curatorial skills? Is the population of people who are strong in these areas growing in any way to be able to accommodate the needs of all the museums?

**RUFFINS:** Two comments. One, the database question, or shared information question is crucially important, and I would say we're in the infancy of that in terms of historical artifacts.

If we look at the world of archives, the archival world is much more linked digitally. So it's actually possible to find out a lot more where archival materials are around the country. If you look at the art museums, more of the art museums use one or two major classification systems. Although this isn't being done to the degree that it could be done.

The Archives of American Art is obviously not the most sophisticated, but it's the most comprehensive such database, although if you go to that database, you find that there are very few artists of color in it. This is a hole that needs to be filled, because that is a very important access point.

If you look at historical collections, you don't see the same development. That is very much something that needs to be funded – since I'm talking to groups of people who have the possibility of funding things – for the future, because knowing where this material is not only will make it easier to locate, it may have preservation implications.

I don't want to make any specific prediction about any specific place, all the museums that exist in the United States right at this moment probably will not exist in the next ten years. Not every single one. So knowing what material is available and is being preserved may be crucial to helping make sure that this material doesn't fall through the cracks, in the cases of some inevitable collapses as a result of funding.

That's one of the reasons why that's crucially important and is something that the funding community could help stimulate. There have been historical obstacles to sharing information about historical collections.

Secondly, in terms of expertise. One of the things I think you see very much in a number of institutions, culturally-specific more so perhaps,



is that there is at least one, maybe now two, new generations of younger people. Those younger people tend to be very different and tend to have had a very different trajectory into the museum world than the older people, and I would put myself into the older category.

The people who are older tend to be people who maybe were community activists, or maybe were teachers, or ministers, or ministers' wives, and they got involved in this because of their great love of the material and wanting to preserve the community. They didn't get involved because they got a Master's degree in museum education.

So you have tremendous enthusiasm, and you have the people who may have made preservation exist where it didn't exist before, in this older group. But among younger people, you have many more people who've actually gone to school and been taught certain kinds of skills that range from digital or computer skills to all kinds of preservation skills.

One of the things we're going to see in the next ten years is a changing of the guard, as some of those older of us move off the field, and perhaps not completely off into another realm, but that too is an inevitable process. Some of these younger people are going to come to the fore, and they really represent a very different kind of expertise. That's quite interesting and exciting to see.

**AUDIENCE:** Are they going to the community-based museums?

**RUFFINS:** There's a two-level approach. A lot of people would like to have a job in a big museum, but there are not necessarily jobs in big museums. So people who are staying in the field, I see them at various levels of institutions.

**LOMAHAFTWA:** I would also like to comment on the sustainability issue, since it's fresh in my mind from the Makah nation pre-conference. They have a wonderful museum, a cultural center. It's a living cultural center which houses 55,000 artifacts that were taken from a pre-contact village site that was preserved in clay.

Janine Bowe chop, the director, led us on the tour. The entire time she was giving us the tour of the artifacts, by flashlight because the electricity was off, her ten year old daughter was there at her side, with the flashlight, and being helpful.

In the excavation and the collections management of these artifacts, Makah people were solely employed and trained by archaeologists who had certain skills. This whole generation that unearthed those artifacts have grown up now

and are older people, and they are cultural leaders, ceremonial leaders, and they are pillars in the society.

They were the generation who had the chance to talk with the old people and gained that cultural knowledge. Now they're using the Makah Cultural Center as the grandparent – they call it the grandparent – where they are teaching the young people these cultural skills. They're not saying, "This is an artifact, an object." They're teaching the ceremonial context with this object, as well as the skills of how to create objects to use now. That is really what struck me.

The Makah Cultural Center will always be there because the community is invested in it. They're trained in collections, and their collections management are done with all traditional Makah values. They are organized with Makah values of ownership and gender rules. For instance, objects aren't categorized according to size, but according to the house they came from, to convey that Makah sense of ownership. We were thoroughly impressed with the sustainability of that organization and that it is, indeed, a grandparent, and it's a changing role.

**CHEW:** Can I just mention two things in response to the gentleman's question. One is on the issue of this coming period, and institutions, and what's emerging.

I know from operating principally in the Asian American arena, because of the demographics and the shift, there's an amazing new burst of energy in the museum field. There are also a lot of institutions. In the next five to ten years you're going to see an explosion that you've never seen before, of Asian American museums, historical societies, that are going to literally be everywhere.

I'm in conversation with a number of folks who are in the birthing process. Usually it takes a few years, but I think that's going to be very significant. Not simply in the Asian American community, but you look at the change in demographics of this country, and it's an inevitable thing that this very important educational institution will begin to be embraced much more broadly and redefined. That's very important.

I wrote an article a year or two ago on small museums for Museum News. I did some research, and it was fascinating to learn that there's a huge undercount in museums. There are at least twice as many as AM actually recognizes as being museums, when you get into the state museum associations who actually do some of the counts. So there's some rifts and controversy around that.



Many people on that state museum level have argued that 80 percent or more of the actual artifacts and cultural legacy of the museum community are within the small community arena, which is to say institutions of \$300,000, \$400,000 or less annual budget. One or two staff at most.

How do we trickle down resources and skills training and funding to those institutions that are taking care of this very rich cultural legacy? I don't think we have figured it out. There's NEH or IMS or even funding on the state and national arena. I would argue that most of the funding doesn't get down there, doesn't trickle down there. So how do we find some initiative that really draws those resources down to that level to support those organizations?

**TORTOLERO:** You know what's interesting in our community, there has not been a call for museums, there really has not been. The ones that are being formed are connected with some governmental agency. They are not coming from a grassroots point of view. They're very conservative, and they play it real safe, and every time we talk to them, we tell them you shouldn't have started a museum, because you really don't want to do this for the right reasons. There are real problems about this.

In the ones that have been around for awhile a lot of the old timers are having a hard time. They really are. So we're in an opposite kind of situation at the moment. There are a couple who have died in the last couple of years. So there is a concern.

In terms of jobs, there are so many people in our community who have the skills. In fact at my museum, I think 85 percent of the staff is from my own community. So, when people in the mainstream say they can't find us, that's lies, that's B.S. We're out there. That's nonsense.

In fact I like to tell the story that I hope I'm wrong about, but it might happen in the United States. When, for the white people in this room, your grandchildren, great-grandchildren are going to apply for a job, and we'll be the ones in power. And they won't get the job. They'll be in the bar complaining, "My God, I should have gotten the job. I have the skills." And we'll be saying, "You know what? We want to hire white people, but, you know, we just can't find them!" *[Laughter]* And that's going to happen one day. I hope I'm wrong, but I think we're headed in that direction if we don't say it. There's people out there with skills, just hire these folks. Please.

**LOMAHAFTEWA:** One of the things that's happening in Indian Country, in the Southwest, cultural centers or museums are being developed within the tribal communities. But there is a difference as to what the tribes have decided they want to do. Some are establishing museums and developing collections of materials from their people.

There are others that are developing cultural centers in the sense of not developing collections, but as an interpretive center. So that, making it like a visitors' place for individuals that are from outside of the community who wish to come in and learn about the people and maybe interact with some of the individuals that may be demonstrating different cultural arts. Some of the tribes are going in that direction and not developing collections, but just presenting about their people.

**AUDIENCE:** I work in San Jose, California, looking at immigrant participatory arts. One of the first things that you notice right off is that they're intergenerational. That puts the parents and grandparents in a different position of authority in relation to their children. As the children are learning English really fast, and the parents are struggling with it, it's an infantilizing position. So, that's where my question is coming from.

My question is, for the people on the panel and maybe people here, do you know of best practices that museums have been trying? Not just to bring the parents to the museum, or not just to bring the school kids with their teachers to the museum, but to bring the parents and the children together so that part of what is being taught is that your parents and grandparents are authoritative teachers.

**RUFFINS:** One suggestion that I would make that I have seen work rather well used to be the Chinatown History Project. It's different for different communities, but creating an oral history/exhibition project, that takes something central in the community. I'll use their example, which might not work for San Jose.

In their case, they took a local barbershop that had a long history of ownership in that community, and brought in men who had been going to the barbershop, and working in the barbershop, and their sons and grandsons, to come in and talk about the installed part of the barbershop.

They did a set of community world histories essentially around it. Then they also did some community arts stuff, where the kids were doing interpretations of their own experience there. I



would call this a multi-level project, in which you pick something which, by its very nature, draws people together, because it's something essential in the community that they were drawn together around anyway.

Using, usually, bilingual interviewers, some maybe from specifically that community. New York is a rich community in that sense, I mean diversity-rich, and so, therefore, there were students at local universities they could use to be oral history interviewers. That might be slightly different in different places.

I was very struck by how the project, the exhibit that came from the project, and then the long-term preservation of these oral histories, all worked together to document key aspects of community. That's just one example that I can give.

**AUDIENCE:** I have a question for Carlos and Ron. I've had a couple of opportunities to visit Carlos' institution, the Mexican Museum in Chicago. Think of the demographics that we've been talking a lot about in the conference, and I think there's over twenty million Mexicans now in the United States.

I remember my experiences at the Mexican Museum where there were a couple of forums which I attended, and they were packed, and they included a range of Latinos in the audience.

Your exhibitions also had a variety ranging from, say, Oaxacan to more established Mexican art, and Chicano art.

I'd like to hear you, Carlos and Ron, talk more about what is the value of your work or your institution to the communities, because you are in your communities. That's something I have not heard yet. How do people convey their appreciation or value of those institutions?

Then I have a question for our historian is, why digital? Is it access? And then what is the cost of digitalizing some of this art?

**TORTOLERO:** I could tell a couple of stories about that. One is we had a show in '92 that we borrowed stuff from the Field Museum on ancient Mexico. It was the first time that we know ever in the United States, that these pieces were in our own place, in our community. In a sense, they're coming home.

And folks would come and say, "These pieces can't be real! They just can't be real. I mean, there's no way they could be real. You know, they're too important to be in our community."

It kept happening over and over again. I'm trying to find the right answer. And so when people asked me, "Why are these pieces here? I had to say, "You know what? Because you're here." We're fighting the fight here, but soon the fight is this basic. You deserve to have these things very close to you.

Another great story we had is that we did a show on the Virgen de Guadalupe, who is the holy image in Mexico. In fact, she's more important than God. I know that sounds crazy, but if you know Mexicanos, Catholicism is very unusual.

We borrowed stuff from the museum that's based in Mexico, these great images of her. One day I'm walking in, and this woman comes up to me and grabs me, and literally just practically drags me! So I just follow her – and that happens a lot in our museum. And she said, "Look, here's my mother."

The mother was about 95 years old. This real tiny woman, and she says, "Vien, vien." "Come closer, come closer." She gives me this big kiss and hug. I don't know who this lady is! And she tells me that she had made a promise to the Virgen that before she dies she wanted to go see her, but she couldn't go. So in that sense, we brought the Virgen to her!

And all the awards we won are nice, but that kiss on my cheek, that's what it's all about. It really is. *[Laughing]*

**CHEW:** One term that I wanted to introduce is the notion of home. For all of us, we struggle in this neighborhood with issues of the crime, the poverty, the kids. After hours if you hang around, it's not a pretty place in many respects.

What we find is of value, and I'll just share with you one project we're working on right now, which is called Kid's Place. It's a project that actually Cassie and others are much more involved in but it's kids in the neighborhood who play outside, in the alleys, and the streets. The project involves bringing them inside the buildings to talk to folks who are their neighbors, their uncles. They are people they should know. But instead they're outside in the street, and they don't know these people who they should know. It's about connecting them and then realizing who they are in terms of having a sense of pride, some kind of connection.

I think we all at some point in our lives have to come back home, wherever that place is. There's something very powerful about the arts and what a museum, as an institution, can provide. Regardless of the social service programs you



provide, they can't provide that. That's the really important ingredient.

**RUFFINS:** Just a comment on your first question. Fifteen years ago I curated an exhibition for something called the National Afro-American Museum in Wilberforce, Ohio. And it was an exhibition on African American life in the quote/unquote fifties, from about 1945 to 1965.

So this opened fifteen years ago, and I thought it was a wonderful exhibition, and a lot of people really liked it. I never expected that it would still be up fifteen years later. It's still up. They do substitute objects in and out. I recently saw it, and it's gorgeous, so they've maintained it at a really high level.

To me this was very revealing. It was a new museum at that time. Part of the reason they decided to pick a recent subject was because they didn't have lots of nineteenth century collections. So they wanted to pick something that was possible to collect now.

Everything that's in the exhibition was collected from African American families. Things that are just like everybody else's Maytag refrigerator; but also things that were quite special, such as magazines or clothes.

When I went back through the exhibition a few months ago, I thought, wow, it's just incredible! This is still up, and there's no real plan to get rid of it! After fifteen years, you would think they'd want to do something else.

Part of what emerged is this intergenerational issue. The fifties is the time the Baby Boom was born. Fifteen years ago people in that age group were perhaps less nostalgic than they are today for this time. The nostalgia for that time has grown. So now you have two or three generations of young people. You have the Baby Boomers, and you still have the WWII-era people who are their parents. All of these generations come to this exhibit and find things in it.

The young people say, "Oh, I saw that in my grandparents' house!" Because when I did this exhibit, I didn't have children. I took my children to this exhibition, and they were like, "Oh, I saw that in grandpa's house!"

So the way in which a community can buy into these experiences which says to them, yes, I was living it, but my experience is worthy to be in a museum. My experience, my culture, my community's experience is worthy to be seen in this kind of a setting. It goes beyond. Everyone may experience this.

Some of the issues that emerge in Native American communities that are now more regulated by law, those same issues are in these other communities. They just don't have specific laws that have been enacted to regulate that. But the issue of, can I see my own culture, or my community, on a certain kind of a stage that makes it say this is important? That kind of pride is enormously important.

That was something I saw in this exhibition on which certainly I worked hard, and thought was great, but I really didn't think would be up for that length of time. If it had been in the Museum of American History, it might not have been up that long. It's because of this institution that it is up, because of how it fits into their larger mission.

Now I want to digitize. Let me say from the start that I don't mean digital things should replace real objects or real collections. In no way did I mean that at all. But in the archival world people talk about intellectual and physical control. When you know where an object is and you can gain access to it, but don't have to spend a lot of time moving it around, that knowledge and accessibility to the information can be as crucially important as actually physically having it, and can be made much more widely available.

That's why thinking more digitally, because of the accessibility that it creates, may be a way in which smaller institutions that may not be able to hold as many objects as they would like, but can be an access point to information about where these objects are in the country, or in the world, that creates the ability for more people to get access. That's why I think digital systems are increasingly necessary because they can link up institutions nationally and internationally.

**AUDIENCE:** I have two brief questions. One for the First Voice institutions, and one for the non-First Voice institutions.

My first question is to the non-First Voice institutions. Is there something that your organization, maybe not you personally, has learned from the example of the First Voice institutions as far as collections management, interpretation, public programming, education, and/or most importantly, relationship with community?

**RUFFINS:** At American History, because the Smithsonian is huge, so I don't necessarily say this is true everywhere, but a lot of the public programming ideas that are used today at American History, and in some of the other historical museums in the Smithsonian, were



actually pioneered by First Voice institutions. Absolutely. There's no doubt about that. The way in which people think about involving communities, connecting communities, for example, you can absolutely see that influence.

In terms of some other areas, you can see changes in what is valued in collections. These are more subtle, and may be somewhat different in the art world. But there are certain kinds of materials that are collected today at the Museum of American History, that twenty years ago when I first came, would not have been collected by this institution. Some of these First Voice institutions have pointed the way to understanding these communities more deeply and, therefore, recording their history in a much more complex way.

Twenty-five years ago, if you had two or three coiled grass baskets, that might have been enough in the Museum of American History to represent African American culture in the low country of the Carolinas and Georgia. Today you have a wider range of objects that, in many cases, were first collected by people in those places, like the Penn Center, just to give one particular example. So those are two examples.

**AUDIENCE:** I did have a second question. I'll make it brief. My second question was to those First Voice institutions. Have you done any education, public program, community work that actually involved using an object that's in your collection as not only a means of just interpretation behind a case, but you've actually used the object physically in the way that it was supposed to be used, as a program?

**TORTOLERO:** We've done that a couple of times. In fact, there's this one feature we have that's done by the Huicholes, who are a group of indigenous people. There aren't that many of them left.

And we got families to come in and look at the work because they've seen these objects so many times, but they haven't really seen them, in a sense. We had them come in and talk about it. Where did they first see it? We have Grandma, Mom, and the little kid. It's worked really, really well.

I want to say something too about how we have influenced the mainstream museums. The major way we've done it is family involvement. I think that's the biggest way we've been different. Most art openings, it's always adults in the mainstream world. At our openings it's families, it's kids, it's baby carriages. I'm saying the community belongs to everyone, not the few people. That's the major impact that we've done.

**CHEW:** Can I just mention that I think it's a complex question, this issue of what's in your collection versus what's not in your collection. There are many things that we use to illustrate cultural practices and so forth, that we intentionally don't bring into our collection because there are a number of them, or they're not necessarily things that we feel belong stored back there. I'd like to share this story.

When I first came to this institution about twelve years ago, it was a different kind of institution. We hadn't evolved into what we are today. I probably shouldn't mention this. This is probably being recorded, and I'll get in trouble later. But, hey, I probably won't be around when this comes out.

We had some folks in our institution who didn't share the vision of the community focus and all that kind of stuff. So I actually intentionally went in the back without the white gloves and touched some things, which shocked some folks. Which then also scared some people out of the institution, which was an easy way to get rid of some volunteers that I didn't necessarily want.

Symbolically, I was trying to send a little signal. Somehow things get in the back and then they become disconnected from what their actual use is. It's important for us to think about those questions.

**TORTOLERO:** There's one factor we haven't talked about. We're an art museum and we're trying to encourage people in our community to collect art and to give art to us. We work with people, we get people who come forward and donate stuff that really is not what we want. You have to tell them, "No." It's like a house of cards falling. Then you start all over again. The word gets around that they offered the pieces, and you had to say no to it.

So that's a problem we have to face, because there's times you have to say, "No. This is a nice piece, but it's not a piece we have to have in our collection." And that's hard to do. It's very hard to do. Especially when you're trying to grow people out there. It's a problem we have.

**LOWRY:** On that topic, I can give a brief example from Humboldt Count. In Eureka, the Clarke Museum is an institution that has a sizable collection of Northern California Indian regalia, basketry, ceremonial dresses, and has never had a native board member or much involvement from the native community. And there's been a lot of fear and distrust there.

For the first time ever, in the last few years, they've had a native board member who is a



regalia maker. They have developed policies and procedures where he could take some of those ceremonial dresses, and dance them in the summer months for the Mela Ceremony, which is the Brush Dance. Which has been quite a breakthrough.

The ceremonial dresses in that area are considered to be living beings. And they cry to dance. They are made to dance. And if they don't, they cry. It's always very emotional for tribal members when they go to these places, and that's something to be aware of.

They don't see them as objects. We've been saying the word "object" a lot. But most often, you know, they are living beings. You probably see it all the time at the Heard Museum, especially for Californian Indian dresses, they might actually sing to the dresses and dance with them. That's something to be aware of.

**BROWN:** We probably have time for three more questions, and we could still have a chance to look at the museum.

**AUDIENCE:** I think that the human scale that runs through your museums is a really critical contribution that has shown up in so many ways. I've taught labor history for quite awhile, and I used to go to workplace museums. They were always about coal mines and machines. You'd never know anybody worked on them.

I went to one recently that had been redone, and I'd swear that museums like yours helped create the environment. The first picture was a big, big Lewis Hine photograph. The banner said, "Coal is why they came." They were what the museum was about, and not the machines, and not the coal. And I really think that you have contributed, and that museums like you have contributed to that perspective. That the museums are about the people and how they lived.

The human scale of the size of the museums is part of this. You're not the size of the Metropolitan, just because you don't have the money to be. You really are different because you're the size you are. You're not bigger than the customer, which some of the mainstream ones are, and I think that's a contribution too.

**RUFFINS:** I would just like to make one comment about collections. You have collections that have, often, art, but sometimes historical pieces, that perhaps are not what you really want. There were a number of African American museums in the United States that have such materials in their collections.

One suggestion that I often make to people when they ask me what to do about these things, is to talk about the different kinds of collections. You may have your permanent collection. You may have a study collection. You may have an exhibit collection. You may have a collection that's primarily for use with teaching, or educational.

If you have materials in your collection, this is a little bit of a stereotype, but airport African art would be something that's in a number of these museum collections. A very enthusiastic person went to Africa once and got something, and then gave it to the museum. Because they wanted to keep them on the board, or keep their enthusiasm up for the institution, they said, "Yes." Now the museum is stuck with this stuff that they have to preserve at some level, but really, probably, may not even be part of their mission. Maybe African art isn't even the main thing that they want to do.

One of the things that I would often suggest to people is to redefine your collection as having these different levels. Then you can use some of this material, which may actually have a great educational value, but doesn't need to be up in the permanent treasure storage for the most important objects. So that's just a comment on that issue.

**AUDIENCE:** My question is more about funding. In my organization, we've talked a lot about a variety of things involving – I love this word – First Voice institutions. One of the things I struggled with, and you talked about as institutions of color within communities.

One of the things I've seen in my community of Philadelphia is that they have a very difficult time doing what I called "remaining present." For example, in my foundation it would not be seen as a positive thing that a museum has had an exhibition up for fifteen years. That would not be looked upon as a good thing, particularly given that we use an adjudication process, primarily of outside experts. I noticed this in our organizations of color in Philadelphia, that they have a difficulty – I'm talking about museums in particular – remaining what I call present.

Could you talk about how funders could be helpful to these kinds of institutions in helping shore them up in any number of ways, and engage them around being more present. This is particularly in light of competing for audiences with large museums and movie theaters, etc.

**TORTOLERO:** I know many of you have to give grants, but foundation people have not been good to us in terms of our collection. They





would rather have us do grants of activities, programming, education.

But collecting, I still think in the minds of most people who do fund, and board members of foundations, is that that stuff is serious work and belongs with the big boys and girls, not for us. I think there is this road we have to cross.

**CHEW:** We position our exhibitions as dialogues. Out of the dialogue comes something that you produce fairly quickly to respond to something that's happening here and now, whether it's in the neighborhood, or whether it's topical.

Unfortunately, we found it very difficult to get funding for that kind of stuff, as well, because they say, "Well what is this community-response exhibition?" And, "Can you create it in a way that's meaningful?" Because funders, too, also say, "Well, you don't have enough time, you don't have the academic overlay to give it that kind of credibility," the NEH/NEA kind of stamp, "is it really valid as an exhibition form?" There's the extent to which you can promote some new forms of creating these kinds of products as the extent to which we can start moving those institutions forward.

**BROWN:** Gloria and I were in a session earlier today where they tackled the issue in a very strong way. The conclusion was that many foundations are beginning to change their criteria. They're beginning to change their grant applications. They're beginning to realize that there are other ways to communicate with people than Web sites. They're beginning to include people like this as they develop their criteria.

In that sense, it's very small change, and it's very slow change. But just to have a session, there must have been six or eight funders in there, who were saying that it seemed very natural to them that they had to change the criteria. Not change the institutions themselves to fit criteria which make no sense for what they really want to do.

There's some slight change. That process seemed a very important one, certainly one that I intend to take back to the foundations where I am in Chicago.

**RUFFINS:** Just one comment, just for the National Afro-American Museum. Of course, they have other exhibits, but they have this exhibition up as their permanent exhibition. I would say, too, that is one of the differences between history and art. If you look at big museums, the Museum of American History has history exhibitions that are up ten, fifteen, twenty years.

The nature of a large history exhibition often means that it's there for a long period of time, in part because of the resources that are marshaled to put it together. They tend to have very long lead times, and so to get the institutional bang for your buck, it's usually up much longer than, say, a comparative art exhibit. There are very few art exhibitions that are anywhere near on the same longevity scale.

But I would also say this, which comes back to your comment. There does need to be some change in the funding institutions to truly value cultural patrimony. In other words, when you come to the Museum of American History, people do not say, "The First Lady's exhibit has been up for forty years." They say, "Gee, it's great that I can still come back and see Mamie Eisenhower's dress and Eleanor Roosevelt's dress." And, "Oh yes, I can see Laura Bush's dress, too."

But the point is, often when people look at community museums that are, in fact, preserving essential parts of cultural patrimony, they say, "Why is this still up? Why is this still there?" They aren't valuing it the same way that they are valuing national emblems. So if we really take to heart this notion of cultural patrimony, then we will come to value certain things differently in these institutions.

It will be very interesting to see what will happen with the number of exhibitions about the internment camps of Japanese Americans during WW II when that generation of people has passed into history. Which is an inevitable historical process for all generations. It will be very interesting to see. But it certainly wouldn't be surprising if it remains an aspect of cultural patrimony that goes beyond the life spans of the people who are actually experiencing it. So I just wanted to throw that out, that there really are some analogies that we need to begin to make in terms of thinking about these institutions.

**AUDIENCE:** I just had a question. Several of you had brought up the fact that visual arts are either at the core of your mission, or an essential part of your mission. I'm curious to know about how you work with contemporary artists. I've heard many artists say that they're very resistant to being pigeonholed or working specifically within cultural institutions. How do you see yourself in support of contemporary artists?

**TORTOLERO:** We show a lot of contemporary artists. Quite frankly, we have seen this across the county, that when some of these artists do make it, they forget who helped them get there.



I think it's very important for all artists to show in the mainstream world. They should show with us. If they only show with us, are they afraid of being in the mainstream? If they only show in the mainstream, have they forgotten their pasts? They should show in both worlds.

But many times it does happen, when artists do begin to make it, they think they have to play the mainstream game. That's what happens in a lot of the cases. Not all cases, but it happens a lot of times. I do find it disturbing.

But I think they are reacting to the way the art world is. The art world is not a very fair place, it really isn't. It's not really their fault, to be honest with you.

The day that someone has a show at the Art Place, and a show at the Met, and says it has the same value, then we've made it. That's never going to happen in my lifetime. So that's the way it is, unfortunately.

**CHEW:** Actually I was just going to mention we don't have the space right now to showcase a whole lot of even changing exhibitions. Our plan and vision is to have a space that showcases both contemporary artists of a whole variety. We serve such a diverse community that once you open the door and you don't have the space, it creates a lot of political problems.

I wanted to also mention that we feel it's really important for our artists from our community to have a vehicle to showcase their stuff. Because oftentimes they're the best documentarians of what's going on. It's really through their eyes that you see what the Asian American experience and history has been and will be. So it is very important.

**LOMAHAFTWEA:** What we deal with in our area is presenting both the cultural arts as well as contemporary fine arts. Oftentimes the fine arts are based on the cultural art. So, it's a continuation into the arts today. But then the thing is, what's considered contemporary art? Because cultural arts that are produced today are considered contemporary art, so they're all the same.

**BROWN:** Next question.

**AUDIENCE:** It's more of a comment in terms of dealing with some of the digital issues and the communication and dissemination. As you know, Museum Loan Network has a centralized database. We do have a lot of objects from a number of institutions that we've done survey grants with that have been wrestling with some of these issues. It seems to me the only way it

is going to happen is if the things are done in a collaborative way.

It's really important also for foundations to understand to set up programs where it's not always huge amounts of money. They can be small projects that probably are done in a consortium kind of way that do focus on collections. Collections are really, obviously important and a strong part of this. I know that the Underground Railroad Museum is using long-term loans through MLN. Even one object can be so important to a community to focus on. We've done a number of projects that have just been one object.

When you were talking earlier about whether the mainstream museums were affected by how some of the First Voice institutions are playing. There's a very important project done by the Arctic Studies Center in which native peoples are going to the Smithsonian, the Natural History, in groups. Elders, intergenerational groups, to tell the people at the Smithsonian what these objects really are called, in terms of preserving their language, which is a really essential part of some of this.

The mix between small museums, large museums, different kinds of museums, is really important. The templates, the technology is all there, that's really not a problem. What is extremely time-consuming and needs resources from the foundation community is the actual cataloguing of the objects, involving the community in the cataloguing. That's an incredibly difficult process. Large art museums are much more involved in it. There are major databases for large art museums. There are not major databases for history or smaller museums, and it's a critical problem in terms of where the national heritage is, and how people can uncover it. Not only digitally, but if they need to borrow it, where can they find it? And it's only going to be done through collaborative projects.

**BROWN:** One of the reasons for calling this panel is that many of us believe that in order to understand American history, you have to understand the history of all of its peoples. The emergence of these museums happened because, in many instances, their stories were not being told in the museums and their communities and in national museums. In beginning to tell their stories, they evolved new practices, practices that have been influential, that have informed the entire field.

We are now at a moment, however, where we're collecting for the twenty-first and the twenty-



second century, and everybody can't collect everything. There probably is not enough real estate to collect everything. Collecting has to be much, much more strategic. There are issues of trust, and there are issues of values.

One of the stories that one of my colleagues, who used to work at the Smithsonian, told me once was, "You know, I identified a collection that I wanted the Museum of American History to acquire. I'm a respected curator here. But there are always priorities. There's a limited amount of money in this institution for collecting. There's a limited amount of money for preservation. And this collection that I have brought to this museum is not nearly as valuable as some of the collections that they see as American. And the whole notion of helping to reorient them so that they see these objects as just as valuable as others is a big deal. I could lose this collection while I'm waiting for them to come to terms with the value of this work."

That's one of the reasons why Carlos is absolutely right. These types of institutions that are trusted by a certain segment of the community need to be collecting. They are the only institutions that certain people are going to give their works to. The major institutions that have great resources need to also be collecting. And there needs to be cooperation between these institutions.

Databases that document institutions' collections make it possible for all of these institutions to share. I cannot tell you how much time it takes to hunt for an object, and it's time that could be alleviated from the process if there were databases that were shared that listed all the objects that were out there. It could cut down the time for creating exhibitions.

It's our hope that some of these issues will be resolved, in our lifetimes even. And that the funding community becomes a major cooperater in the larger conversation that is beginning about how we acquire collections, how we make sure that certain stories that could be suppressed get told, and that institutions that have the will and the inclination to do these exhibitions have a greater ability to do them because we are working together to make these stories happen.

So, thank you very much. Thank you. *[Applause]*

**CHEW:** We had a short presentation which relates to the Japanese American internment story, which you saw a small piece of. Kathy, were you going to introduce it?

**HSIEH:** Hi, my name is Kathy Hsieh, and I am with a company called Living Voices. The

presentation that I'm going to share with you is called "Within the Silence: Share the Courage."

I loved the comment that you made about the fact that exhibits, more and more, should reflect the stories of people and not of machines and the coal mines, but of the actual experiences of the people themselves. The reason I was sharing this piece today as part of this panel presentation is because this piece demonstrates a live exhibition that is interactive with the audience.

One of the unique collaborations that we've been able to do is to work with Wing Luke Asian Museum in creating a piece that shows the personal side of what happened to Americans of Japanese ancestry during WW II. We approached the Wing Luke Museum because they had an award-winning exhibit called, "Executive Order 9066." We thought, what an incredible way to bring our piece to life by partnering with a museum and creating a live, three-dimensional, living, breathing exhibition.

We were very fortunate, because the mission and philosophy of the Wing Luke Museum, in terms of creating a community of people who work and develop the exhibition together, was incredible. We had a committee of about thirty people who had lived through the experience themselves. Working with this committee for almost two years, gathering collection material from the Wing Luke Asian Museum, as well as the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, the National Archive Museum, and the Library of Congress, this team of people developed this particular show and the video that you'll see accompanying it. Ken Mochizuki, who's an award-winning writer, wrote the script.

Living Voices has seven different programs. We've been fortunate, because with almost all of our pieces we've been able to collaborate with different museums across the country. For instance, with our Dust Bowl piece we worked with a historical society and museum in Oklahoma. For our piece on La Causa, which is about Cesar Chavez, we were fortunate enough to work with the Cesar Chavez Foundation. With our Civil Rights piece, we were able to work with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation.

So a lot of these organizations, by partnering together, not only were we able to leverage funding that individually each organization might not have been able to leverage by themselves, but we were able to create something that was innovative and a unique way to share the experience.



I'm going to do a piece called, "Within the Silence: Share the Courage." If you're interested in getting more information about Living Voices and our other programs, we do have brochures. So you can feel free to pick those up.

*[Music plays. Children's voices are heard reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.]*

**EMIKO:** When I was growing up, I learned the Pledge of Allegiance like any other American student. Now that I am a teacher, I lead my students in the pledge every morning. But these words mean something very different to me than to most Americans, and this is the reason why.

My parents came to America in 1910. They were the Issei, the immigrants from Japan. I was born in Seattle, a Nissei, the second generation of Japanese in America. My family and I lived in a neighborhood called Nihonmachi, or Japantown, where all the people from Japan, and their kids who were born here in America, like me, had to live and work there. Mama and Papa ran the biggest grocery store in Nihonmachi.

When I was fifteen, Monica Andrews and I were best friends, everyone I knew went to the soda fountain where the cutest boys from another high school were. But when I walked through the door, the owner pointed me out.

"Hi, Monica."

**OWNER:** Miss, you can't come in here.

**EMIKO:** And everyone there turned around and stared at me. Immigrants from Japan weren't allowed on properties. My oldest brother, Grant, lived over the owner's parents' store. He just graduated from the University of Washington with an engineering degree.

**GRANT:** Can you believe this, Sis?

**EMIKO:** What?

**GRANT:** I have a college degree, but the only careers I can work is here at Pop's store.

**EMIKO:** My other older brother, Tommy, is a senior in high school. He had an answer for everything.

**TOMMY:** You know why.

**EMIKO:** Why, Tommy?

**TOMMY:** Because we have Japanese faces, and our last name's Yamada. That's why.

**EMIKO:** But Mama always had the most reasonable solution.

**MAMA:** If no one gives you a job, you make your own.

**EMIKO:** Yes, Mama.

**MAMA:** And then you serve those who are not served elsewhere.

**EMIKO:** Papa was America's biggest fan. That's why he named my brothers after Presidents Grant and Jefferson.

**PAPA:** If I prove I can be an American citizen, maybe laws will be changed so I can be a citizen.

**EMIKO:** Papa kept busy being the community leader in Nihonmachi. He was also the principal of the Japanese Language School. I hated going to regular school all day then studying Japanese for two more hours. One boy in my class named Toshio was always the worst student. Papa had to go to Toshio's home a few times.

"That's right, Toshio. I think you have it now."

**TOSHIO:** Thanks for coming over, Emiko.

**EMIKO:** Sure.

**TOSHIO:** It helped a lot.

**EMIKO:** Well, after that I didn't mind going to Japanese school so much, because I saw Toshio become a better and better student.

When I wasn't busy with school, I liked to play with my dog Suki. [Hands clap. Laughs.] She loved to follow me around, and she liked to sleep on my bed. I wouldn't dare let Mama see that.

Monica's mom, Mrs. Andrews, is a history teacher in our school. The way she helped her students, she was more than just a teacher. She paid for Toshio's eyeglasses because his family couldn't afford them. After I'd helped Toshio too, I knew what I wanted to do after high school. *[Bell rings.]*

**ANDREWS:** I'm not trying to disappoint you, Emi, but for now, you really can't go to college and become a teacher.

**EMIKO:** Just like I can't go to the soda fountain, and Grant can't get a job, and we can't live anywhere else besides Nihonmachi.

**ANDREWS:** You're right. America is not perfect. But if you really want to become a teacher...



**EMIKO:** I do.

**ANDREWS:** Hold onto that dream.

**EMIKO:** On the first Sunday morning in December, my family was at our Methodist church. Service had just let out when Tommy dashed up to us.

**TOMMY:** Did you hear what happened?

**EMIKO:** No, what?

**TOMMY:** Japanese planes bombed U.S. Navy ships at Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i.

**EMIKO:** Tommy, are you sure? Papa, you don't think it's true?

**PAPA:** I can't believe Japan would be foolish enough to attack the United States.

**EMIKO:** School was never the same again after that. All around me I saw and heard what some Americans thought of the Japanese.

**CROWD:** Rip it up!

**RUTH:** The newsreels and papers are right, Emi. Japs can't be trusted, you're all the same.

**EMIKO:** But Ruth, we've known each other for a long time. What did I do? I thought we were best friends.

**RUTH:** My dad says your dad's a spy. Your dad's...

**EMIKO:** No!

**RUTH:** ...got all the guns stored in that Jap language school, ready to take over America when Tokyo tells him to.

**EMIKO:** My Papa doesn't even own a gun! Monica...

**MONICA:** That's the dumbest story I ever heard, Ruth. People like your dad are the ones calling my mom a Jap lover. [Bell rings.]

**EMIKO:** Apparently America agreed with Ruth. Japanese businessmen, community leaders, ministers, and newspaper editors are being rounded up by FBI agents. We were lucky, Papa was still with us.

But my family didn't take any chances. All my things were destroyed, everything from Japan – papers, scrolls, old photographs. Even Japanese dolls. Anything we couldn't burn, like the old samurai swords, Grant and Tommy buried in the back yard.

In the morning, Suki woke me up, barking wildly.

**FBI AGENT:** We have to search your house for contraband.

**EMIKO:** Unfamiliar footsteps approached my room. Then a man in a hat and suit entered. Who are you?

**FBI AGENT:** You'd better hold that dog back, miss.

**EMIKO:** Shh [*hands clap*]. He went through all my drawers and then through my closet. "Why are you going through the pockets of my dresses?"

I dashed downstairs with Suki.

Mama, what's happening? Papa, why are you packing your suitcase? Tommy, what's going on?

**TOMMY:** What are the charges to arrest my father? Where's your warrant to barge into our home in the first place?

**EMIKO:** Shhh. Tommy, don't say anything.

**FBI AGENT:** Quiet, or else I'll arrest you, too.

**EMIKO:** We watched as the FBI agents drove away with Papa. He looked back at us with eyes that asked, "Why?"

What had Papa done? When would we see him again? What had any of us done wrong right before Christmas?

My family worried ourselves sick over Papa until finally we received a letter from a prison camp somewhere in Montana for Japanese community leaders.

**PAPA:** Do not worry. I am all right.

**EMIKO:** The U.S. military issued a curfew. We had to be in our homes between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. Tommy left his high school baseball team to help Grant and Mama at the store. I had to help too.

Long time non-Japanese customers no longer came around. We had to make sure to close the store early enough to be home before the 8 p.m. curfew. Then rumors began to spread that we would soon be taken away like Papa.

Mama?

**MAMA:** Do not worry, Emiko, child.

**EMIKO:** But Ruth said that we would all be...

**MAMA:** It will only happen to Papa and me. You and your brothers are American citizens.



**EMIKO:** Then the U.S. Army removed the Japanese from Bainbridge Island. Those forced away were of every age. The same thing began happening in other areas of the state. Then closer yet to Seattle. Well, maybe we lived in a place where we wouldn't have to move.

Then the signs went up. Japanese aliens and non-aliens had to leave the city. We had a week to get ready. We could only take what we could carry.

"What's a non-alien?"

**TOMMY:** That's their tricky word for a citizen.

**EMIKO:** But what do we do about our home, our store, and everything we own?

**TOMMY:** I say we move everything inside the store and lock it up.

**EMIKO:** Tommy, how? We only have a few days? Grant, what do you think?

**GRANT:** That's right. We'll have to sell everything, even if it means dirt cheap.

**EMIKO:** My family argued late into the night until Mama had the final say.

**MAMA:** Grant is right. Who knows what will be taken from us next. Better to get something for all we own, than nothing at all.

**EMIKO:** Homes and businesses were selling everything. Grant and Tommy sold off the inventory at the store while Mama and I sold everything at home. Well, some of the few books we owned were a treasured set of encyclopedias. A man offered us \$10 for them.

"Mister. The set cost a hundred."

**MAN:** Then I'll do you a favor, young lady. I'll give you fifteen.

**EMIKO:** I had to take it. I couldn't carry the books with me.

When it was time to go and our house was bare, Grant and Tommy boarded up the windows to the store. The only things left inside were boxes and furniture belonging to us, neighbors and friends.

Then Grant returned with tags for each one of us.

"We have to wear these?"

**GRANT:** That's what they said, Sis.

**EMIKO:** We were family number 10710. As we waited our turn to be loaded onto the buses,

Monica and Mrs. Andrews showed up to say good-bye.

**ANDREWS:** I still don't believe this is happening.

**EMIKO:** I know.

**ANDREWS:** I'm sorry about everything, Emi.

**EMIKO:** I couldn't put it off any longer. Giving Suki to the Andrews. We weren't allowed to take pets. As our bus pulled away we saw Monica sprinting after us. "No, Suki. Go back. Go away." She couldn't understand we'd really leave her behind.

Hundreds of us ended up at a place called an assembly center named Camp Harmony. [baby crying] We were at the Puyallup Fair Grounds. A barbed wire fence surrounded us now. They had machine guns.

**TOMMY:** If we're in this place for our own protection, like we've been told, how come these guns are pointed at us?

**EMIKO:** I wasn't prepared for the worst shock of all. We had to live in a horse stall where the horses gone not so long ago. Then again it was appropriate we lived here since the locals stared at us through the fence, like we were animals in a zoo. Everything was cramped and crowded with the four members of my family living in this small stall. We had to wait in long lines to eat together, to use the latrine together, to shower together. Sleep became impossible. Families separated by hanging blankets and sheets.

"Mama, I can hear everything everyone says."

**MAMA:** That is why you must be careful about everything you say.

**EMIKO:** Grant's girlfriend since high school, Cherry, was also supposed to be somewhere in Camp Harmony.

**CHERRY:** Emi, it's me.

**EMIKO:** Cherry!

**CHERRY:** I looked everywhere for your family.

**EMIKO:** Cherry, it's so good to see you! How have you been?

**CHERRY:** Where's Grant?

**EMIKO:** Oh, Grant and Cherry are planning on getting married soon. But now, where would they get married at? Heavy rainstorms turned the fairground into a sea of mud.



How long will we be here?

**EMIKO:** Then one day I saw a familiar face waving to me from the other side of the fence.

“Mrs. Andrews! What are you doing here?”

**ANDREWS:** It certainly is good to see you again, Emi.

**EMIKO:** How’s Suki? Is she okay?

**ANDREWS:** She hasn’t been the same since you left. Emi, this is not what America stands for. Even Eleanor Roosevelt is against this.

**EMIKO:** The U.S. military moved us all once again. This time on a train with the windows covered by black blinds. We sat in the suffocating heat, sleeping sitting up. Soldiers with guns sat in the car with us.

“Where are we going? How long have we been traveling?”

I couldn’t resist any longer, I peeked through the nearest black blind. I saw nothing but flat, brown desert, when a hand slapped the shade shut.

**SOLDIER:** You do that again, Miss, and you’ll be under arrest for committing a felony offense.

**EMIKO:** We all thought we were making another temporary stop, but we had really come to the end of our journey. Placed in the middle of nowhere, Hunt, Idaho. As the soldiers led us through the entrance of the camp, a howling wind greeted us. Then flying dust hit us like a thousand needles, filling our mouths and nostrils, blinding us, under a scorching sun.

Thousands of people of Japanese descent were crammed into this camp called Minidoka. Home for my family was now a section of a wood barrack. During frequent dust storms, dust got through the cracks in the barracks walls. Thin wood boards separated families. [Baby crying]

**TOMMY:** Hey, somebody get that baby to pipe down. We’re trying to get some sleep around here.

**EMIKO:** “Tommy.”

We did everything according to our block. Waiting in long lines, food like tongue and mutton stew tasted by people used to American food.

**MAMA:** You go on and eat without me.

**EMIKO:** Mama, look how much weight you’ve lost. You have to eat sometime.

**MAMA:** I will rather starve than eat that food!

**EMIKO:** School started for me again. Thousands were in a barrack with hardly any textbooks. For typing class, we drew circles on a piece of paper and pretended the circles were keys.

After what seemed like forever, Papa rejoined us.

“Are you sure it’s today, Grant?”

**GRANT:** It’s what Pop said in his last letter.

**EMIKO:** I can’t wait.

**GRANT:** If he said so, he’ll be here.

**EMIKO:** Finally a bus pulled up to the main gate. “Papa!”

**PAPA:** Nobuo.

**EMIKO:** Papa?

**PAPA:** Nobuo.

**EMIKO:** Mama cried and embraced him, but I didn’t do the same. The man who stepped off that bus wasn’t the same Papa I knew. He sat around hardly talking with anyone, even his own family. That is if we are still family. Grant and Tommy hung out with their own friends in the mess hall.

“Grant, where are you guys going?”

**GRANT:** We’re going over to Block 7.

**EMIKO:** What’s over there?

**TOMMY:** The food is a heck of a lot better over there. That’s what.

**EMIKO:** I continued on in the camp school. People in camp tried to make this place like a small American town. There were jobs, clubs, a camp newspaper called The Minidoka Irrigator, Boy Scouts, and sports teams. I became a teacher’s assistant for a grade school class.

During the winters my family huddled around the potbellied stove, our only source of heat. I walked a long way to the pile of coal in the middle of camp, carrying a bucket to fill with our ration of coal. One day I met a little girl there.

**GIRL:** Hi.

**EMIKO:** How are you?

**GIRL:** I’m too cold.

**EMIKO:** I know.

**GIRL:** I don’t like this place anymore.

**EMIKO:** Neither do I.



**GIRL:** I want to go home to America.

**EMIKO:** We are in America.

The adults made sure the kids had a Christmas. I helped Mama and Papa build toys by hand. Every block had a Christmas party. And the entire camp held a contest to see which block decorated their mess hall the best.

In February men from the Army came to the camp and made everyone seventeen years or older fill out a questionnaire. Everyone talked about two of the questions that had to be answered.

**TOMMY:** Question twenty-seven asks, "Are you willing to serve in the Armed Forces of the United States in combat duty wherever ordered?"

**EMIKO:** Tommy, you have to. You're an American.

**TOMMY:** I can't believe this! Question twenty-eight, it asks if I will forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor.

**EMIKO:** Don't make any trouble over this, Tommy. We don't want you taken away like Papa was!

**TOMMY:** How could I forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor when I never had any to begin with?

**EMIKO:** Tommy, we can't split up the family again. Grant, tell him.

**GRANT:** We have to prove we're Americans.

**EMIKO:** Right.

**GRANT:** Even if it means fighting for America.

**EMIKO:** I agree with Grant. Tommy, we have no choice but to answer "Yes" if we're ever to get out of here. Don't you see that?

**TOMMY:** No! Both of you don't get it. I'll fight for America when it gives me back my rights.

**EMIKO:** Tommy! Then Papa became Papa again for the first time in a long time.

**PAPA:** Enough! Whatever you do, you answer "No" to that first question.

**EMIKO:** Papa, what are you saying? You always told us America is our country.

**PAPA:** I don't want my sons to get killed.

**EMIKO:** Grant stuck with his words. He and his friends joined the Army together. Tommy answered "No" to both questions. People in

camp started calling Tommy and his friends "No No Boys."

The fifth grade teacher I assisted, Mrs. Boyd, fell ill from the flu epidemic raging through the camp. With a shortage in teachers, I supervised Mrs. Boyd's class. I began class by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

*[Children reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.]*

**EMIKO:** I found it hard to say. Especially the last line about liberty and justice for all. I found Mrs. Boyd's teaching plan, studying American history and its guarantee of individual freedoms.

"Class, who is the state of Pennsylvania named after?"

**STUDENT:** William Penn.

**EMIKO:** And why did William Penn and his followers come to America?

**STUDENT:** To seek religious freedom.

**EMIKO:** "That's right."

I didn't dare bring up how there were Buddhist priests in Papa's prison camp, just for being Japanese Buddhist priests in America.

After months away, Grant returned to Minidoka on leave. He was now a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the all-Japanese American unit training in Camp Shelby, Mississippi. He came to our barracks with some Hawaiian GIs from his unit. They were all escorted by an armed guard wearing the same US Army uniform.

**GRANT:** Well, me and the Hawai'i boys didn't get along at first, but now we're buddies. We have to stick up for each other in the South.

**EMIKO:** I often saw Grant and Cherry strolling along the camp fence. Tommy was nowhere in sight while Grant was here. Finally I ran into him.

"Come on, Tommy. Go see your brother while he's still here."

**TOMMY:** Sorry, Sis. If I did that, I wouldn't have any friends at all.

**EMIKO:** After Grant left, Mama's health grew worse. I tried to get her to go to the camp hospital.

**MAMA:** Ah, never mind.

**EMIKO:** Mama!





**MAMA:** There are many more who are sicker than I am.

**EMIKO:** Cherry worked as a nurse at the camp hospital, so I told her about Mama.

**CHERRY:** Your mom has a severe case of diabetes. There's not enough doctors around here. And the food full of sugar they serve in the mess hall sure doesn't help.

**EMIKO:** Cherry came by our barracks often to see how Mama was doing. While there, she gave me tips on doing my hair and putting on makeup and shared all the latest gossip. Whenever I went to the mess hall with Cherry, we were always served more food than anyone else.

Tommy was being sent to Tule Lake, a camp in California for the No No Boys. Going with the No No Boys are families that answered, "No. No." and chose to go to Japan.

**TOMMY:** So, I'm considered disloyal for fighting for my rights.

**EMIKO:** Tommy, you know this is going to follow you for the rest of your life.

**TOMMY:** Well, Sis, I made my stand. See you when this war is over.

**EMIKO:** I watched as his bus disappeared through the main gate. "Papa, why didn't you try to talk him out of doing what he did?"

**PAPA:** Emiko, we live in a country that will not let me become a citizen. Your brothers are Americans, and they made their decisions as Americans.

**EMIKO:** How long will this war last? This war that keeps us here?

Near the end of my junior year, Grant shipped out for Europe with the 442nd. He wrote to us often, but even more often to Cherry.

**EMIKO:** Give me that letter.

**GRANT:** You wouldn't believe what it's like, living on a ship for a month, crossing the Atlantic with hundreds of other fellows.

**EMIKO:** The 442nd landed in Italy and battled their way through coastal towns, through France, and the rescue of the Lost Battalion.

**GRANT:** And when one of our own goes down... I don't look, because it could be somebody I know.

**EMIKO:** The 442nd scored victory after victory, but not without a price. Army officers became a

common sight in camp. Those who told parents that their sons had been killed.

Workers were needed in nearby farms, so many left the camp during the day. Then passes were issued for the nearby town of Twin Falls, Idaho.

"Cherry!"

**CHERRY:** "I'm going into town, want to come?"

**EMIKO:** As we rode through the main gate, past the miles, half the people in town were going. I couldn't wait for the day when we would pass through that gate for the last time.

In town we walked around, looking in store windows.

**CHERRY:** "Do you see the way people are staring at us? Let's go inside somewhere until the bus comes to pick us up."

**EMIKO:** "Let's get out of here as soon as we can."

Cherry helped me get ready for the senior prom that was to take place in the mess hall.

**CHERRY:** "You can borrow this dress if you like it. It's the one I wore when Grant took me to our senior prom."

**EMIKO:** We received fewer and fewer letters from Grant. We all hoped the worst hadn't happened.

**CHERRY:** "Maybe he just doesn't have time to write."

**EMIKO:** As I was walking home from school, thinking about graduating soon, Army officers came to our block. They stopped at our barrack door. We received a letter from one of Grant's Hawaiian GI buddies. It said during a battle against the Germans, took over a machine gun, and held off the enemies until his wounded buddies were safe. A grenade landed nearby. Grant tried to throw it back. But it was too late.

A memorial service for Grant took place in the camp. An Army officer presented Papa with Grant's Silver Star.

**CHERRY:** I got accepted to a small college near Philadelphia.

**EMIKO:** "But Cherry, won't it be hard? Being alone in a strange place."

**CHERRY:** "It will, but I can't stay here anymore. You should go after that teaching degree. Grant made this possible for us."



**EMIKO:** One morning people in camp were talking more than usual.

**MAN:** "Did you see The Irrigator?"

**WOMAN:** "No, what?"

**MAN:** "This camp is closing soon."

**EMIKO:** But there were no celebrations. People only asked themselves, "What do we do now?"

Months ago, I thought leaving camp would be the greatest day of my life. But now what I faced really hit me. Grant was dead. Tommy was gone. Mama and Papa would never be the same. I was the only child left in the family now. I would have to do everything when we got out of here.

Families started leaving Minidoka. Buildings were being torn down. As I looked back at my home of the last three years, I remembered when we first arrived. Now trees and gardens sprung up in the middle of this dry land.

**WOMAN:** Who will water the gardens now?

**EMIKO:** They were being returned to what they once were.

We each received \$25 and walked through the main gate for the last time. Going back to Seattle, we saw what we were up against. We stayed at a temporary home provided by the American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers.

And our store, it had been broken into, with most of the boxes and furniture we had left there before camp gone! But my parents remained the most optimistic.

**MAMA:** We have to look forward. Is there any other choice?

**EMIKO:** The first person I went to see was Mrs. Andrews. Monica had already gone to college when I got back. Would Suki know who I was? Oh, she jumped all over me like I'd never left!

**ANDREWS:** The war is over, Emi. It's time to start living that dream of yours.

**EMIKO:** But my dream would have to wait, as I spent long days helping my parents rebuild. *[Phone rings.]* Then we received a phone call.

**TOMMY:** Hey, Sis.

**EMIKO:** Tommy?

**TOMMY:** I'm calling from Chicago.

**EMIKO:** Chicago! Tommy, what are you doing there?

**TOMMY:** Me and my buddies heard about all the job openings up here. In fact, employers wanted us to come.

**EMIKO:** But what about your own family?

**TOMMY:** I know. But I had to go someplace where I was wanted. It's too late for me, but I know you'll do us proud.

**EMIKO:** So there went my dream. Even if I applied to the university, who else but me would help Mama and Papa now? Over time the store began to do well, and eventually we found a home to live in. But outside of work Papa stayed home, never being the community servant he used to be.

**PAPA:** The nail that sticks up the highest, gets hit the hardest.

**EMIKO:** Papa hired more help, but eventually my college dreams began to fade away. My family was more important. Then one night my family surprised me.

**MAMA:** "You have done enough! It is time for you to do what you wish."

**EMIKO:** "That's okay, Mama. Besides college is too expensive."

**MAMA:** "Do not worry! We can take care of that."

**EMIKO:** "But you don't have to do that."

**PAPA:** "It is our wish."

**EMIKO:** The first day of my dream finally arrived. As I stepped onto that campus, I was amazed by how huge it was and how many people there were. As I found the path to my first class, I made a promise to my family. "I won't let you down."

So, as I say this Pledge of Allegiance, and though my job has helped to make these words come true, as I raise the flag, I try to look forward. I'll keep the past to myself until the day comes when America will want to know. Then I will be silent no more.

**HSIEH:** Thank you. *[Applause]* Thank you so much.

As I said before we started, this is an example of a unique collaboration between several different partnering organizations. It was a way that we were able to work with the community to create a more living, breathing exhibition. So that people, when they come in to see these collections, as powerful as they are in two dimensions, when



you add in that third dimension, the human dimension, it really gives people an example of what it might have felt like to go through those experiences. Sometimes that can actually give them the most powerful recreation of what the exhibit stands for, and why it is so important that we preserve these items in our collections, and why we continue to support small organizations that sometimes take bigger risks in terms of coming up with more innovative ways to share these stories and our common history together with the community.

I want to thank you so much for your time, and I'll hand it over to Ron now.

**CHEW:** I just want to thank Kathy for coming down here to take time to do this for us.

*[Applause]*

**BROWN:** I want to thank again Kathy Hsieh and all the presenters today.

**END**

