THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION’S HERITAGE
AS GRISTMILL OF HEGEMONIC POWER ON THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

A Thesis in
Geography
by
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Viewed concretely, the Smithsonian Institution’s main museums, gradually raised along the promenade of the National Mall in Washington, D.C., are centralized processing and display units whose contents are curated from the vast array of cultural and natural history collections and archives housed by the institution. The Smithsonian’s numerous international research and collection locations gather large volumes of “real” material whose provenances are ostensibly representative and traceable to authentic origins as gleaned from the “lived experiences” and perspectives of cultures all over the globe. The institution provides materials and forums for professional and lay audiences to “consume an experience” by processing displays, seminars, and publications about this material – for entertainment, education or legitimation purposes. Viewed abstractly, constructs like identity and heritage are the primary artifacts of interest; they signify immaterial systems of knowledge that assign meaning to objects. These constructs are traceable to place: the hallowed western cultural institutions inclusive of their landscapes, buildings and regulating bodies. Archetypally, the Smithsonian is a strategic repository of power, worldviews and cultural activities that elevated the status of the United States as a new Western nation by creating sciences and employing an elite citizenry.

This thesis historicizes the Smithsonian Institution as a metaphorical factory or gristmill of culture; established in 1846 upon the heels of European imperialism to create tandem subjects and systems of hegemony for the corporate-elite U.S. entity and to proliferate a certain set of cultural values. The Smithsonian, whose contents span global territories and cultures, became one of the most important and historic institutional faces of the United States chimera. As one of the first cultural institutions physically built in the District of Colombia, the Smithsonian processes cultural fodder of the U.S. – a global harbinger of contradiction: i.e., democratic mores as enforced by military-industrial power. Yet, this thesis also locates potentially decolonizing geographies within the Smithsonian’s contemporary presence. Culturally specific museums represent a complex discursive and representational power-share between institutions and marginalized populations; once studiously exploited and now invited to reconstruct a past as viewed from present cultural memories that simultaneously disentangle and reframe the museum’s object-based discourses. Historical contrasts are highlighted by examining organizational structures, mission, activities and shifting socio-temporal dynamics that undergird and challenge the Smithsonian’s standing as a national fiscal and cultural trust institution.
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This thesis is dedicated to the fulfillment of dreams for freedom and just representation shared by the all human cultures and our indigenous ancestors. To Joseph Loren Bailey & family, to friends, and to my instructors and advisors at the Department of Geography at Penn State University.
Introduction

Thesis Framework: Indigenous Decolonization of the National Museum

In the Smithsonian Institution, we have one of the first domestic examples of a center for the consumption and production of a mass-culture industry in the U. S. that – by warehousing collections and displaying the traces of individual and community experiences as artifacts – vies for the position as placeholder, archive and preeminent cultural representative of their ontologies. The consumption of land, resources, physical artifacts and cultural heritage by a quasi-governmental entity facilitates the power-driven production of belief systems and influences behavioral modes, thereby proffering an externalized national identity. These codified elements of the Smithsonian’s Victorian-era cultural enterprise predate and inform our contemporary American lives in important but subtle ways and ultimately give rise to various iconic cultural forms and norms. Resistance rises as well from indigenous voices in marginalized sectors of society – who have, by force or by choice, contributed grist to a globalized American cultural gristmill.

Who is indigenous? Broadly, I refer to anyone in the human tribe who, by their mundane expression or by their spiritually or culturally entrained choice, abjure the lifestyles and narratives of western patriarchy’s systems of law and science – especially when they are forcibly projected as hierarchical and pejorative ascriptions upon our interrelationships with each other and the planet. Indigenous peoples of the planet are comprised of every lineage and geographic origin – thus, being indigenous is a concept and way of life rooted in place. Being indigenous carries deep meaning not captured by the modern categorical assignations associated with “race” and thus, as used here, has no root historical identifications in an anthropological sense.
I argue that being indigenous is an ideological orientation – or sense of place – which can be adopted by anyone at any time or space. It is a chosen recognition of humanity’s true condition of coexistence and interdependence with Earth’s finite resources in its cyclical interrelationships with the Moon, Sun and other planets – interrelationships described in various spiritual, religious, non-sectarian, semiotic and scientific languages. It usually involves harkening to ancestral wisdom in a dynamic interplay with the human condition in the contemporary moment. As indigenous lives have been subordinated, misrepresented, stereotyped and commoditized as “other,” simplistic, primitive, or taboo, we now have occasion to face the mass-culture industry at institutions such as the Smithsonian. At these sites where ontological fodder becomes the material of epistemological power, indigenous voices must dismantle and/or reframe principles which are sometimes – but not always – at odds with our own perspectives within a very diverse set of self-realized norms.

For this thesis, I speak more narrowly to the experiences of my U.S. acculturated lineages – legally classified as “red, black, and white” – but who originate from cultures who have been marginalized as a function of their “nativisms” such as skin color, beliefs, clothing, language, foods and/or adherence to any of their niche cultural practices – namely American Indian, African and Irish. We, as a human species in the Americas, have had our native tongues and eco-spiritually adorned ontologies “melted down” into an amalgamated citizenry. Historical records highlight the commonality in indigenous experiences, regardless of “race” categorization:

Acts of genocide upon Natives are well known to Native peoples in the Americas…According to Kane, professor of the Colonial Studies Program at the University of Montana, the Brits even tried to put the Irish on reservations. Kane said the Irish, Africans and Natives in the Americas lived tribal, indigenous lifestyles that offended the British (Rose, C.).

In the U.S., diversity (in peoples, landscapes and ecologies) is denigrated via the dictation of whose heritage matters within institutions, while espousing the expediency of “racial” categorization as a divide and control mechanism. However this did not stop the blending of
cultures due to proximity in their spatial marginalization and common experiences of stereotyping, genocidal policies, starvation, Catholic indoctrination and torture:

With comparable cultures and similar experiences of colonization, the Natives and Irish intermarried, often with the French, and came to be known as the Métis. Many live today on the Rocky Boy Reservation, Kane said, adding that the Métis now produce a “gorgeous” music that blends Irish fiddling and drums, and dance steps that reflect Native culture and Irish jigs (Rose, C.).

The limits to our contemporary understanding of blended cultures subsumed by “race” categories is a direct indication of the forced segmentation of our heritages in museum culture and other government enforcement spatial segregation strategies and tools of colonial settlement enforcement. Our heritages were slowly “racialized” through the slow indoctrination to “whiteness” and “otherness” via the suppressed indigenous cultural expression for non-Anglo Europeans such as the Irish and through commoditized exoticism and assimilation/extermination policies for most everyone else.

This thesis began with the genesis of an idea: I wanted to do something to heal my lineages of devastation and ontological separation caused by certain toxic attitudes nurtured in my home nation. These attitudes have passed among my peoples as traumas; scarred aspects of self inherited by virtue of having been born here and living in a “racialized” cultural milieu. Why do the culture and “race” categorization concepts seem to delimit the ability to manifest wealth, and moreover – why does it starkly define one’s sense of place in the U.S.?

The United States, a “race-centric” nation, is sick with confusion, hatred, and the active but disavowed suppression of our common histories of forced-assimilation, extirpation, enslavement, segregation and discrimination under a “racialized” demographic and class-based gridlock. We are infected and somewhat crippled by the noxious constructs of “race” and culture – as the two are often conflated but hardly ever defined in clear and productive ways. In order to find a homeopathic medicine for this sickness, I endeavored to locate a representative industry and institution where the toxic substances of “race” and culture were generated or rather
simplified from rich intercultural genetic pools and mapped upon the land as “racially”
categorized demographic grids and wealth-codified cultural landscapes of the new nation. In
order to follow through to the ultimate crux, the material and immaterial ramifications of “race”
and culture constructs, it seemed important to find out exactly where and how wealth, opportunity
and sense of place had become intrinsically tied to nonspecific but rigidly guarded sub-
categorizations of “racial” identity (personhood vs. nationalism) and heritage (cultural
inheritance).

On a mundane level, I felt daunted in choosing the Smithsonian Institution – as a much
vaunted and monolithic-scale cultural landscape artifact. On a spiritual level, I was granted an
omen of affirmation, entering the main Smithsonian Institution archive center for the first time on
the afternoon of August 23, 2011. On this day, a rare earthquake rippled through the city of
Washington, D.C., and cracked the towering Washington Monument as I held and read pages
from an original copy of the first Annual Report of the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents. A
superstitious correlation on my part, perhaps – but from a practical perspective I noted the pages
full of Smithsonian geological and geographical surveys and endless lists of the indigenous
persons, flora, fauna, soils, and mineral deposits that were going to be utilized or transformed
during the construction of the buildings and streets city of Washington, D.C. There were
unabashed statements therein delegating the Secretary of War to gather artifacts from the Native
peoples as a first step in mapping them for future cultural assimilation and/or consumption.

I experienced a rupture in my awareness of who I am and where I was sitting – a
simultaneously unnerving and elated feeling that the physical and metaphysical foundations of
my worldview were shaken. In the Smithsonian Annual Reports, I held in my hands a definitive
and meticulously documented “Capitalization” of so-called raw materials for the U.S.; complete
with the description of the resources it would transform into future material artifacts like
museums and monuments – it actually read like a corporate inventory. As brutal as it seems to a
contemporary sensibility, this systemized inventory was assiduously formalized as assets via a set of government-sponsored sciences developed by Smithsonian’s Board of Regent-lawmakers, anthropologists, geologists, physicists, biologists, meteorologists, artists and geographers – all of whom laid the cornerstone justifications for the hegemonic enterprise of nation-building.

Where there are coexisting representational dipoles, there can be intriguing and sometimes mystical opportunities for radical shifts in awareness on either end. Dipole, a terminology borrowed from physics, describes the state of opposite electrical charges that is sustained between positively and negatively charged subatomic particles coexisting along with the uncharged neutron. These two types of charged particles, electrons (negative), protons (positive), are analogous to the opposition of perspectives in the cultural and historical dialectic where two states of being coexist and yet repel each other; functioning in a dynamic tension.

The August 23rd earthquake, which caused the Washington Monument to physically rupture, was a symbolic bifurcation and opposition of landscape experiences; it represented a dipole between the empowered experience of “positivist” scientific data gathering and the marginal or “negative” experience of being forcefully disempowered as the “object” of science. Following intuitive cues from between the lines of an often cited “method of scientific observation” and a seldom-referenced “method of inspiration” – the active engagement with a dialectic liminality between these dipoles has, for this indigenous researcher, created an important opportunity for identifying and healing the roots of intractable “racial” and cultural conflict.

The establishment of the Smithsonian Institution as a public trust via James Smithson’s bequest and the formation of the Board of Regents are direct responses to the benefactor’s mandate to “increase and diffuse knowledge among men” – as they were outgrowths of the late-imperialistic, revolutionary and Enlightenment time-periods. From within a complex discursively multidimensional worldview embodied in the gestalt icon of the Smithsonian – I identified a representative institution for the materially and immaterially complex neo-colonial American
heritage. By squaring the institution’s philanthropic mission statement against its global productions, the institution’s hegemonic processes – the itemization and consumption of cultures for the display and dissemination of a curated worldview – become evident.

Both “Enlightenment” and “indigeneity” can be, for the sake of simplicity, counterbalanced on the dialectic of “culture industry” versus “native pragmatism” - a dipole paradigm of conflict wherein those two ways of knowing are coexistent and either owned or disowned as valid. Museum culture (identity) and the nationalized American cultural landscape (heritage) are identified as the mechanisms of dominance and normative genesis known as cultural assimilation. To earmark some core frames of reference for the indigenous decolonization of the Smithsonian Institution and the national museum concept, I assert that the fluidly morphing but categorically persistent concepts of culture and “race” are the mediums through which hegemony was codified at museums as an intellectually and financially conditioned project of government-sponsored science.

I further assert that the indigenous responses to the U.S. hegemonic presence and practices were varied, but have precariously preserved – through our marginalized perspectives, and through our traumas – a cultural memory now being reclaimed through our academic and social expressions. These expressions are our wisdom heritages, our eco-spiritual-scientific knowledge, our sacred arts and rituals woven of daily life and our considered rejection of historical and contemporary perspectives we find prejudicial, unethical, unilateral and stagnantly time-linear.

Oregon State University professor of American and Historical Philosophy, Scott L. Pratt describes this dipole as a poorly functioning cultural geography. In his 2002 book, Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy, Pratt describes how deeply enmeshed European and Native American perspectives, landscapes and collective experiences are, and how they are usually ignored or poorly described:
While America’s plants, animals, water, and minerals all are viewed as the raw material for humanity’s future, Native American peoples are taken as an insignificant group of primitive people who are neither raw materials (except as slaves) nor possible contributors to the rich intellectual life of immigrant Europeans. Histories of American philosophy, in fact, face a problem of origins (Pratt 1).

Pratt contends that the dipole has been a consciously acculturated myth – as this nation of colorful contrasts has been actively mixing oppositional cultural pools and knowledge systems from the beginning – leading to a distinctly blended philosophy in American thought. Pratt continues:

As a result, histories of American philosophy tend to tell either a version of the frontier story in which ideas from Europe adapt to the trials of the wilderness or a story of genius in which what is American springs from the minds of talented European Americans… Both approaches have value, but there is another alternative. I will argue that the problem of origin can also be addressed by recognizing the origin of distinctive aspects of American philosophy in Native American thought (Pratt 1-2).

Even though there has been little credit given to the indigenous influences on systems of government and “the average American” way of life, they are evident in our national anthem “o’er land of the free, and the home of the brave” – the archaic connotation of the word “brave” perhaps being an unintentional tip of the hat by Francis Scott Key to the First Nations who bravely fought colonization and in some cases survived extirpation. This confluence is also evident in our U.S. Constitution, directly influenced by the pre-existent governance system of the Iroquois Confederacy – and in the multi-fold appropriations of indigenous cultural practices, place names and philosophies derived from the colonists’ experience of the indigenous lifestyle within a perceived wilderness.

However, the concept of native pragmatism has also been used – in its application during land disputes – to set the indigenous person in a different class and thus not held in protection and equity by the admiralty and maritime-contingent courts of law because these courts were admittedly established to protect the personhood and property of the European conqueror. The courts do, in this fashion, abuse the sovereign spirit imbued in the native pragmatism, by
extinguishing the rights of indigenous peoples to even approach the courts on equal grounds (Bartlett 283-6). Therefore it is crucial to establish the sovereignty principle as a universal of birthright of human identity regardless of lineage, rather than a geographically quantified assignment via birthplace of a natural or naturalized citizen. The sovereign identity and heritage inheritance concept is keenly important throughout this thesis. Had the strict, conditional inheritance laws of England not caused English citizen James Smithson to feel disenfranchised, the founding of the Smithsonian Institution in the U.S. by a contingency in his will would not likely have taken place.

As the progeny of an ambiguously and arbitrarily defined cultural offspring imbued with statutory rights via a citizenship – a status awarded to the denigration of sovereign status for the conquered – I have often felt that my ancestral peoples, American Indian, African, and poor European immigrants, were denied their sovereign rights, punished for indigenous pragmatism and set against each other with class and arbitrary “race” distinctions. I have felt that a “war in my blood” survivalist mentality was forced upon us: for the love, suffering and struggle to survive was common to us all. In the course of nation-building for the uplift of a select few entitled super-citizens, our commonalities were, and still are, likely feared as the tinder that could ignite a wider class revolt.

The cultural institutions supporting imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and capitalism, exemplified herein by the quasi-governmental Smithsonian Institution, comprise a complex system of legitimating landscapes and discourses involving scientific research, nationalistic propaganda, commodification and tourism. European enlightenment sciences, resulted from the expansion of the “the boundary” application – an attempt to both create mediated responses to the unknown cultures under exploration and facilitate the global foray of domination by exploratory corporate agents acting to gain supremacy under the auspices of crowns and crests. In an attempt to kill the “God(s)” of the dark ages, the Enlightenment’s
Descartian logic extracted the human mind from the human body and further set each as a dipole dualistic entity (mind) against the backdrop of its hostile environments (matter) that must be surveyed and controlled – the evolution of a Cartesian paradigm. This paradigm elevated discourses of western knowledge upon a pedestal of explication rather than explanation, and set the European male as a pinnacle among our human species – the winner of the never-finished conquest and mapping project that pits “man” versus “nature” in a mechanistic understanding of phenomena; whether tangible, conceptual and/or experiential.

Architects of this narrowly defined mechanistic reality realm meet the unexplained forces of nature with a measure of disdain and arrogance – with dire consequences for those coexisting by a reality stream considered subaltern by hierarchical comparison. Ultimately the “master” must face dire consequences as well: of tragedies of commons, externality-limited progress narratives, and failed growth aspirations due to the limited carrying capacity of Earth herself. Conversely, retaining this status requires one to blanket the world with “methodologies” and “technologies” removed from ecological interconnectedness – a useful but perhaps ultimately false and contextually myopic sense of verity attained by formulaic approaches to the study of phenomena.

Cultures outside of this realm of methodological and technological power endured the tyranny of scientific knowledge – collection, observation, description and dispossession – which was rich in detail but profane in its reductionist and xenophobe-induced meaning. For an age marked by the deification of knowledge, the fastidious collection and romanticized perusal of the spiritual and practical lives of indigenous peoples by entities like the Smithsonian Institution seems paradoxical, but it is not unexpected. The transitions between the religious and scientific worldview were not smooth. The approach of Victorian-age museum anthropologists to all things “exotic” was as much a moralistic as it was an internal and didactic philosophical struggle.

Despite the fact that Enlightenment and positivism carried the scientist from the
confusing belief in a beneficent but also punishing deity, there remained troublesome questions about why the world’s cultures were so varied. In that confusion, the museum embraced a comforting expunction from neocolonial Victorian guilt – that the work of conquering the borders of uncontrolled nature, while subduing the “violent and chaotic savage,” would lead to the orderly world of cultivated possessions, dioramas and artifacts – collectible cultures placed upon shelves and inside glass cases as curiosities. This brought about the regimentation of thought and a nullification of a personal connection with a spiritual world, now resurgent in fields like human geography, deep ecology, feminism, phenomenology and philosophical anthropology where the overspecialization of disciplinary expertise and oversimplification of external phenomena into rigid categories is rejected. These fields locate power in the margins of “observable” knowledge, where the interdisciplinary approach is valued and the qualitative realms of feelings are embraced as rich data.

As stated by critical theorists Horkheimer and Adorno in the opening paragraph of the first chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, “Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity. Enlightenment’s program was the disenchantment of the world.* It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge.” Note that the symbol “*” specifically denotes enlightenment as a *concept* in the chapter title, “The Concept* of Enlightenment” (Horkheimer, Adorno and Noerr 1) – which underlines the fact that agreements were tacitly made as to whose cultural lens, ideological power and forces were engaged by the Enlightenment program itself.

Research under the auspice of European concepts like “Enlightenment” and the “progress of civilization” underwrote the core foundational principles of imperial expansion whereby control, classification and display of the spirit-matter of indigenous earth-harmonic cultural
wisdom and artifacts became standards of contact with the “un-civilized.” Enslavement, reeducation, religious indoctrination, and the marginalization of indigenous people’s life-ways and knowledge under the Concept* become the unremitting tools to actualize these foundational principles. The culturist researcher underscored the concept, whereas the government enforced the mechanisms of immaterial and material oppression.

Enlightenment projected humanity itself into a delimited framework of power and fear of the unknown – where knowledge set the observer hovering above a glass cabinet of collected museum artifacts, or at the mercy and dark mythos of nature. Defining developmental stages of knowledge and history narrows our growth as a species to a linear trajectory rather than acknowledging that western civilization was not a pinnacle stage that humans achieve with “mastery” of natural forces through science; all ecological and human degradation are evidences of a failing experiment in separation.

Enlightenment – as a project of the European male’s privilege to name, claim, and construct reality for the world – began moving humanity away from ontological frameworks that integrated sciences and metaphysics and toward one that fixated on Western male observation, rationality and peer-review as the pinnacles of human thoughts and achievements. This rupture in the global cultural ecology created, by self-designation, a dominant icon whom no-one could challenge. The iconography invoking a trance of dominance over space is oft depicted is the masonic all-seeing eye of a pyramid on government currencies – a kind of rationalist geomancy and spell-casting. Yet even with our reliance on “advanced” technologies, knowledge systems, social agreements and statutory (artificial) law – we are still an Earth-bound species rooted in locality; we are still governed by and subject to the balancing scales of natural law.

Many aspects of my arguments will stem from one central premise: the identities of my ancestral peoples have neither adequate space nor standing in the academic, political, social, ecological and economic profiles of this country to adequately influence the prevailing program
of coexistence. In many respects, we are landless and invisible – whether we are commonly identified as Mulatto, Black Indian, Indian, Black, Colored, Negro, African American or any of the other categorical assignments and labels applied through anthropological misnomer.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to voice our presence individually, and when possible collectively, in order to establish discourses which assert our extraordinarily complex and diverse heritages. I am globally indigenous in my love for Mother Earth, but my demographic roots make me keenly interested in how I can leverage my particular indigenous experiences in decolonizing part of Turtle Island, known politically as the bordered North American nation of the United States. Since the peer-reviewed languages of an oppressor are often the only recognized and authenticated perspectives that gain status as valid discourses – indigenous decolonizing approaches and networks need to be treated equally for a more thorough representation and paradigmatic rupture.

I have introduced the decolonizing approach of an indigenous geography as a philosophical underpinning and applied it to the cultural and historical evolution of museums as preservers and agents of culture and power. In this context, museums are a key colonial mechanism. Indigenous research perspectives not only identify the potent power imbued in the compounded institutional constructs of government-funded science and museology, but offer alternative worldviews constructed on principles that call for direct interventions and responses to the problems of colonization and modernity, such as global environmental degradation and climate change. The demand by indigenous peoples for economic justice and equal standing in the construction of worldviews offers an alternate set of values on the concepts like space, place, time, identity and resources. This demand calls for a needed injunction on the status quo of operation within knowledge infrastructures and perhaps a new paradigmatic framework or epoch that not only assails the proposition that colonization is a thing of the past but also offers a diverse set of pathways forward.
The worldviews that underlie decolonizing geographies are similar to those traditions which informed the aforementioned intellectual ruptures and responses to modernity including feminist, Marxist, post-modern, post-structural, critical theory and post-colonial frameworks. These intercessory discourses have disrupted but not completely divested the underlying imperialist process – because the basic frameworks and power structures of imperialism remain intact. Within colonized communities, whose contact and familiarity with hegemonic practices is fundamental to survival, entire languages and approaches predate these recognized discourses in trying to mitigate the oppressive impacts of colonization.

Decolonizing geographies obviously arise from indigenous and marginalized places and persons – thus I include the political economies of gender, poverty, segregation, and “race” as four important social constructs of my indigenous experience in the United States. I focus on the communities closest to my oral history-traced ancestral experiences. Each shared experiences and community under forces of colonialism, migration or intentional collaboration: Black or African American and American Indian – colloquially “Black Indian.” Less specifically, my blended “black, red, and white” ancestry causes my lens to land on the blurry boundaries between these constructed “racially” exclusive categories and the experientially unified category of “otherness” so I may embrace the wider framework and label-resistant power-position of indigeneity.

My personal ideologies and perceptions arise from ideological and actual disenfranchisement, material deprivation – countered by the inherited oral-histories of survival, humor, celebration and self-determination. I resituate the stigmatized knowledge of my interdependence on an unseen-world of spiritual resources as that which helped my families negotiate their survival in a world that negates this framework. I reclaim these deferred frames of reference as a partially realized decolonization of my indigenous consciousness.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an Associate Professor in Education and Director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of
Auckland, identifies indigenous research methodologies that employ responsible questioning and results orientation. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Smith (1999) asserts that research itself is a hegemonic weapon if conducted or applied *sans* adherence to the indigenous research methodologies of reflexive praxis and inclusivity – because western scientific research was designed and conducted for imperialistic gains, not mutual reciprocity.

Specific languages, stories, and strategies have been developed within indigenous communities to directly intervene in the implementation of research. These methods make sure that there is a benefit to the community, who become part-designers, part-implementers, part-givers and part-owners of the knowledge and results obtained (Smith 5). Smith, noting that the final “s” in peoples is a hard-won acknowledgement of the plurality of voice and a widely diverse set of local empowerment considerations, asserts that the indigenous research methodology framework moves beyond participatory research and cultural relativity because it is not only conditional upon the non-indigenous researcher’s acknowledgement of bias and agendas, but also calls for more indigenous peoples to recognize their keen insight into the motivations and biases of scientific research via their colonization experiences (ibid 6-7).

From indigenous people’s perspectives, scientific research is not differentiated from the informal leisure knowledge consumption of the world of the casual imperial traveler (Smith 8-9) – as such it often times less empirical than it is often bias-deductive, conjectural and anecdotal. Harris points out the fact that the post-colonial focus on this imperial-eye phenomena does not encompass the complete picture of how the power was effected:

A study of travel writing, for example, may yield an appreciation of the inflected seeing of travelers and of the complicity of such seeing with colonial projects, while not beginning to address the relative importance of travelers’ seeing and writing in the whole colonial enterprise. Given its focus, it cannot (Harris 165).

To fully unpack the impacts hinted at by the false biases of scientific research agendas, we must be willing to admit that the phenomena imparts experiences also worthy of study, as well as
truthfully discuss and witness the rich knowledge embedded in the indigenous geographies outlined by Smith. These are “wisdom gained from trauma” perspectives and experiences.

Casual observances of the scientific explorer were also carefully preserved and writ large as facts in the annals of the Royal Society. For example, despite the unsystematic nature of the journey, James Smithson’s team exploration of rocks at Giant’s Causeway at Staffa became his rite-of-passage supplement to the Royal Society via senior colleague and society president, Sir Joseph Banks, who brought this island to prominent attention (Ewing 74). Curiously, Mr. Smithson claimed to have collected the zeolite specimens for his published analysis at Staffa, but in a letter to a colleague, he bemoaned that there were none left to collect on the island. Indigenous knowledge of the island geographies would have likely been obtainable from the one family found living on Staffa, who provided meager shelter and food to the exploratory team. Yet the explorers before and after Smithson’s team could become scientific authorities by reporting their exploratory travel in a Society publication. By nature of the empowered European male gaze, fragmentary geological knowledge of the land was obtained – while stripping the land of zeolite rocks (Ewing 91-93).

Is there any record of the impact that this overharvesting of minerals had on the Staffa family? What other ecological ramifications resulted from explorers traversing the island? If records exists, they may be in Smithson’s or some other explorer’s journal but this type of information would probably not have risen to the same level of importance as explorers’ findings on zeolite, nor would these documents have been necessarily written as an exercise of conscious witnessing until a researcher reviewed the documents with the determination to find inferences or sought out original oral histories. The point being, without respect to place, perspective and personhood, the scientific method mostly enriches observers, their private collections and museums, creates the well-established externalities and casualties of colonial project – and presents only narrow slices of a potentially holistic knowledge-base to inform our contemporary
understanding.

In the case of Banks, his 1768 *Endeavor* expedition to the South Pacific with Captain Cook in pursuit of timing standards enabled by observation of the Transit of Venus in Tahiti is exemplary of the imposition of European concepts of time and normality on the daily lives of the indigenous. Banks is infamously noted for his exploitation of indigenous women’s bodies sexually and the textual exploration of their life-ways – while his notes confess a misunderstanding of their culture’s memes and time-management notwithstanding his profusely detailed experiential notes thereafter offered as research findings (Ewing 75; Smith 54).

Smith elucidates the deeply scarring impact of these Enlightenment-era cultural mapping projects based on lineal time and frames them as a historical concept called progress. Upon contact, indigenous orientations and languages for identifying and speaking about constructs such as time and the relationship between themselves and the land became irrelevant and out of step with Western modernistic designs upon reality:

What has come to count as history in contemporary society is a contentious issue for many indigenous communities because it is not only the story of domination; it is also a story which assumes there is a “point in time” which was “prehistoric”…Traditional indigenous knowledge ceased, in this view, when it came into contact with “modern” societies, that is the West. Deeply embedded in these constructs are systems of classification and representation which lend themselves easily to binary oppositions, dualisms, and hierarchical orderings of the world (Smith 55).

While unchecked European colonialism during the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries allowed control and subjugation of land and people, colonialism was only the most overt of many imperial weapons of domination used on the colonized. We are still reckoning with material *and* mental (non-material) impacts in communities destroyed by colonization’s hegemonic force – therefore, if considering time as a measure of the ongoing resistance interventions, we are still in a period of decolonization (Smith 21, 24).

“Post-colonial” relationships between indigenous peoples and scientific researchers are
ongoing since colonizers changed guises from imperial merchant kings serving monarchs to corporate kingpins serving boards of directors. However, the power conditions have shifted from the polarity contingency of exploitation-versus-survival to one in which indigenous people are demanding mutual reciprocity, intellectual property and full re-haul of research methodologies to include local perspectives and research questions that are designed to benefit us, not cleverly designed for facilitating the world-consuming geographies of corporate-imperialist imperatives.

One important contemporary battleground for indigenous sovereignty in discourse, research perspectives and representation resides at culturally specific museums like the National Museum of the American Indian (hereafter NMAI). Even still – the national museum complex cannot hold the full reservoir of resistance narratives due to the power structures that the Smithsonian Institution itself answers to, as well as its problematic handling of indigenous heritages.

Sleeper-Smith, editor of *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (2009), asserts that the distillation of the thousands of indigenous cultures in the Western hemisphere under one roof is problematic, because prior to contact with Europeans there was no concept of a collective Indian identity. Sleeper-Smith contends that the multiple voices of indigenous peoples will not be silenced, surfacing in the tribal museum – a series of counter-narratives to a suppressive metanarrative of “American Indian” profiled at NMAI, on a grand public promenade at the National Mall (2-3). Not only does the unified label, Indian, confuse and conflate this complexity of cultures, Sleeper-Smith emphasizes that knowledge systems like museums are storehouses of hegemonic ideology that have such pervasive power that they continue to inform and haunt the public consciousness. In her words,

Global expansion created new notions about human nature and embedded knowledge...Many objects were received through the traditional exchange of goods; and like written narratives, these objects were displayed as a way of telling stories about Indians. Museums, like literary texts, were also purposefully constructed to tell stories about Western, rather than Indigenous, society...Notions about the “primitive” nature of the Indian society influenced what was collected and how it was displayed (Sleeper-Smith 1-2).
As such, until recently heritage narratives created in museum cultural paradigms were predominantly used for and by non-indigenous peoples to inform what the Western society valued in itself. Heritage objects and landscape were the material traces of a Westernized history written in specific pejorative terms whereby evolutionary or developmental ideals of time and progress place a subset of Europeans at the top. Moreover, despite the presentation of museums on the national stage as a step toward recognition, it is difficult for the indigenous persons to place their trust in the same institutions that were instrumental in cultural rapaciousness.

The impetus behind this thesis is to discuss the engineers and vectors of intent and the reservoirs of power affected by Smithsonian Institution’s presence on the national landscape; a no less important intent is to establish the heretofore latent reservoirs of power located in the marginalized public voice now owning and utilizing our hard-earned “trust” institutions. This thesis cannot plumb the entire depth of Smithsonian’s expansive well of influence, but will attempt to provide an informative purview of the site. Researching its importance as a founding institution in the United States helped me establish its relevancy as a site for engagement with contemporary ontologies and epistemologies as they relate to personhood and the vagaries of citizenship.

The growth of the discipline of anthropology at the Smithsonian – site of the largest national museum complex in the world – was rooted in the construction of an embryonic ideal for the American cultural identity. By comparing and contrasting an ideal construct of “civilization” with the lifeways of indigenous persons (labeled “savages” and/or “noble savages”), anthropology constructed American citizenry by defining “what” they were and who they could hope to become. “To be sure, there has been an intimate relationship between anthropology in North America and the study of the American Indian…Historians and ethnohistorians, conversely, have emphasized the crucial role of the Indians in the emergence of an American Identity” (Darnell 9).
Via the limiting constructs of a linear human cultural progression and images of an alternatingly aggressive or noble “savage” – certain Americans were taught to see themselves as the rightful inheritors of this land, partially through the culture industry of museums. This has been an unsettling and phantasmagorical model for those who carry indigenous perspectives in our lineages, because it is sometimes difficult to know who we truly were prior to engagement with the hegemonic propaganda images constantly fed to us. We were frozen in time and placed in contrast to a monolithic image of ourselves as precursors to “civilization” – and these images could not easily be challenged on our own terms when our wisdom-keepers were exploited and sometimes killed and the objects of our cultures were gathered, interpreted and described in the colonizer’s language. There is no solid ground here, but instead we are left to trace a horrific propagandistic hyper-reality, while trying to correct historical narratives and abide within the deeper meanings of this experience by surviving to retell our traumas and suffering.

In addition to the fact that the early Smithsonian’s institutional focus was almost exclusively directed at the indigenous people and territories of the United States, NMAI’s groundbreaking book and exhibit InDivisible, (Tayac, G. 2009) – which explores the complex historical identities of peoples with blended American Indian, African and European ancestry – was the primary influential factor that helped me identify the Smithsonian as a personal and academic site of interest. Therefore, the construction of NMAI will comprise an important reference point herein.

Chapter Overview

In chapter one I establish the Smithsonian Institution’s key role in the facilitating western expansion and the subjugation of native spaces through the identity-defining discourse of anthropology. Anthropological research was nurtured as a discipline at nineteenth-century
museum institutions, but rested on the ideological frameworks of older traditions such as biology, geography and natural history. By establishing a false-linear time-stamp on artifacts and inscribing Anglo-centric interpretations onto cultural phenomena, anthropologists construed the lifeways of non-Europeans and many non-Anglo Saxon Europeans as savage or barbarian, thus advocating the abandonment or repression of many aspects of the indigenous eco-cultural interconnections fundamental to our survival as a species. Pejorative lenses used to construct the methodologies of ethnographic and archaeological research served to divide human groups along “racialized” cultural biases, while the militaristic/religious establishment of colonial rule violently enforced hierarchical systems of law and hegemonic control over land and epistemology.

In chapter two, I explore the site-specific mechanisms of “conventional” museum culture at the national museum institution to further elaborate on the personalities and hegemonic mechanisms that developed as a function of government-sponsored science and display. Transforming from private collection to public museum, the halls of exhibition became western-cultural training grounds *par excellence*. The Smithsonian Institution became a key infrastructural means by which museum culture and hegemonic practices operated to entrain U.S. populations as either the denizens of revolutionary power or as the objects of display, respectively elevated or excluded from cultural influence and power.

Chapter three situates the Smithsonian Institution’s origins in European intellectual societies through an examination of its provenance as the tangential inheritance from James Smithson, a professional chemist who was, not inconsequentially, a disenfranchised English subject. The consequence and implementation of an inheritance of this kind was neither smoothly undertaken, nor was it universally accepted by U.S. leadership. Particularly important to this inquiry are the geographies formed by analyzing the amount of money inherited, the way it was secured and invested and the corruption and mismanagement of funds that ensued. Ultimately, I juxtapose the experiences of (dis)empowerment, (mis)representation and (dis)enfranchisement
between the founder’s ostensible history, the institutional mission statement outlined for execution by his will, and the imposition of said mission and assets upon the people and landscapes that the U.S. captured and subsequently governed.

Chapter four examines the landscapes of the Smithsonian Institution’s culturally specific museums as transitional sites where cultural “others” have moved beyond objectification, marginalization, stereotype, and pacification experienced at conventional museums toward a more recent recognition of sovereignty over image representation through concerted ontological resistance, reconceptualization and celebration. The contemporary paradigm shift, invoking the sovereignty of indigenous rights and perspectives, utilizes western research scaffolds to situate and foster various modes of resistance including successful initiatives to explore non-objectifying discourses at culturally specific museums and to reclaim space as a function of citizenship.

In Chapter five I explore the contrasting functions served by the construction of culturally specific museums such as Smithsonian’s Anacostia Community Museum (ACM) and National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The spaces of representation for the empowered versus marginalized populations are most at odds when comparing the prevailing messages and contents of a conventional museum versus the culturally specific museum – yet their land placement and time of construction are of primary interest here. There, the resistance narratives potentiated despite historical mis-representations that facilitated the obfuscation of indigenous peoples’ cultural heritages for the purposes of assimilation, categorical assignation and governance. When a national museum complex enshrines separate buildings for “non-white” culturally indistinct identities such as American Indians, Asian Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans etc., are we to read these portions of the cultural landscape as inclusion and recognition, as segregation, as reification, as a long awaited stage of settlement, or all/none of the above? How has our story been coopted to construct/reenact the tools of a hegemonic cultural paradigm. Have we begun participating in our own subjugation by occupying these same semiological spaces?
Chapter six concludes on a philosophical note. Who consumes the grist of culturally specific museum culture and who/what is consumed? Is it possible to obtain sovereign engagement as the authors of our own cultural narratives and images while using the same “racialized” identifiers – even as we depart conceptually in our use of heritage objects? Can we trust culturally specific museum spaces to assist us in tracing a sovereign identity while simultaneously situating our own bodies, intellect and communities as the true spaces of resistance? We cannot do so if all we do is retrospectively construct ourselves. As sovereign indigenous peoples, we cannot continue to defer our meaning or be exploited as inheritors of the colonizer’s hegemonic ideologies and the misrepresentations of museum culture.

Though located within the frameworks of conventional museums, these sites have the potential to create contemporary platforms of empowerment whereby research is redefined as both conditional to and inclusive of resistance narratives and community-level self-determination initiatives; however, the factors that caused the imbalance of power over representation still prevail, as they are infrastructural and longstanding. While the Smithsonian’s culturally specific museum contexts still situate “race” as the underlying framework of socio-spatial enshrinement, (thereby fostering a seemingly intransigent paradox), they simultaneously introduce new grist to the cultural gristmill in an attempt to become building blocks of intercultural insight – sometimes called cultural relativity or situated knowledge. Where can such a trail lead academics?

A New Epoch Calls for Important Collaborations

As a primary artifact of the federal landscape, we can trace both material and immaterial traces of personhood over time by understanding the situated power that was potentiated through the Smithsonian’s infrastructural presence and legislated conveyance. Therefore, a retrospective mapping of the common disciplinary territory between geography and anthropology is a pertinent
exercise in tracing the material and immaterial forces of colonization embraced by cultural institutions as necessary, moral and scientific. Poignantly, the key point of commonality for either discipline was politicization of discourses about the land and its original inhabitants thereby endorsing subsequent commodification activities whose fodder was processed at museums.

The emerging field of anthropology and the established geographical survey were at the heart and center of a well-funded institutional program undertaken under government expansionist aegis. Anthropological identification pressed labels of inferiority upon any European or non-European persons whose labor must be gotten at the cheapest price while the geographical survey of lands desired for development corroborated the imperialistic and modern industrial concept that the “non-civilized” culture could not make the best use of the land. Landscapes and people were collected, artistically rendered, categorized, studied and/or displayed as the raw materials of civilization – the paradigm of mechanization and commodification underwrote this worldview.

Penn State University launched a collaborative lecture series on indigenous geography with the Smithsonian Institution in September 2013. The series is hosted by the Interinstitutional Consortium for Indigenous Knowledge – “established at the Pennsylvania State University in 1995 to promote communication among university faculty, staff, students, and townspeople who share an interest in the diverse local knowledge systems that enables communities to survive in a changing world” (ICIK). The first lecture by Dr. Douglas Herman, Senior Geographer at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (Herman 2014). In a related article, Herman contends that the field of geography has been stuck in the disenchantment mode. Despite having full engagement with the post-modernist, feminist, and critical theory approaches that directly pose challenges to the modernists’ negation of marginalized systems of knowing, he suggests that the discipline has not engaged with the indigenous perspectives to the same degree:

Geography as a discipline provides ways of talking about the interconnections
between environment, modes of production, social and political formations, and cultural practices and values. Because modern geography maintains a mechanistic view of the world, perhaps we can look toward "Indigenous geography" to get a glimpse of knowledge systems that did not make this disconnect. Cultural and environmental knowledge, values, wisdom practices, and science remain holistically integrated…(Herman 2008, 77).

In fact, formerly marginalized knowledge systems are in more demand than ever, especially in the realms of climate change wherein the search for local solutions to a host of associated problems holds global significance. Herman continues:

This is not to glorify Indigenous knowledge as a panacea for the ills of modernity or to suggest that there are no other paths to wisdom. Rather it is simply to say that inasmuch as geographers have drawn avidly from other disciplines, it is time that geography did so with Indigenous science in an honest and meaningful way (ibid).

Whereas the hegemonic paradigm places a nearly impenetrable embargo on knowledge originating from the realm of “savage races,” Herman makes no such blanket claim. The keen insights of a frank collaborative discussion (that utilizes the indigenous wisdom gained from experiencing a mechanized civilization) is usually overshadowed by focusing on the oversimplified weaknesses of either path. While an emphasis on top-down power weakens the qualitative contributions of western institutions, an overemphasis on romanticism weakens the instructive-power of indigenous wisdom. Is there not a middle path where both sets of knowledge strengthen each other?

The importance of these conversations and collaborations to geographers, according to Herman, lies in a threefold observation: 1) Disenchantment literally removes “spiritual” aspects to the world and thus the nature/culture bifurcation is perforated with threads that have been ignored by modernity’s mechanistic models of nature and humanity i.e. mental realms of consciousness oppose a material reality, 2) The intrinsic value of nature is subsumed by the mechanistic model since its value exists in the mental space not the outer world, and 3) The bifurcation of humans and nature fosters the detachment underlying capitalist commodification of the world (74). In a parallel application to early museum anthropology, the categorical separation
between peoples via arbitrarily rigid stages or “races” and the categorical separation between humans and nature are corollary remnants of antiquated systems of classification formed in the previous epoch. Neither is sustainable. We are stronger with cross-culturally attuned hearts and minds working as one.

The epochal shift mentioned by Herman appears to be emergent in the reclamation of indigenous perspectives which do not exclude modernist ways of being. This shift toward indigenous wisdom attempts to illuminate modernity as part of a learning curve within human systems that have evolved since Enlightenment reductionism. The Enlightenment sciences of imperialism systematically eliminated local economies along with a host of spiritual and ecologically balanced knowledge systems. Our current paradigm uses objectivist contrivances of science and law as a means of spreading global capitalism. Extreme consumptive patterns of this capitalist modernity are justified based on the idea that the technology of “civilization” will help humanity escape externalities by offering a never ending series of improvements over indigenous technologies adapted to the interconnected flows of natural ecological systems. In effect, this has bifurcated knowledge systems between a hyper-rationality where nature is controllable and separate and the rejected worlds of the unseen intrinsic to many indigenous cultures across the globe – including pre-modern European cultures.

A series of important indigenous responses to the climate change phenomena was explored during NMAI’s symposium on climate change in 2011 and 2012 entitled Conversations with the Earth: Indigenous Voices on Climate Change. This is another of several important offerings at NMAI that shift the emphasis from historical focus on prehistoric to living indigenous cultures where knowledge of intricate systems of adaptation and a spirit of wisdom have been nurtured together holistically. As the Smithsonian is a storehouse of the collected heritage treasures of many cultures, its contemporary relevance as a site for both local and globally-important problem solving is invaluable. Therein lies the potential to inform and expand
the knowledge base of physical and social sciences by dropping certain antiquated cultural filters and putting everyone in the same room. Citing indigenous geography’s importance in collaborative problem-solving, Herman states:

Today the major initiative on climate change being developed by the US Geological Survey and other federal agencies involves working closely with American Indians and Alaskan Natives. The time for Indigenous geography to be recognized as an important field of inquiry has arrived, not just for the colonized societies whose cultures are alternately extolled or dismissed, and whose lifeways are under threat from the power of global capitalism (if not the state), but also for the dominant society that suffers a shortage of wisdom (Herman 77).

The work conducted in the Indigenous Geography division at NMAI is one example of how the resources and perspectives emerging from culturally specific museums could potentially turn the hegemonic research-display paradigm of the early Smithsonian Institution in the direction of cutting edge relevance to the discipline of geography and other disciplines that utilize geographic tools. Herman’s framework lends support to the idea that both human geographers conducting ethnographic research and physical geographers studying nature-society or environmental phenomena are fundamentally interdependent in the indigenous geography approach.

Indigeneity is a concept beyond positivist mechanistic models of humanity and nature and it is beyond “racial” or ethnic categorization. It serves as a beacon for a highly adapted and scientifically viable state of being – rooted in place, respectful of space and diversity, available to all. The stigmatization of the word “savage” should be understood from its very core – arising from a biased ethnographic history based on mechanistic and capitalist modes of living. When placed in the context of reclaimed indigenous geography and cleansed of its pejorative biases, savagery – bearing the same root as the words savant or savvy, i.e. “to know” – points directly to the lost source of wisdom mentioned by Herman. There is urgency imbued in the impending shift; Herman points out that the wisdom-holders in many cultures are aging and many have not been able to successfully train youth due to violent colonial pressures forcing the indigenous to assume modern ways of being (Herman 83-85).
Harkening back to Horkheimer and Adorno’s statement on Enlightenment, there is a definitive recognition of how far this perspective has lead humanity astray from balance and reciprocity. Similarly, both Hinsley and Herman cite Max Weber’s backward gaze at the civilizing forces of the modern age – concluding that these forces act as both cause and symptom of mechanistic bifurcation: “‘The fate of our times…is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and above all, by the disenchantment of the world’” (Weber quoted in Hinsley 190; referenced by Herman 2008, 74). Something invaluable was hidden inside romanticist artistry and developmental theories – it is the hidden desire to loosen the grip of modernity, and the attempt to break the spell of disenchantment by rediscovering one’s own indigenous connection. The challenge to modernity and to scientists is to engage a personal “spirit-science” – a rigorous individual engagement and openness to the unknown as linked to one’s own lineage experiences. We must also create interpersonal currencies that mutually contribute value to a cultural tapestry to be shared, not prescribed by what is already “known” via the commodification of someone else’s notion of the “real.”

A liaison between indigenous and modern technologies has the potential to ameliorate the destructive externalities of civilizations built around modernity’s pure rationality without losing the technological advantages of innovation. This is possible because indigenous ways are fundamentally intelligent and scientific with respect to the incredibly complex systems of knowledge required to live in balanced coexistence with the land – many have been perfected on the most marginal lands after colonial pressures assumed the choicest resource locations. There is also rich knowledge on how to maximize limited resources while minimizing waste and pollution.

Locating the Smithsonian Institution as a globally potentiated cultural institution in the United States with respect to its place within pre-existing western systems of knowledge charges the institution with accountability in the collaborative use of indigenous knowledge, artifacts and resources. Entertaining a future collaboration, Penn State and the Smithsonian open an important
opportunity for American geographers to apply several decades of indigenous qualitative responses to modernity in order to co-facilitate the rehabilitation of formerly pejorative systems of meaning that the discipline of geography helped create. Increased engagement with the ways geography’s academies, languages and tools have facilitated and turned a blind eye to oppression are necessary. One important first step is identifying historical sites and cultural constructs wherein hegemonic forces proliferated. Only a concerted project of honest reconstruction and engagement with indigenous wisdom and hegemonic geographical and anthropological histories can eradicate the misnomers and data-skew involved in building pan-global ecological equality paradigm – site by site.

Geographers are necessarily amplifying efforts to ameliorate former and current participation with the many remnant negative forces of imperialism and colonization that still oppress indigenous peoples (Shaw, Herman and Dobb 2006). Geographers have a key role in tracing these forces owing to the widespread use of geography tools that map and describe individuals, populations, spaces, and places through conventional cartography, landscape narratives and GIS mapping as well as the poignant fact that through our worldviews and academic outputs, we influence the perception and fundamental approach to phenomena at all scales. Geographers engage with the formation of history, cultures, economies, and politics as well as influence demographic indices in the process of mapping the social trends impacted and informed by individuals and communities. Germane to this thesis, geographers’ instruments have been and will continue to be used by museum curators as background information for various educational and visual engagement strategies in museum displays.

Focusing on museology, particularly given the international scope of the Smithsonian Institution, offers us the ability to trace the socio-economic and political underpinnings of a giant, but mostly silent, purveyor in the construction of knowledge systems that helped to define a demoralizing pejorative worldview which is killing the planet. Critiquing museology on the
national scale enables me to situate a narrative of personal resistance in light of damages done to my person and lineages by presumptive laws and conjectural sciences. Laws (Acts of Congress) and applied sciences assign societal rules of operation and govern value/valuation systems, respectively. Both have epistemological roots and ontological hegemonies that are traceable to the Smithsonian Institution as both a site and an archetype of museology’s diffuse cultural forces and counterforces.
Chapter 1

Smithsonian Institution as Instrument of the United States Government

On August 10, 1846 the Smithsonian Institution was established as a national public-trust by resolution of a joint committee and Act of Congress (Smithsonian Institution 1 - henceforth Annual Reports 1847-1849, 48) seventy years after the Declaration of Independence initiated permanent freedom from British colonial rule in 1776. The Smithsonian’s Board of Regents, tasked with budgetary appropriation and mission oversight, has been a product of government officiation since the institution’s inception in 1846 (see figure 1.1). As the largest national museum and scientific research complex in the world, it is a key site for understanding American material and immaterial geographies. By parsing its iconic presence, collections and contexts as a vast synecdochic cultural inventory, the Smithsonian’s quasi-scientific, quasi-political enshrinements of cultural and natural resources become symbolic of the establishment, growth and transformations of a new nation.

Amongst a proliferation of similar iconic nineteenth-century cultural institutions, the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution’s national museum and scientific research complex serves as a lamppost to highlight the Eurocentric worldviews that nurtured a systematic hegemonic continuum. Hegemony evolved through imperial, colonial, and industrial periods to contemporary iterations – where cultural-imperialism is implemented by corporate-governments. While nationalistic declarations for liberty and independence gave impetus to revolutionary war against Imperial Britain, de facto colonialism of the post-revolutionary period nurtured culturally imperialistic motives and mechanisms that stripped others of these same ideals and freedoms.
Inscription for the foundation-stone of the Smithsonian Institution.

On the first day of May, 1847, was laid, in the city of Washington, this foundation-stone of a building to be appropriated for the Smithsonian Institution;

FOUNDED BY BEQUEST OF JAMES SMITHSON, OF GREAT BRITAIN,

JAMES K. POLK, President of the United States.

CORPORATION.

President of the United States.
Vice President of the United States.
Secretary of State.
Secretary of the Treasury.
Secretary of War.
Secretary of the Navy.
Postmaster General.
Attorney General.
Chief Justice.
Commissioner of Patents.
Mayor of the City of Washington.

OFFICERS.

George M. Dallas, Chancellor.
W. W. Seaton, Chairman.
Jos. G. Totten, Executive Committee.
Robert Dale Owen.
Joseph Henry, Secretary.
Charles C. Jewett, Assistant Secretary.

BOARD OF REGENTS.

George M. Dallas, Vice-President.
Roger B. Taney, Chief Justice.
W. W. Seaton, Mayor of the City.
Lewis Cass, U. S. Senator.
Sidney Breese, U. S. Senator.
James A. Pearce, U. S. Senator.
Wm. J. Hough, U. S. Representative.
Henry W. Hilliard, U. S. Representative.
Rufus Choate, Massachusetts.
Gideon Hawley, New York.
Wm. C. Preston, South Carolina.
A. Dallas Bache, National Institute.
Jos. G. Totten, National Institute.

BUILDING COMMITTEE.

Robert Dale Owen, Chairman.
Jos. G. Totten.
W. W. Seaton.

James Renwick, jr., Architect.
Robert Mills, Assistant Architect and Superintendent.
American Indians, Africans, Asians, the poorest Europeans and many other persons suffered to various degrees from the effects of war, slavery, indenture, and disenfranchisement during U.S. infrastructural and territorial expansion. By the mid-nineteenth century, a growing complex of American societal institutions fostered subtler but still violent social instruments of cultural indoctrination, assimilation, re-education and pseudo-scientific identity stratification – a cultural war of attrition toward a stratified citizenry with capitalistic national growth ideals. The Smithsonian Institution, as the first home of American anthropology, helped the governing European male elites outline the parameters of American “civilization” as a categorical progression toward anthropological – i.e. cultural and/or “racial”– stratification based on a false sense of their cultural superiority. In the Darwinian-Spencerian sense, this was the just result of European “fitness” for survival – a theory not reflective of the cooperative model of many indigenous American societies, whose kinship and cooperation are the primary reasons early European settlers survived disease, starvation and other hardships upon reaching these shores.

The fact that power was potentiated through the Smithsonian Institution does not comprise the entire range of purposes for its construction. As explored by architectural historian Heather Ewing in *The Lost World of James Smithson* (2007), the love and promise of knowledge, discovery and the herald of legacy were also at the core of the strange posthumous bequest from English chemist, James Smithson, whose largesse was transferred to the United States government to establish a namesake institution *in absentia*, despite the fact that Smithson never visited the American continent. Also, in his nearly single-handed crusade to preserve the fund from misappropriation, the extensive efforts of U.S. Congressman and former President, John Quincy Adams, demonstrated his belief that the funds would greatly advance scientific endeavors and contribute vital infrastructures toward the improvement of national character (Wheelan 114).

Cultural institutions like museums serve deeply significant social needs such that we often look to them to help define our place in a social order. Perhaps many people would identify
David Carr’s statement in *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* as familiar: “I went to the library and to the museum for the same reason: I needed to grasp for myself the immaterial possibilities of the world and to make some of them my own, as a way to rescue myself from the everyday apprehension and insularity of being human” (xviii).

Further, because they are sites where meaning is constructed as much as they are themselves constructions of meaning, they stimulate change and stir feelings humans cannot always pinpoint as belonging to us because we often go to gather something new or find some aspect of an idea to reconsider (Carr 1). The idyllic picture painted by Carr as shared sense of belonging and purpose is an important squaring off between the historical and contemporary Smithsonian Institution with regard to its ability to represent the public as a whole. If a sense of belonging is agreed to be an important commonality with regard to the basic qualification of being human – a qualification that has not historically been equally accessible to everyone in modern civilization – and the sense of belonging is also a human realization of being rooted in place, then the qualification “human” must itself share ground with the modern cultural institutions that immerse us in propagandized imagery and contexts.

Inferentially, this is where the institutional power to define personhood enters to cast a sobering frame around Carr’s otherwise bright picture. The mechanisms of hegemonic domination and scientific authority had few limiting boundaries within the birth of institutions, since anything or anyone placed under the lens of pejorative institutional knowledge was subject to control, redefinition and/or annihilation in both a demographic and relational sense. Even if the idealistic turn toward a universal construct of humanity has no true moment in time, its place and potentiality has always been held on the idealized democratic landscape, and it is experienced as an emotional and often politically vestige geography called citizenship. For the Smithsonian, the potential for the ideal to manifest as “real” occurred when the dark past of social inequality
crossed a lighted path of equality – evident in the many civil rights demonstrations on the National Mall.

Upon the mantle of its managing Corporation, the United States federal government, the Smithsonian Institution was established as a public-trust and erected on the National Mall. Therefore, the outlines of the institution and (re)public must be defined within an intellectual demographic and political history; i.e. what are the boundaries of personhood (humanity), citizenship, and public and who is serviced by the institutional landscapes? With regard to the assumption of “public” lands and resources for its construction and productions, the Smithsonian Institution was initially a servicer to the learned elite, but would eventually – as heralded by the 1960s battles for equal rights taken directly to the National Mall – be looked to as a servicer to all persons of the United States for education, entertainment and, most contentiously, representation.

The effective change was not in time or memory, but in the use of space – the common ingredient between time and memory. In a biological analogy, information (as power-situated knowledge) flows through the medium of museum space like nutrients in the cell of a larger organism. The museum institution as a medium or a memory cell, records and displays the information as part of the mimetic cultural norm or accepted system of knowledge. The norm may dominate the space but coexists with a range of subordinated memes (unutilized nutrients in this analogy) that are deferred from the normative body thus becoming a subaltern body until a shifting demographic impulse declares otherwise.

Time and its dynamic functions or interpretations are consensus-agreement concepts empower by perspective – their elements and artifacts are spatially recorded (or memorized) as constructions and reconstructions of certain histories and heritage to the diminution of others. Western institutions preserve the linear time-perspectives and selectively define the culture of alterity via categorization of objects (artifacts). In this example one facet of cultural alterity is the notion that indigenous systems of knowledge are ahistorical (“timeless”, “romantic” or
“pastoral”). Taken out of context and set against linear-time narratives the subaltern’s body of knowledge and wisdom traditions (intellectual property) are catabolized and diminished while artifacts and landscapes are used as the fodder of a cultural gristmill (museum institution). Control of perspective and space feeds a body politic called national “progress” – a time-linear objective with a massively unbalanced and unbounded appetite and no care for ecological consequences or human casualties.

Historically as well as contemporarily, museum institutions – especially those situated on public grounds like the National Mall – are places where formative ideological principles of personhood are often identified, defined and fought over because of their direct impacts and reflections upon the determinations and privileges of citizenship. If personhood is signified by scientific, political and emotional geographies whereby scales of social participation are delimited, then what of the newest form of personhood that has been awarded to the multiple-bodied entity of the U.S. “corporation” itself?

Ideals of liberty, opportunity and deservedness may underwrite laws of the land, but they are constrained via unequal distribution of the access and means to exert power over representational constructs, movement through space, resource availability and other rights associated with citizenship as a facet of personhood. I contend that the concept and exercise of “corporate personhood” is not new at all. That is, incorporated institutions and organizations have always been collections of persons with a conglomeration of power to exercise actions according to their anthropological identities, titles, organizational principles, monetary resources and fundamental desires.

Corporate institutions are now, e.g. the 2012 Supreme Court ruling of Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Committee, simply formalizing and enjoying their own versions of citizenship rights (money as speech) while escaping the vaguer outlines of corporate social responsibilities, securing corporate welfare via tax loopholes, and lobbying to erode checks to the
condensation of power such as antitrust laws. It is likely that the formalization of these formerly tacit rights is a direct reaction to multiple forms of resistance to “corporate personhood” coming from individual persons or groups who identify this categorization as a newer form of imperialistic domination directly linked to their experiences of inequity.

President Barack Obama, the current and first multi-”racial” or African American president of the United States, spoke to these salient points when addressing the current cultural milieu of heightened voter suppression efforts that many see as racist and partisan actions by the Republican party to maintain association as the ideological representatives for those who identify with the anthropological category “white” (Walsh). He visited Texas in April 2014 to deliver a speech at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, in honor of his role in passing the Civil Rights Act on what would have been Johnson’s one-hundredth birthday.

A related news article specifically noted that the speech was marked by large public protests to a reported increase in deportations during the Obama administration – and describes the heightened emotions displayed as four demonstrators chained themselves to a memorial statue of Martin Luther King, Jr. the night before the speech. Ironically, the president remarked that that the concept of equal rights is more than law – that “we cannot be complacent…our rights, our freedoms are not given, they must be won” (Ward and Rauf). The article quotes an activist who saw the president as the key holder of power to influence immigration reform, but fails to note that concerted efforts by Democrats to pass such legislation have been met with staunch opposition by Republicans in the form of aforementioned voter suppression and the promotion of “race-baiting” discourses which make unilateral reforms difficult. If suppression of voter rights and immigration reforms is based on a clandestine racist strategy, there is a more clearly defined corollary in early twentieth-century “guarding the gates to Ellis Island” immigration laws where direct anthropometric assessments filtered the immigrant pool of “poor genetic stock” from Europe. This is further evidence that citizenship has always been a privilege tied to a certain
ideological creed that is based on human morphological prejudices.

Equal flow and access to public services and personal opportunities determine the degree to which one can claim the rights of personhood and influences one’s sense of belonging to nation and community. It was only after several organized demonstrations on public landscapes, like the National Mall, that “Black” and “American Indian” equality causes gained real public audience. At that critical spatio-temporal juncture, many individuals self-proclaimed their already constitutionally recognized status as citizens and acquired staging for self-representative heritage in the form of the Smithsonian’s first community museum for the underserved populations of the Nation’s Capital – the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, later known as the Anacostia Community Museum (ACM, est. 1967).

Since the National Mall was developed using the forced-labor and confiscated land of other sovereign human beings, the land and its infrastructures are, for some cultures, memorized as spaces of remnant conquest and the fodder displayed is contested cultural heritage even today. The ACM was placed in Anacostia, a subset of D.C. that came to be home to economically poor mostly “non-white” populations, not the National Mall – a decision driven by demographic factors such as “race” disenfranchisement and accessibility. Though done for sympathetic reasons, the bifurcation of ACM’s museum location apart from the main suite of museums is symbolic of the overall segregation between “races” into anthropological categories as well as the separation between culture and “race.” One example that demonstrates the disparate and sometimes arbitrary placements of is when objects are displayed for aesthetic “cultural” value as objects of art – or – as objects of scientific “curiosity” or categorical “race” objectification.

Similar to classrooms, museums are sites for public and private education and have played a crucial role in constructing our knowledge base, seeding elements of memory and promoting a set of values. In this thesis, the dual construct of personhood/citizenship is assigned to the nebulous immaterial concept of cultural identity, and the materialization of cultural identity
within the infrastructural and programmatic landscapes of museology is called heritage. Museums are sites where dominant and resistance epistemologies take shape as identity and heritage constructs. The museum uses representational constructs of immaterial identity and material heritage to transmit multiple worldviews – therefore these are sites where a geographic critique takes on prime importance.

Identity and heritage constructs – stemming from positivist categorization and imbedded hierarchical power ratios – have a definitively traceable path in historically ethnocentric principles, laws and cultural institutions. As stated by Dwyer and Alderman in Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory (2008), they are prime locations for the work of geographers who understand the inextricable relationship between culture and place because what is observed in a site reflects those with the power to project and reproduce their own aesthetic and values:

In our unequal society, some people wield more place-shaping power than others. In turn, places exert their own subtle influence over society, broadcasting what is “known” to be important and trivial, honorable and corrupt, beautiful and repulsive. Public space – in our case, the monuments, museums, parks and streets dedicated to the Movement – is an especially potent site for transmitting notions of what is right and true, because it is authorized by the government on behalf of all citizens (ibid vii).

This set of contextual cues is a herald to “remember” the Smithsonian Institution and the spaces it occupies as reference points in the construction of a “white-normative” civilization, identity, and heritage set as a general standard for “non-white-minorities” in the American cultural landscape. Its remembrance resonates with the voice and heart of a newer-born resistance standing on the same physical and ideological grounds of a troubled past.

The National Mall in Washington, D.C. serves as promenade to the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Capitol, where a marriage of pejorative worldviews and “deterministic” federal policies begat a culture of hegemony – but also potentiated and laid a stage for the impulses of resistance, rectification and expressions of a globally important set of wisdom
heritages born of walking the difficult path from separation and objectification to places of intercultural understanding where simplistic categorical labels no longer contain our human stories.

A Gristmill That Produced the “Science of Man” & the Art of Hegemony

To avoid idealistically projecting our current social orientation toward a “universal sense of belonging” upon the past, it is important to historicize the concept of humanity as a hierarchical construct. According to John S. Haller, Jr. in *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority 1859-1900* (1971), the modern parameters of humanity arose within a particularly discriminatory intellectual convention cultivated in the cultural institutions, and by leaders of the European and American scientific paradigm. “What was at once the worst of nineteenth-century America in the sense that we now judge its “racial” attitudes was also, ironically the best that American culture had to offer” and, Haller surmises, that those sciences, once systematized, verified and generalized, “became the means through which both scientists and social scientists sought to determine the relative value of the races of man, delineate social categories, and even justify the rationale of race legislation” (Haller viii).

Early activities of the Smithsonian Institution definitively outlined and exercised the science and art of hegemony. Instrumentation and protocols developed at the Smithsonian under Joseph Henry, the first Smithsonian secretary, were used to exploit Civil War carnage and regimentation to gather anthropometric data from soldiers. These opportunistic statistics collected by the Sanitary Commission were then used to direct war policies and military enrollments, buttress social biases and curate particular scientific attitudes (Haller 19-26).

Haller cites two primary reasons why anthropometry became a scientific preoccupation: the Union army defeat at Bull Run on June 13, 1861 spurred life insurance companies to invest
more in the Sanitary Commission’s operations and President Lincoln’s success in securing congressional sanction for enrolling the “negro” as soldiers for the military and naval service in 1862 (ibid 20). “Somatological differences, which previously had been ascertained from random measurements upon small numbers and with a variety of measuring devices, could now be taken on a wide scale, with planned experiments and uniform measuring instruments” (Haller 21). The Smithsonian Institution’s instrumentation facilitated this war-time research, but the data-gathering methods were far from rigorous. The data gathered were the unsystematic product of “unfavorable circumstances” and the training in use of the instruments was transmitted by circulars (Haller 23) – according to a retrospective by Smithsonian’s first full-time professional physical anthropologist, Aleš Hrdlička, hired at the turn of the twentieth century (Hinsley 282).

In *Savages and Scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology 1846-1910*, Curtis Hinsley asserts that the anthropological approaches were seen as important scientific and moral exercises. “For American no less than for British ethnologists, the study of man was a historical and geographical search of deep religious import…while the historical orientation lost ground in succeeding decades to systems of evolutionary classification, beneath these developments the central concern with human unity persisted” (Hinsley 22). Furthermore, it was well known that as the western frontier of the United States expanded, nation building was rapidly eliminating or assimilating this hemisphere’s indigenous communities, thus American anthropologists were almost exclusively and religiously interested in collecting and preserving cultural traces of American Indians – who were deemed by some anthropologists to be a single “race” frozen-in-time and a traceable antiquity of human development awaiting discovery.

In the American context, the significance of Native Americans to White historical identity and national destiny and the progressive annihilation of these peoples, compounded and complicated the religious impulse in anthropology, lending an urgency to Indian studies that emerged in Americans’ frequent expressions of “salvage ethnology”: a unique blend of scientific interest wistfulness, and guilt
On the surface the hegemonic practices of objectification, collection, categorization and display in nineteenth-century American museums were exemplary of over two centuries of consumptive exploration and cultural colonization wherein a climate of rapaciousness was partially validated through institutions of scientific research and display – government policy and spending made these institutions both possible and lucrative to elite persons.

As a public trust and symbolic edifice of the nineteenth-century rise of U.S. independence, the Smithsonian Institution is one of the most important fiduciary institutions intrinsically involved with the machinery of nation-building through direct participation in expansionist government policies. On December 4, 1846 the Board of Regents resolved to allocate five-hundred dollars annually to collect physical artifacts of natural history but more importantly those of cultural significance obtained during the course of extirpation activities:

Resolved. That the Secretary of War be respectfully invited to furnish to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs such suggestions as he may deem proper regarding the procurement from the Indian country of collections for the museum of the Smithsonian Institution, illustrating the natural history of the country, and more especially the physical history, manners and customs, of the various tribes of the aborigines of the North American continent…(Annual Reports 1847, 11).

The presence of these objects in a federally funded museum invokes their provenance as the spoils of conquest – a quasi-celebration belying the violent means by which they were obtained. The moral detachment of housing the cultural commodities of ethnic cleansing is reflected in the tidy arrangements of glass cases displaying the physical artifacts (including bones) as they were preserved, studied and reproduced for science. That the servant-at-arms became recruited as an “Indian agent” and tangentially instructed through a list of item-types presented to them, calls into question how these items could be adequately sorted, ascertained and labeled amid the stresses and spoils of war for the said “special character of the collections desired” (ibid).

The period between 1860 and 1890 is noted as the time period when “American
demography and identity embraced the entire continent…in these years the Indian ceased being a subject of foreign policy and became a focus of domestic concern for the United States” (Hinsley 146). Expansion was justified beyond the original colonial imprint by consolidating the Interior Department’s geographic and geological research surveys under the United States Geological Survey (USGS) with a special permanent appropriation for John Wesley Powell’s anthropological surveys at the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) housed at the Smithsonian Institution (Hinsley 146-147).

“Civilizing” efforts involved Bureau agents making intense – and not welcomed – ethnographic engagement as they gathered research “data” from living cultures. Aside from intellectual curiosity, reasons for performing the research were plentiful; the U.S. establishment needed to establish imaginary proprietary boundaries and resource claims two main kinds – i.e. theft under the auspice of lands management and cultural extirpation under the auspice of developmental progress. As the field of anthropology deeply engaged with the concept that indigenous cultures and their settlements were vanishing, the Smithsonian also extensively developed methodologies of archaeology and physical anthropology research by collecting ancestral remains and artifacts from sacred burial mounds and living settlements. The blood-tinged irony of self-fulfilling prophecy inherent in this particular drive for preservation is embodied in the fact that many of the early collection items came through territorial war and incursion (Hinsley 87).

The fact that the Smithsonian is the first institutional parent in the “professional ancestry” of anthropological field methods has been occluded, according to Smithsonian anthropologist William Fitzhugh, by the fact that anthropology was set in close, contextual juxtaposition to general evolutionary and “racial” theories. Also, Smithsonian’s early collectors privileged naturalist approaches in structuring the four branches of anthropological research. The oversight
is also partly due to the fact that anthropology was officially professionalized at Columbia University by Franz Boaz in 1901:

…the practice of anthropology and its subfields—linguistics, ethnology, archaeology, and physical anthropology—had been pursued vigorously at the Smithsonian for more than 50 years…Because most anthropologists in North America trace their origins to the beginnings of academic anthropology, the importance of this instance of early museum collecting, research, and exhibition is not widely known. In fact, one of anthropology's deepest roots lies in natural history as it was practiced in European and American museums from the 1830s to the 1850s (Fitzhugh 179).

Fitzhugh points to the museum’s role in defining methodological approaches for ethnological data collection and analysis of material culture as well as “social life, behavior, and language” – yet indicates that museum-anthropology’s fundamental methodologies are derivative of naturalist biology (ibid 179). Powell’s leadership of the BAE from 1879-1902 added a clearly defined public policy emphasis (Hinsley 286). This emphasis complimented Joseph Henry’s institutional principles which espoused the moralizing exercise of science (ibid 9). Powell formerly worked as a special commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an explorer and cartographer of Indian lands as well as the second director of the United States Geological Survey from 1881 to 1894 (McNamee). Powell’s fame as an explorer and naturalist rivaled and preceded that of John Muir (Dorman 181, 190). Regardless, Powell’s sympathetic stance on Indian culture did not preclude his belief that the land-use of new territories should be maximized.

Under Powell, the BAE legitimated regional expansion into “underutilized” territories for government management and thus co-facilitated centuries of cultural hegemony. During this early period, the ethnological and archaeological branches of the discipline itself suffered from mutual isolation, stagnation and discontinuity. Collectors of artifacts, whose ranks included military personnel, were not trained in the methodologies of ethnography leading to problems of labeling and proper identification. Due to the blanket “stages of development” focus of the BAE, stereotypes and geo-historical discontinuities of presentation and deduction abounded (Hinsley
In American anthropology, hundreds of individual American Indian cultures became known as a ubiquitous "nomadic, warlike race without proper home or history" (Hinsley 68).

Figure 1.2 “Diversification of the Boasian Paradigm” (Darnell 38).
While noting the prominent anthropological researchers whose work was performed under the Smithsonian’s roof including Henry Lewis Morgan and John Wesley Powell, Regna Darnell’s *Invisible Genealogies: A History of Americanist Anthropology* does not specifically examine the contextual site dynamics of the Smithsonian Institution itself. Rather Darnell notes that the BAE (noted on page xxvii as her abbreviation for the “National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.”) provided institutional and theoretical frameworks of an Americanist tradition (see figure 1.2). It was Powell’s BAE that initially supported and influenced the most notable figure in the professional anthropology field of the twentieth century, namely Franz Boas (Darnell 2).

Boas paid his early professional dues including the same type of fieldwork as any regular BAE agent, including grave-digging for American Indian skulls and visiting a Pacific Northwest jail (in Victoria BC) to measure the live skulls of the incarcerated (Stocking 189). The difference was, after many years of research, Boas concluded that a faulty scientific methodology followed the faulty research assumption which conflates statistical anthropometric “race” classification with ethnographic language and culture (Darnell 323-24). With respect to Boasian rigor in the field, summary conclusions and correlations were difficult to prove because, “For Boas observations could be organized according to ‘any fitting theory’ but it was rarely possible to prove conclusively that any one was correct (i.e. nonarbitrary)” (ibid 325).

In performing “participant-observation” ethnological fieldwork for Powell, Smithsonian BAE agents including Cushing, Mooney, Dorsey and LaFlesche handed the government its legal loophole for expansionist policies in the form of their anthropological sciences. “Powell and his staff (optimistically funded by the United States Congress because of the practical need for accurate information about the Indians) devoted themselves assiduously to mapping the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent” (Darnell 10). Darnell cites Boas’ professional association with the BAE as an “honorary philologist” and editor for American Indian languages
handbooks in 1911 and 1922; a project Powell had formalized in 1891 with a linguistic classification volume (ibid).

Boas became a key figure in anthropology due to his breadth of experience, influence and his acumen in distilling prominent disciplinary threads and organizational structures. It was inevitable that as Boas began questioning the validity of using anthropometric measurements and other methodologies that used a physiological underpinning to predict cultural qualities under a presumed innate biological “race” construct, his sponsorship by the museum and scientific association would come into conflict with his ideologies and research objectives (Darnell 325). Therefore the bifurcation between Smithsonian anthropology and the professional field was less a question of museums losing relevancy or influence and more a product of Boas’ having slowly and carefully built a wealth of research that could challenge early epistemological and ontological research assumptions (Hinsley 282).

By initially using analytical methods from a different discipline and by relying on a stage-developmental model, Smithsonian anthropologies were initially crippled in terms of their ability to broach either continuity or historical depth. Salvage ethnology, which, “usually focused on the disappearing tribes from the plains to the Pacific, with special attention to those already removed or settling in the Indian Territory” (Hinsley 68), stunted the anthropological readings of American Indian civilizations. However, since the assignation of identity and heritage values was done in accordance with Eurocentric hierarchical worldviews, these narrow concepts of personhood did serve specific functions for those in power.

Even prior to the establishment of the BAE, the Smithsonian had begun to organize its collections along ethnological lines, with similar examples of unforgivable insensitivity to the populations being “studied.” One notable atrocity – noted as an exemplar for the justifiably visceral antipathy held by indigenous toward the Smithsonian and anthropological researchers – is recorded by Hinsley. It demonstrates that the early ethnological data collector viewed the
people of indigenous cultures as they would animals, rocks and plants. Edward Palmer is listed often by the Smithsonian Annual Reports as a major contributor of ethnological items in the 1860s and 70s and Palmer was commended by Smithsonian’s first President, Joseph Henry for the completeness of his illustrations of American Indian manners and customs (Hinsley 69-70).

Though his primary interest was a collector botanical specimens, Palmer also served as an assistant medical surgeon in the Union Army and agency doctor in Indian Territory where he had contact with the Kiowa, Comanche, Wichita, Apache, Pima, and Papago peoples. Palmer stated, in explaining his unsuccessful intent to submit the dead body of an Apache child as a research specimen to the Smithsonian: “’The females of the camp…laid it out after their custom & covered it with wild flowers and carried it to a grave…They hid it so completely that its’ body could not be found, as I had a wish to have it for a specimen…no persuasion could induce them to tell the secret, so I did not get the specimen’” (Palmer quoted in Hinsley 70).

These are stark realities of the ruthless conquest of indigenous peoples and their territories; when justified as the methodologies of anthropological research, acts of atrocity are disassociated from violence through their depiction as “data” collection. Even more fundamentally, the psychological auspices of “progress” and “civilization” shielded museums and collectors from their own moral dysfunction, bordering on what would be considered sociopathy now. Yet – these activities have always been sociopathic atrocities when viewed from the receiving end. Reading these kinds of passages can and does awaken deep trauma for one whose ancestors endured similar treatment – and much worse. However horrifying, this is a crucial springboard to discussing the impacts of social policies laid upon the historical foundations of this institution – policies with contemporary relevance.

On the other hand, Hinsley points out that sending BAE agents to mine western territories for “salvage ethnologies” proved to be a challenging and confusing cultural immersion in some cases – for the anthropologist, there was always a danger of “going native” and losing one’s grip
on rationality. Smithsonian Institution employed individuals such as Frank Hamilton Cushing and James Mooney, who immersed themselves in Zuni and Cherokee cultures respectively (Hinsley 194, 207). The results of their immersion drew them toward the understanding that they were straddling two cultures in the full swing of their own distinct histories – and they fell in love.

In each case, the deep immersion in indigenous lifestyle allowed them to place cultural differences and their own experiences in a relative power context. Cushing was keenly aware of the potential betrayals involved in reporting his findings after having been witness to secrets during initiations (Hinsley 199) and Mooney was one of the first anthropologists to whom the question of power undermines the notion of truth in observation when collecting ethnographic information from oppressed (i.e. Irish and Native American) peoples (ibid 207). There were concerns that Cushing’s immersion might cause him to “go native” – signified by his being dubbed the “White Indian” in some anthropological circles – and Cushing felt himself loved by the Zuni as he ingratiated himself in ceremonies and customs. However, according to Hinsley, “Cushing exaggerated his acceptance. He was hardly an object of veneration as he was still deeply entrenched in the notion that the aboriginal life could be improved upon by his own skills of demonstration and artistic cultural reproduction” (Hinsley 91).

The historical contexts surrounding the birth of the Smithsonian Institution and the BAE were emergent of the paradoxical system of beliefs and practices embedded in government institutions during and after the period known as westward or Jeffersonian expansion. During this time period, government began shifting priorities to domestic asset management in the immediate aftermath of revolutionary war and amplified in the 1830s (John 2004, 601). During this time, the Smithsonian, and similar institutions that produced or supported the arts and sciences of hegemony, provided personnel, scientific instruments and artifacts that helped to build expansion-supportive narratives of civilization and progress wherein naturalist artists with a geographic eye, such as George Caitlin, depicted American Indians as savages occupying empty or wild
landscapes. Caitlin’s paintings are a fundamental Smithsonian collection – at the time and possibly still seen as an important act of preservation for a ravaged population. One irony of the collection of paintings is that it forms a fundamental body of work to the construction of a geographic language of landscapes (John 2004, 598), whereas for the Smithsonian, they held obvious anthropological significance.

Conventional museums served as repositories of natural history specimens and anthropological collections. Conventional scientific ways of seeing humans and nature negated the voices and subjective agencies of those deemed/categorized as uncivilized. Under the direction of the Smithsonian’s first Secretary, Joseph Henry, early museum collections and exhibitions were not seen as entertainment; they were purposefully didactic and moralistic constructs upon which hegemonic world-views were reinforced as object-study for social objectives important to scientists, students and general audiences (Hinsley 38-39). Regardless of their level of training, indigenous people were bombarded by the network of correspondents and collectors who studiously sent objects, vocabulary lists, sketches and other data. “Reporting on collections received from explorers in the Northwest Territory in 1867, the Secretary noted with pride that the Smithsonian had served as a stimulating and civilizing force for the inhabitants of the region” (ibid 39). Via their conditioned gaze, those data were preliminarily classified as part of the inductive sciences of archaeology and ethnology by naturalists, artists, missionaries or soldiers. Actual impacts of these activities on the indigenous was anything but simulating.

**BAE & Manifest Destiny: Cultural Mechanisms of U.S. Tyranny**

Expansion into the sovereign territories of American Indian nations was not unanimously acceptable to every person in government or community. BAE anthropologists were not only there to document the riches of newly acquired territory, but to thoroughly document the
“savagery” that justified efforts at “civilizing” a continent of people. Establishing colonies was the violent undertaking of imperial military forces driven by the materialistic spirit of imperialism, which served as the inspirational basis of its New World corollary – “manifest destiny.” The Smithsonian Institution was founded in a cultural milieu that tied American destiny to the ownership of more land.

Corporate government entities were perforce the curators of exploratory capitalism; the 1600s merchant kings (legal pirates) quickly cashed in (capitalized) the world for its cultural and natural treasures becoming the collecting arms of globally oppressive octopus of corporate “trade.” The notion of pan-global collections, in turn, fostered a competition and domination imperative of monarchs laying ground for the strange presumption that if land was seen and surveyed under the corporate logo of crown, crest or flag, it was rightfully claimed without regard to sovereignty of the inhabitants. Soon, the idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy outran the notion that war and conquest was an inherently immoral act. Therefore, violation of sovereign space was no longer considered the routine spoils of war – but some kind of divine right granted by invisible forces to those with certain anthropological characteristics in their favor.

Law professor, Jean Stefancic traces the specific phrase “manifest destiny” to the publication of two newspaper articles in 1844-45 by John L. O’Sullivan stating his belief that it was a fulfillment of divine design for the U.S. to the annex of Texas and beyond to the Pacific coast to encompass the entire continent (Stefancic 533). However, Stefancic contends that “The concept of manifest destiny seeped into the American consciousness during the early settlement of the United States. Even before British Captain James Cook explored the northwest coast of North America by sea in 1778, explorers had hoped to find a passage to the Pacific through the waterways of the American continent” (ibid).

The Jeffersonian-sanctioned western territories exploration commission given to Lewis and Clark at the turn of the nineteenth century was one of the first grand outlays of the American
version of the imperial paradigm which tied property ownership to a divinely given right for the Anglo-Saxon to own any land surveyed and stamped. In the mid-1840s during the war with Mexico and for years afterward, the slogan of manifest destiny became an important topic of political debate (Stefancic 534). Of course, the same dynamics by which the U.S. conglomerate dispossessed land from indigenous persons were observed during the establishment of other nation-states such as Canada and India. Cole Harris describes the process of land dispossession as a four phase process – of which the cultural dialectic creating legitimation and justification of subjugation was just one phase.

My conclusions are these: the initial ability to dispossess rested primarily on physical power and the supporting infrastructure of the state; the momentum to dispossess derived from the interest of capital in profit and of settlers in forging new livelihoods; the legitimation of and moral justification for dispossession lay in a cultural discourse that located civilization and savagery and identified the land uses associated with each; and the management of dispossession rested with a set of disciplinary technologies of which maps, numbers, law, and the geography of resettlement itself were the most important (Harris 165).

The importance of Harris’ parsing the “post-colonial” study in terms of a full range of colonial mechanisms – force/infrastructure, infusion of capital, a cultural dialectic and statistical geopolitics – is recognizing that the key model of hegemonic enterprise is a repeatable, customizable, fundamental geography for any “land-grab.” Thus studied, we can reflect with a degree of honesty upon the core goals of territorial acquisition for the installation of a nation-state – and thus expose it, not as a gentle evolution of cultural progress, but a purposeful mechanism to possess an invaded land and remove its original inhabitants to the fullest extent possible.

This thesis asserts that the Smithsonian Institution and its Bureau of American Ethnology leveraged all four means to an end for the establishment of the U.S. – but in terms of customization, this model relied most on the false cultural bias of anthropological superiority built on the preexisting notion of manifest destiny. Smithsonian’s model paved the way for the construction of a cultural heartland infrastructure in Washington D.C., all the while infusing
James Smithson’s capital into the collection and mapping of indigenous cultures/land and ultimately clearing the land for Euro-American settlement. By default, this model exemplifies the backward gazing historical narrative that “unwitting savages” fall prey to an “advanced civilization” – but it was no lesser so the considered exercise of the Smithsonian, as a quasi-governmental institution in collaboration with the military and post-colonial elite, to assist in U.S. land acquisition, cultural commodification and an unapologetic capitalization on broken treaties.

Presumably, the real shift from imperialism to manifest destiny is traceable to a system of U.S. laws creating a privileged citizenry functionally tied to “white” skin color and the performance of a newly acculturated citizenry and “democratic” nationalism rather than allegiance to a monarch. The domestic cultural propaganda touted individual achievement toward higher goals through the application of intellect – an earned ascendancy – rather than an inherited right to ascendancy, land ownership and title by birth as in British aristocracy. However, underlying the propaganda, privilege still conferred moneyed inheritances to one born a “white” male in both English and American systems – whereby invisible divine hands were oft credited for granting the Anglo-Saxon a set of “higher faculties” and “fitness” to reach those goals. In either case, with the coupled privileges of inheritance and maleness, came the ability to claim nobility or run for political office. Whether by aristocratic elite or plutocratic elite, both systems comported a legal system and infrastructures that reward according to an anthropologically and subjectively determinate system of laws over personhood.

The U.S. legal system systematically marked anyone outside certain parameters as alien – and not capable of asserting their rights to land ownership – evident, for example, in a series of state laws that forbade land ownership and other rights in the case of Chinese, Mexican and Japanese immigrants (Stefancic 541-42). Laws were passed to increase land occupation by “white” settlers via consignment of property under the Dawes Act passed by Congress in 1887. Indigenous former occupants were divested of land and denied human rights by directly applying
anthropological extensions of law and were thus violated under the guise of moral uplift and civilization by government agents, who were simultaneously rendered above the law – all the while committing moral atrocities (see also Hannah 2000).

Prior to the Dawes Act, the conquest of American territories apparently had an international flavor. Guidelines of what “property” was ceded to the victor was negotiated via official treaties between internationally recognized sovereign nations with no mention of “race” whatsoever. Treaties were the ostensible basis of land acquisition, aside from nastier techniques such as smallpox biological weaponry disguised as blankets for gift or trade. Via treaty, U.S. entered into trust-beneficiary relationships with Indian nations and thereby the U.S. assumed certain responsibilities as the trust-holder including “protection” and fiduciary duties:

Because Indian Nations were recognized as separate sovereigns, prior to the enactment of the Dawes Act, the only way the federal government could obtain Indian lands was through war or treaty. In a series of treaties, the United States obtained Indian lands in exchange for goods, services, and the promise to provide Indian Nations with "protection" and/or other fiduciary trust duties (Nagle 69).

There were limitations on how much land could be acquired by treaty and even existing reservation lands were coveted. Thus, a decade and a half before the Dawes Act, in 1871 Congress passed legislation to undermine the sovereign status of American Indians by negating a treaty process altogether, despite having formerly made hundreds of contractual agreements to honor fiduciary duties which included several benefits conveyed to tribes through trusts (Nagle 64). Legal loopholes and assimilationist language undergirded the Dawes Act, but the final and most permanent solution was not civilization but extirpation.

Allotment land plots were fixed in size based on models of the Euro-American nuclear family, which failed to support the extended family sizes and communal life practices of American Indians thereby spitting up families. The Act focused on transitioning Indians to a rapidly dying “Jeffersonian” farmer trade during an age of rapid industrialization. Indian heads of household were paid small duties for the land, and by transferring the money and land to trusts
the government could essentially tighten the conditions of inheritance. They did so using vague anthropologically determined categories – thereby, sovereign nation’s rights were much eroded by a systemic fragmentation of cultural identity.

Nagle asserts that one case law, Seminole Nation v. United States (1942) was the basis of establishing the 1871 Act rupture of treaty processes and that it violated the pre-existing sovereign relationship and that “racial” classification as a bar to receiving rights would have been prohibited by the Fourteenth Amendment to the constitution. Thus Congress was actually in violation of the constitution by utilizing a “racial” classification to underwrite the transfer of land to white settlers under a “benign policy” that ignored the pre-existing sovereignty arrangement, undermining of the trust relationship, such that the indigenous became “beneficiaries” of millions of acres of land.

Nothing in the Seminole Nation trust doctrine reflects the classification of American Indians as a “racially” inferior race - or even a race at all…Instead, the only true “racial” classifications in contemporary Indian trust law are those that were congressionally created in an attempt to destroy the tribal sovereignty of Indian Nations with the passage of the Dawes Act - a destruction that Congress felt was necessary in 1887 to effectuate further land confiscation that legally binding treaties forbade (Nagle 66).

Treaties are legally binding contracts – so to question the very humanity of original inhabitants was to question the basis under which a sovereign contract could be formed. Under the auspices of government concern for them, the problem of how to manage disenfranchised Indian people could be remedied through aggressive treaty-claim and removal policies based on the research of their cultural practices. Much of the research that opened the western territories for settlement was conducted by Powell’s BAE.

Between 1873 and 1878 Powell conducted the research by which he later made his argument for a “government-supported scientific bureau of anthropology” – wherein he observed that the area was heavily populated by white settlers. He observed that the remaining Great Basin Numa Indian communities were suffering terribly, and had been reduced to bare subsistence
activities. In other words, since they were too subjugated and scattered to be a war threat, Powell “sympathetically” recommended their removal to a reservation comprised of a ten thousand square mile patch of desert and mountainous land – and divested of their original 410,000 square-mile home territories (Hinsley 148).

The field of anthropology was, thus, first nurtured in the United States as a profession at the Smithsonian Institution’s Bureau of American Ethnology (Hinsley 43; Darnell 9). The instruments of the Smithsonian’s mid-nineteenth century anthropological sciences legitimated governmental systems of classifying, studying, collecting and displaying humanity and nature in the Victorian-Industrial age, when definition and order were desperately sought (Hinsley 83). The BAE helped foster the quasi-religious, quasi-scientific creed of progress and manifest destiny for the ruling class. Anthropology helped establish a devastatingly effective divide-and-conquer psychological order based on subjective developmental categories of color and physiognomy. The anthropologies were eventually derivative of older Linnaean “race”-behavior categories and vague socially applied Darwinian ideals. This conflation of disciplinary and cultural biases gave birth to the notion and legal argument that an Anglo-hegemonic order was the “natural” outcome of the ruling class’ superior cognitive abilities and fitness for survival – rather than a multifaceted program of territorial and identity warfare justified by legalese (Stefancic 535).

The Smithsonian Institution’s activities constituted a reconnaissance for the cultural war of attrition followed by actual consumption of the landscapes of indigenous peoples in order to expand U.S. territories. Anthropology marshaled a new science of moralizing philosophies and measurements to further engender European cultural biases remnant of the “re-name everything” age of Enlightenment, justified the imperialistic spirit of manifest destiny, and stimulated the Victorian age materialistic fervor for order and collections. In this respect, the Smithsonian Institution, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior (now the Bureau of Land Management), helped lay the groundwork for a more organized U.S. expansion and performed a
fundamental legitimization role via direct consumption of land and artifacts (including human remains) and thereby directly encouraged profiteering from extirpation of indigenous bodies, land and ways of being.

The Smithsonian’s historical role in constructing identity-defining systems is herein weighed against the institution’s more recent (de)construction through culturally specific museums which have begun to address the pernicious myth of “race” in America. Recognizing the scales of the institution and government at both poles in time is important in gauging their museum’s effectiveness. Whereas the nineteenth-century Smithsonian was highly influential, looming large as a factor in paradigm establishment, the twenty-first century Smithsonian is eclipsed by the structures it helped create. The Smithsonian’s paradigmatic potency is now limited by its perceived role as a site of public recreation.

The Smithsonian’s new relevancy lies in seeing it as a culture shifting in ideology from structural iconography and scientific normativity to a situational complexity that destroys arbitrary constructs of space and time by demanding structural flexibility to tell new versions of old stories to wider audiences. Its communication vectors now embrace YouTube, Facebook and Twitter as supported by research and display centers – reflecting larger cultural shifts toward the same conditions. The Smithsonian Institution’s potential for global outreach is thus revived.

Now, indigenous voices are rising to reclaim individuated expression, pass oral traditions of old and create new vistas that acknowledge positivist worldviews for what they have contributed – but disavow them as the source-fields of universal truth. The voices arising from the margin have meticulously collected wisdom from the experiences of subjugation, and we have other ideas about what the ideals of personhood and citizenship means – therefore our identities and use of heritage fodder are revolutionizing the ideological and material grounds upon which the ideals operate. The Smithsonian Institution may still engage in the processing of cultural heritage, but the expanded view of indigenous geography recognizes the institution as a landmark
of sovereign potentiality and a place-holder for important deliberation over how to understand and represent the usable past.

Contemporarily, the Smithsonian Institution is charged with the high-order tasks of self-reflexivity and repatriation to correct the many historical abuses, pejoratives and biases associated with the expansion of the United States’ seat of power through the rapacious acquisition of land and exploitation of people. To meet the challenge of presenting itself as a resource for all citizens, including the marginalized populations most harmed by hegemony, the Smithsonian must reconcile the uncomfortable facts of its hegemonic imprint without artifice and without totally obfuscating the function of monolithic sites of institutional power to house and venerate the ideological constructs and exhibitions of a nationalistic discourse.

The contemporary age has injected resistance narratives into formerly hegemonic institutions through demands for indigenous intellectual property rights and representation inclusive of the voice of the represented, repatriation of artifacts, qualitatively responsible research protocols and, most visibly, as Smithsonian’s culturally specific museums such as the Anacostia Community Museum (ACM - est. 1967), National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI - est. 1994), and the new National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), whose groundbreaking on National Mall took place in 2012. Culturally specific museums are, in some ways honorariums to an ambivalent and ultimately hegemonic worldview – yet they are potentially valuable sites for indigenous narratives as long as the constructive spaces are maintained as one of mutuality over dominance – wherein the frame of reference shifts from alterity to sovereign expression.

Metaphorically, culturally specific museums are value exchanges; places where important, morally debt-charged histories can be rebalanced with direct engagement in representation from the marginalized, whose voices charge institutions with new accountability. In terms of cultural growth, the dynamism of newly interactive museums may be seen as places
where deeply significant ideological seed-lines are planted, cultivated (acculturated), sorted, stored and/or crossed. Due to its status as a venerated geopolitical and cultural icon, I argue that it is difficult for the Smithsonian to carry out a transformation of its cultural (and monetary) currencies with absolute transparency without having scrutiny applied to its research and collections practices of the present and past. Doing so will enable the institution to establish a more fertile ground on which to cultivate cross-cultural seeds in the future.
Chapter 2

Museums & Cultural Hegemony

Arising from a decolonizing indigenous geography perspective, I trace the mechanisms of the Smithsonian Institution to hegemonic underpinnings with respect to its political roots, landscapes, and culture constructs displayed as heritage. Historian Steven Conn traces nineteenth-century American museums as the first nurseries of naturalist sciences, which in turn generated museum-specific discourses upon object-based epistemological foundations – as such, predating universities as places to expand western systems of knowledge (Conn 15). Museums as a phenomena reflected the growth of American cities where the influx of multi-lingual Southern and Eastern European immigrants created the need for visual communication via glass-encased object displays; communication that was less dependent on language uniformity. They were central places to learn the rituals of a civilized modern American life (Conn 6). Museums allowed amateur and established scientists and the public to become consumers and participants in the Victorian-age obsession with observing, collecting, categorizing, displaying the fodder of new economies for a growing middle class – and they also served well as the outlet beneficiaries of an elite class with an excess of philanthropic income (Conn 29; Schlereth 9-10).

Natural History museums took an especially important role in establishing anthropology as a new field of object study applied to human cultures (Conn 26). Along with a proliferation of natural science museums in the U.S. such as the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania’s Museum of Archeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia, the Smithsonian Institution had an important role in the late-nineteenth-century development of
anthropological methods. The object-based epistemology is arguably the mainstay of museums. This situation entirely reversed at the turn of the twentieth century as object epistemologies waned in relevancy toward specialization in sciences at universities (Conn 63) exemplified by the shift from description-based “catch-all” natural sciences at museums to experimentation-based academic disciplines like biology and medicine (Conn 67-68). While university life sciences extended beyond the “observe, collect and classify” methodology of museums, the same techniques, fundamental to Darwinian theories, were later applied to human classification framework. The Smithsonian, whose mandate had always included outreach, was also subject to this shift towards education endeavors, therefore the impact of its objects orientation snowballed.

The fervor with which the anthropological methodologies were applied through the early Smithsonian served to both establish the reputation of the institution upon a still emergent subfield of natural history and to fulfill the utilitarian function of a new government achieving its western-expansionist hegemonic ends (Hinsley 21). Anthropology’s positivist categories of “race” and culture were obsessively assigned to living persons, artifacts and skeletal remains. This knowledge was organized into a set of discourses that determined one culture’s relative worth and ability to claim personhood within a three-stage ascending scale – the savage, the barbarian and the civilized – the pinnacle of which was Western civilization (Conn 89-90). The study and application of this stage-development model was the ultimate justification for hegemonic activity:

The Euro-American efforts to master cultural knowledge about natives has, from the early seventeenth century, been inextricably bound to the destruction of those cultures. Whether it was mastery of native languages in order to subdue native peoples through missionary work, or the understanding of the Plains Indians’ reliance on bison, which then drove the wholesale slaughter of those animals, knowledge has always preceded conquest (Conn 98).

Collecting anthropological specimens was not a casual byproduct of subjugating and divesting vast populations of American Indians of their lands, resources and freedoms – rather it formed a
key stratagem in an overall program of hegemonic domination and control.

Social sciences grew into academic disciplines by necessity; to deal with ethnic diversity and economic inequality, it was important to establish a brand of nationality. This meant instilling a sense of commonality between established classes of Europeans and successive waves of labor-indentured European immigrants – while reeducation, assimilation, segregation and removal were deemed crucial interventions for the American Indians, African slaves, freemen and other immigrants. Social sciences were a necessary tool to understand differences well enough to root them out and/or leverage them as polarizing forces between groups to prevent revolt – a possible undesirable outcome of mutual identification with collective suffering experienced by disempowered classes under the new tyranny of capitalistic nationalism. The establishment of national landscapes and social regulating bodies like museums helped maintain power amid a dangerous milieu of disenfranchised populations (Hinsley 145; Conn 98-99; Baker 5).

The Smithsonian’s contemporary national and international exhibition and research paradigm is still a product and driver of its reputation as a centrally situated institution on the landscapes of federal power. However, it is now under constant socio-temporal pressure to represent the diverse public it serves. If the Smithsonian Institution is open to illuminating this past and ethically situating its vast collections and research initiatives, it is dauntingly tasked with negotiating between a diverse set of qualitatively inclusive geopolitical worldviews.

In recognition of the power of the Smithsonian to shape public knowledge and social relationships, the Smithsonian Institution’s Richard Kurin, Director Emeritus, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, wrote Reflections of a Culture Broker: a view from the Smithsonian. Functioning much like a global warehouse of what Kurin refers to as “brokered” cultural representation and understanding, the Smithsonian consciously co-creates museums, exhibits and festivals by drawing upon the perspectives of a national and international pool of persons from which the institution chooses collaborators,
employees, and groups to represent and inform (Kurin xi-xii).

Since museums potentiate new spaces or contexts for change in the world on the most fundamental human scales, both the abstract and the concrete reasons for museums to exist are first enjoined to meet within the mind and heart of the individual consumer and then shared at collective scales through dialogue - whether the sharing spurs approbation or critique. Given this supposition, tracing the Smithsonian Institution’s place in the cultural milieu of the early and contemporary United States becomes a relevant exercise in underlining the impacts of an object-based epistemology on human life.

I contend that misrepresentation and marginalization will continue until the larger debate on race categorization is fully addressed by the academies and governing bodies. For this reason, I have centralized the issue of Smithsonian’s relationship to the field of anthropology and how it was instrumental to governance in creating the “race” construct. The results of this anthropological approach to cultural engagement – racism, heritage misrepresentation, categorical inequality segregation etc. – have led to distrust toward museums curatorial processes and resentful populations.

Even prominent persons in the museum field address the problem directly by raising questions of the validity of anthropology as a science versus a field of humanistic enterprise – questions that are hotly debated even within the field itself. As the four subfields of anthropology evolved at the Smithsonian and in academic departments, it became a matter of expediency rather than methodology or theoretical purpose as to their coherence as science (Kurin 84-85).

Physical anthropology and ethnology were very close in the last century and earlier in this century, when culture was perceived to be innately related to biology – and head shape, for example, was thought to be correlated with social organization – a relationship long studied at the Smithsonian. Archaeology and ethnology were close within functionalist and civilizational approaches of the mid-twentieth century, a relationship still evident in some of the halls of the [Smithsonian] National History Museum (Kurin 85).
The multicultural or identity-based approach to museology addresses the fact that the damaging “folk concept” of race and cultural “othering” is behind the issues of historical misrepresentation, but also drives the contemporary desire to have museums represent histories long ignored by traditional museums. Yet it also raises the question of how to represent cultures on equal terms including pondering whether the category of “white” populations should be historicized as such a general category or whether they should be in a separate ethnological display as well (Kurin 99-100). The Smithsonian Institution is now, by nature of its location, public-trust mandate and choice to engage in multicultural representation, forced to be more self-reflexive in its approach to exhibitions, construction of museums and the language of heritage.

Museums, especially on a national scale, should then be first approached as cultural productions whose contents are first processed by the socio-political environment, then by the curatorial process and finally through the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual sensory lenses of the consumer. The viewer may or may not be aware of the entire process behind which the museum influences cultural experience – but regardless, when we do visit, there are extraordinarily powerful and subtle influences upon their intellectual states of learning and social exchange and these interact with the more subtle visceral states of edification, identify formation, empowerment and enjoyment – states which are more or less conscious dependent on the viewer. The common element in any of these conditional states is some form of influence and inner transformation.

Between the abstractions of museum-object epistemologies and the concrete nationalized-landscape of the Smithsonian as an artifact and institution of research and knowledge, lies a potent but mostly invisible site of intent and power to influence transformation on scales beyond the individual. Power is exerted within the construction of systems of knowledge and meaning of, for, and/or with those represented - who accordingly receive or extract benefit or harm from the representational constructs. The three prepositions emphasized
are distinct but not mutually exclusive when describing the spatially politicked vectors of power
directed through the Smithsonian Institution. The silent site of power is defined by how and the
degree to which the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents and curators enact the following: to what
ends (of whose ontological worldview) do they direct publically funded research and museum
resources; for whom does the such an institution exist; and with whom are its constructs designed,
collected, defined, and mediated. The historical and contemporary answers to these questions are
vastly different due to the fact that the demands and cultures served by the institution are
constantly in context-temporal flux. Processing the above set of prepositions is thus temporally,
spatially and politically convoluted.

The rudimentary object-based epistemologies that emerged from the denizens of
American naturalist sciences of the early part of the nineteenth-century museums were
fundamental to the cultural ethos of pious Victorian order. Amid the chaos of nationalistic
growth, collections were comforting and presented the means by which disposable income could
be displayed; “bourgeois acquisitiveness” was a tandem birth of industrial economies and the
middle class, and “museums, then, can be seen as a constituent piece of this culture of
acquisitiveness” (Conn 13).

It is crucial to note that national museums themselves are artifacts of a heritage scaled for
the general mediation of identity, because the sites and materials national museums occupy,
preserve, display and catalog are barometers of how we mediate evolving cultural relationships
and also serve as centralized sites of learning (Schlereth 2-3). These relationships are
summarized, labeled and presented to us in ways that presume to depict singular and aggregate
experiences. Museums are, therefore, sites where tangible traces of culture and history become
constructive of the intangible and vice versa. In other words, they are archives of the materials of
a questionable “collective memory” – which exists only in theory. Conversely, curators/audiences
are the actual representatives and participants of individual/group identities because they perform
acts of interpretation, display, interaction, and remembrance that shift over time and in relation to
cultural ethos.

Even after the recent two-decade shift toward intellectual property rights and research
accountability, a set of western-male derived scientifically referent worldviews are still largely
dominant as the normalized intellectual voice expressed through appointed, approved, publically
funded cultural mediums and filters. The Smithsonian Institution is one of the best exemplars of a
cultural filter zone; an ideal microcosmic cultural reference point from which to analyze the
western science paradigm and the many forms of inequality derived from its imperialist designs.

More generally, national museums have often served nation states for the same purposes
– some of which are highlighted here in the forthcoming examination of the evolution of museum
culture. Museum culture, as coined from a cultural studies perspective by Black (2000), is marked
by the nineteenth-century museum’s powerful, pervasive and expansionist influence on British
Victorian lifestyles in the city, market, home, and empire. Museums, according to Black, were a
centripetal force of the Victorian society, as “it was the age’s great enterprise, realized in the
opening of the National Gallery in 1824, the South Kensington complex in 1857, the National
Portrait Gallery in 1859, the Natural History in 1881, and the Tate Gallery in 1897” (4).

Yet the institution of the public museum, exemplifying the resource flows of larger
imperial forces toward the cultures they nurture and away from those catabolized, acted in two
colonizing directions – centripetal and centrifugal (Smith 58). Imperial territories grew outwardly
via centrifugal forces such as scientific expeditions to assert European dominance over other
humans and desired landscapes and by renaming or imparting categorical labels on what they
collected, displaying the resulting representations, and then exporting imperialistic values and
ideals. In the other direction, museology’s centripetal forces coalesced the material fodder of the
non-European world, including the rank-ordered, dehumanized “savage other.” The combined
inward/outward force of early public museums construed meaning from material collections in
the various modes of instructive representation and extrapolated meaning into the teaching tools of exoticism or xenophobia.

That is, while museums formed a centralizing site for the European to construct a culture of modernity for themselves, early museum cultural modes represented the non-European world with a measure of disdain by ascribing to non-European life ways and materials various pejorative and atemporal labels such as “curiosity” or “primitive,” respectively. Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the rise of the phenomenon of museum culture represented a shift from nobility exhibition to public museum – correspondingly, in a Marxian sense, a shift from class relations to an emphasis on national largesse (Black 5). In doing so, museums helped lead a chorus of modernity as powerful instruments in the score of imperial myth (Black 8-9).

Museums became beacons of civilization (as force, constructed landscape and conceptual firmament); they were not only tributes to power but the gristmills where the fodder of colonization was processed. Explorers were dispatched to collect this fodder, objects of other cultures and actual people for displays, while holding the artisans and cultures from which the “artifacts” came at a dehumanizing distance (Black 12). Positivist sciences were the driving engines and soft weapons of the overarching paradigm of museum culture as the mark of civilization, whose concomitant forces of self-aggrandizing collection and dehumanizing expansion placed the world under glass (Black 22). The country’s explorations and an explosion of the import, production and public display of material goods sparked fascination with every aspect of the museum and its role in the life of the museum-goer. Correspondingly, the museum represented the world at a glance, in miniature – a force by which to fill in the gaps in the map and situate London at the pinnacle (Black 13).

Black asserts that a “psychocultural” impetus or spirit drove the Victorian construction of museums and their sister sites botanical gardens and zoos (17); they were representations of self-defining exploration that generated panoramic and sometimes utopic world views along with a
growing focus on materiality and order that drove three basic museum activities: compilation, organization and display (Black 4-5). The Great Expedition of 1851 housed at the Crystal Palace, constructed specifically for this display, was orchestrated by Prince Albert’s Society of Arts. This highly successful demonstration of British colonial and industrial dominance drew over six million visitors.

Though it lasted only half a year, it contributing the material and prototype for the establishment of South Kensington Museum and its first-of-a-kind glass construction (no doubt made possible by advances in industrialized chemistry) represented the ultimate voyeuristic opportunity whereby the world and all its cultures were laid bare in orderly fashion for ocular consumption. Museum displays, collections and catalogues created a milieu for cultural propaganda that offered spectacle and prolific literary descriptions and renderings. In short, museum culture and Victorian culture were tandem expressions of power and control that were:

...brought to fruition by key political events and social and cultural forces: the British involvement in imperialism, exploration and tourism; advances in science and changing attitudes about knowledge; the national commitment to improved public taste through mass education; the growing hegemony of the middle class and the subsequent insurgence of bourgeois fetishism and commodity culture; and the democratization of luxury engendered by the French Revolution and the industrial revolution (Black 9).

Through the guise of museum culture, the initiating forces of imperial power both predate and form the foundation of the contemporary generalizing notion that cultural globalization speaks for all, is good for all and tells all. In materiality, the diversity of communities and individuals are serially minimized as displays of stereotypes, taboos or curiosities.

Museum culture thus defined vast sources and stockpiles of powerful hegemonic resources and, once identified as such, provides some sites of resistance. For the imperially or nation-state sponsored explorer, whose exploratory objective was to gather objects, land, and people for the monarch, it did not necessarily behoove them to get the details of contact correct. Columbus’ geographic misnomer “Indian” absorbed countless entirely diverse groups and
civilizations such that we still use this referentially simplified title for “new world” people and their artifacts for display purposes; as renaming forms the first imperial assault, this shorthand purposefully eliminated mutual sovereign exchange with those civilizations encountered. The Smithsonian Institution carved an intricate ingress for the expansion of former colonies; in acting as a heritage gristmill for the construction of a new European-American identity, it became site for both endearment by the citizen masses and for alienation of the indigenous en masse.

**Museum Culture at the Smithsonian Institution**

Asserting the premise that the Smithsonian Institution played a keynote historical role in facilitating globally hegemonic activities for the new government of the United States, I argue that this site grew into the largest museum complex in the world modeled on already established imperialistic institutions like British museums and scientific societies that fostered anthropological collections, exhibits and international scientific expeditions and displays. The activities of collecting, scientifically categorizing and displaying artifacts made strange bedfellows of scientists, explorers, political agents, military men, and lay persons; all were conscripted by a new government and its museum to self-define and expand its primary objectives to commoditize the “new world” in the name of progress.

Ultimately, the motivations behind Smithson’s decision to will the vast sum of money to the United States as a contingency rather than to England are mysterious, but they remain a subject of speculation. The will states:

In the case of the death of my said Nephew without leaving a child or children or of the death of the child or children he may have had under the age of twenty one years…I then bequeath the whole of my property…to the united states of america [sic], to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian institution an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men (Smithsonian Institution 2, my emphasis).
The scientists, citizens and government officials behind the Smithsonian Institution’s public amenities enacted precise hegemonic agendas abstracted from this vague mandate of the founder. The Smithsonian Institution’s Board of Regents was formed to administer the money from the will and was composed of staff, government agents and prominent citizens. By nature of the Board’s decision to hold the institution as a public trust, the location, activities and the mechanisms of the Smithsonian became a new hybrid system of public acculturation and governmentality.

By utilizing a complex set of interrelated and coordinated inter-agency methods the Smithsonian Institution provided a centralized culture factory and public policy tool, in which the new government could map and inventory all its acquired territory and subdued inhabitants (Hinsley 9). Even if the explicit motivation was under the auspices of scientific research and exploration, the overarching result was to dehumanize indigenous populations through the systematic collection and pejoratively ascribed descriptions of indigenous artifacts, languages, and life-ways. The sought-after “public” clearly excluded those populations mapped, described and/or collected; the production of heritage fodder was performed and proliferated by the actions of a new museum-acculturated research and display facility and consumed by public citizenry.

This nationalized museum expanded beyond the original charter to “increase and diffuse knowledge among men” (my emphasis) to a larger framework to reach a multi-cultural, multi-gendered audience possessing diverse needs and ideas of what constitutes heritage and its associated knowledge systems, and landscaped identity constructs. I maintain that it is crucial to consistently situate this institutional framework within the context of landscape tourism, namely public education on the National Mall – but more importantly to the institution’s role in anchoring the mechanisms of expansionist U.S. policies through the Bureau of American Ethnology, the exploratory and collections arm of the anthropology division. The Smithsonian’s learning environments operate within the auspices of a diverse public “passing through” for an
ostensibly free source of entertainment; however, its early influential power over still-pertinent historical and cultural ideologies is thereby understated.

A potent cultural and historical memory for the United States resides in the American museum from its earliest informal roots in Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello mansion to its oldest public enshrinements in Charles Wilson Peale’s Philadelphia and Baltimore museums established in 1786 and 1814, respectively. In Peale’s museums, the pursuit of science was interwoven with exhibitions to satiate public curiosity. Modest fees were collected from museum-goers in lieu of government funding, which Peale Sr. sought unsuccessfully (Alderson 7, 12, 19; Hansen). Peale’s son, Titian, was the scientific artist on the Jeffersonian government expedition of the Louisiana Territory in 1819-1820 headed by Major Stephen H. Long (Alderson 55). Titian Peale, as manager of the Philadelphia Museum, was also present on the 1838-1842 United States Exploring Expedition under Charles Wilkes, which brought collections through the Patent Office to the Smithsonian Institution. He was suspected for labeling many specimens as his own and diverting them to the Philadelphia museum on the government’s tab – further fueling the debate over the conflation of public and private interests and funding (Hinsley 18-19).

From the earliest years of museology and quasi-scientific societies, the private interests of collectors turned amateur scientists – who wanted access to collections for inspecting and categorizing specimens – blurred with public interests to see the artifacts of unfamiliar cultures and specimens of nature. Spectacle for profit was clearly a motivation for outlandish and sometimes contrived early displays such as “mermaid” remains. Scientists bristled at such displays which fostered misinformation, but drew eager hordes whose fees supported collections maintenance (Alderson 33-34). In the mid-1840s showman, P.T. Barnum purchased many collections from the Peale museums for his New York Barnum Museum after having clashed with scientists who had distaste for his proprietary treatment of specimens (Alderson 33-35).
Alderson contends that due to the increased availability of books and other formal education establishments by the late 1850s, civic sponsorship of museums increased – and the public education philosophy of museums blossomed correspondingly – leaving the spectacle approach to circuses:

During the last half of the nineteenth century a new philosophy about the importance of museums for education created opportunities in which the skills of those who had run popular museums could be combined with the expertise of geologists, zoologists, and anthropologists…The new model museum would have opportunities for paid curators whose life work was in natural science (Alderson 35-36).

The shift in emphasis was also driven by educational reformers who felt natural sciences should be taught to children in order to spread the noble democratic ideals and improve the depth of curricula.

Pre-photographic artistry was a key factor in the mechanisms of identification and classification – scientific drawings were considered instructive whether the drawing was of a natural world object or a person. Agassiz, noted as one of the foremost proponents of the didactic teaching methods for science, emphasized artistry because it trained the mind to observe, ponder and draw conclusions from what was already known or instructed. However the method has since been associated with the idea of constructivism – where forgone worldviews to which the student has been exposed are reinforced even as the instructor is advocating the goal of internal discovery founded:

The use of visual representation to learn science can be traced to Louis Agassiz…However, implementation of Agassiz’s student-centered approach has struggled with the conflict between science as a form of developing “mental discipline” in which mastery of scientific facts is the goal and science learning as a socially situated activity with an emphasis on the process of learning, not merely its products (Lerner 379).

When compared to a dialectic or Socratic method of learning, where one’s views are argued against another as a relative truth, the didactic method by itself appears more like propagandistic mind training.
The conventional museum of the nineteenth century used the artistic constructs of detail and observation to represent truth – yet the portrayal of the natural world and human culture through the artist’s eye was just as biased as any contemporary photographic lens. Some of the earliest evidential collections of the Americanist anthropology were paintings of the American Indian. These ranged in artistic interpretation from the vanishing pastoral noble savage to the violent Indian savage of the frontier plains. Portraits by John Mix Stanley depicting Indian people in their “native dress” comprised one of the first artistic collections as opposed to collected artifacts of their daily life. However, at that time the portraits were seen as part of a scientific study and preservation of Indian culture; all but a few were lost in the fire of 1865 and replaced by a collection acquired from artist George Caitlin. The lost Stanley portraits were among a set specifically noted as the property of the government (Annual Reports 1865, 16-17; Ewing 5).

In his paper “Cultural Nationalism, Westward Expansion and the Production of Imperial Landscape: George Catlin’s Native American West” (2001), Gareth John outlines one figure whose artistic expressions provided an organized collection of propagandized material behind the expansion of territory ultimately warehoused by the Smithsonian. Caitlin, as an artist and explorer, was the primary pioneer of western art paintings; he is said to have influenced Stanley and other artists. According to John, the layered meaning in Caitlin’s paintings, along with his engaging writings and public tours, continued to reinforce and render ideals of a national patriotic narrative and the romanticized vision of Indian country. These works produced, John states, “an ambivalent imperialist iconography depicting American westward expansion and Indian policy during the first half of the nineteenth century” (John 2001, 176) – they simultaneously preserved facets of ethnographic information for posterity and contributed to the ideals of imperialist expansion into western territories.

The ambivalence imbued in Caitlin’s works was that the preservation and romanticism therein contained its own critique, for the result of western expansion was the utter destruction of
those idyllic landscapes and cultures. Therefore, John proposes that a contemporary contextual reading of Caitlin’s iconographic images employs a critical cultural iconology; i.e. the sympathetic scientific artist’s portrayal becomes the propaganda of nationalist ideologies when set in context of the violent extirpation and consumption of American Indian cultures and landscapes (John 2001, 178). Anthropology’s early paintings and artifact collections were not only the ammunition for expansionist political salvo; they were status symbols for Indian agent/collectors, whose names were on plaques next to objects.

**Smithsonian Institution, Power & the Heritage Concept**

I situate the government-centered nature of the Smithsonian’s establishment and its evolving mission statement beside a parallel inquiry about our pseudo-scientific ways of knowing humanity – which are often driven by the inherent biases of cultural orientation and the trick of what “appears” to be valid research. The Smithsonian’s Bureau of American Ethnology in collaboration with the Department of War, and the Bureaus of Land Management and Indian Affairs would provide the means to refine the heritage “data” used by the government in the development of territory possessed by removing the indigenous inhabitants. The western male lenses of culture and the folk taxonomies of “race” operated to the detriment of displaced indigenous and enslaved populations and paved the land for waves of settlement by poor Europeans who had to displace their own indigenous heritages to adopt the “white” categorical universal. The Smithsonian Institution’s museum culture facilitates the multi-scale construction of heritage through its highly reputed sciences, education, and entertainment. The Smithsonian’s museum complex is, from its foundations, a site of displaced heritage given the historical frame of its founder James Smithson, explored in the next chapter and given the impacts on indigenous persons, thereafter suffering displacement orders of magnitude greater in severity.
The Smithsonian Institution is commonly known as the “Nation’s Attic” – a metaphor signifying a place people can store objects assigned as artifacts of heritage. In this regard, the Smithsonian Institution is a national heritage site, where artifacts of diverse origins from the present and past are stored then presented in context of a curatorial lens. These objects gain or lose meaning, value and historicity through contemporized uses – which are driven by politicized interpretations for a broad public audience. Over time, these objects wax and wane in both sentimental value and commodity value given what we think, what we love, what we want to keep hidden or that which we have forgotten we had (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 6, 12). The “we” is always relative to who is assigning meaning and value to whom/what. Thus, with regard to each museum built within the complex, for each stage in the timeline, or when viewing a display, it is interesting to ask whose heritage is preserved and displayed…where, how and when? Therefore, heritage is an appropriate central concept because it addresses the tri-fold considerations of race, identity and power in a geographical framework from which we may approach two organizing and defining principles of interest in the study of national museology; public landscapes and public display.

In their introduction to *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture, & Economy*, Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge explicitly characterize and expound upon heritage as a key and intersecting concern of geography (pp. 2-5 in passim): First, as already noted, heritage – as an idea, association or object representing contemporary use of the past or a projection into the future – is inherently spatial as it addresses location, distribution and scale of historical and cultural phenomena within and across spaces and places. Second, heritage as both object and signifier places identity, representation and belonging in the forefront of fundamental concerns within historical and cultural geographies. As such, the authors contend that heritage makes meaning and therefore shares with geography the importance of acknowledging the context-bound power relations inherent in questions of interpretation and remembrance. Third, the authors
seek to highlight within geography the true integration and conflict arising from the dualistic role of heritage rather than focusing on either role in exclusion of the other: “heritage is both a cultural and an economic good and is commoditized as such…Consequently, the economic” (ibid 5).

This layered function creates conflict between the groups with a vested interest in defining the heritage in question due to the fact that heritage is a central commoditized element driving multiple scales of economy including policy implementation, development, regional planning and tourism while at the same time carrying deep and poignant historical and cultural connotations, signification and power. Cultural institutions like the Smithsonian are prominent in site and organizational power; in their positions as observer-collectors and in their positions as makers of meaning they wield potent power to direct the direction and use of the constructs of deferred meaning via hierarchical and hegemonic power. The elite (monarchic or democratic) maintain power partly by the utilization of the liminality of the public awareness created by a juggernaut of propagandistic and revisionist histories. Thereby a tacit agreement is attained from widespread ignorance of the temporally shifting cultural ethos wherein the saturation of top-down power makes its mark everywhere – and yet hides in plain sight.

It is incumbent on marginal voices to magnify our liminal spaces of power where we can tap the knowledge gained by our suffering and begin to reconstruct meaning on multiple stages – public and private. What begins as unquestioned participation and belief in scientific paradigms ends in the empowerment of those who reserve the right to redefine the symbolic institutional codexes and monuments. Both authors and challengers assume the right to (de)construct meaning. In decolonization scenarios – the meanings of identity and heritage are always deferred and paradoxical. From my indigenous perspective – power is the medium for inner transformation because you either have it and use it wisely, you try to use it to change/influence someone else, or you forgot you had it and need to rediscover it. Because normative power exerted over the subaltern is based in pejorative judgment – it is, ironically, the product of what the normative
does not understand about itself. When power is rediscovered and used with self-reflexivity and wisdom, it becomes compassionate, self-determined and sovereign; it is directed from a sense of self and community that not only rejects the pejorative milieu but peacefully implements a sovereign will for peaceful coexistence.

Even within overt realms of power, architects of museum culture have operated behind the scenes to construct cultural lenses and resultant use values for the material traces of individual and collective life ways and experiences. The use of heritage as a tool for oppression is counteracted by the use of heritage as nurturance for the ebb and flow of ideas between cultures. If one takes the nurturance element out of heritage – there is no growth, only a recycling of the products of culture. Those who tease heritage from its conceptual and institutional roots gain partial perspective and the ability to speak truth to power – but only a relative truth filtered and contextualized by the preservation, description, interpretation and display of material and immaterial cultural traces.

However, since the Smithsonian Institution is not strictly a museum or archive but a set of sites where history is continually created, learned – its complex of museums, research units and virtual databases can be viewed as the active product of a “circuit of heritage” which includes the flow of representation, consumption, commodification, regulation and production (Figure 2.1). Geographies created from the categorization of objects, artifacts and lives housed in museums have real and perceived power to construct space and place – thereby reflecting the emotional maps of identification. I trace the mechanisms by which the immaterial meaning and materiality of heritage is processed through the lenses of museum culture and governmentality at the Smithsonian Institution complex – herein identified as a key site where the counterforces of hegemony and resistance commingle and clash with regard to heritage constructs such as identity, “race,” territory and representation in the United States.
Individuals do not form representational opinions and thoughts about their world in isolation of instructional conditions that influence their formation. Opinions and thoughts are the products of conditioning of a cultural ego – the medium acculturation to Culture – which is partially done in institutions like the Smithsonian. The mechanisms and degrees to which the cultural ego informs the individual ego (which I refer to as the ethos script) is determined by immersion and repetition of basic concepts that label or identify the observed world – whether or not the truth is relative or representative, all aspects of the cultural ego are constrained and imbued with the notion of relative power rendered in the lived experience as freedom or containment.

Figure 2.1 “Circuit of Heritage” (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 3).
Figure 2.2. “The Indigenous Research Agenda” (Smith 117).
Examine, if you will, the contrast between the conceptual diagrams of Graham *et al.*’s heritage circuit (Figure 2.1) and the Smith’s indigenous research flow (Figure 2.2). Now imagine that heritage circuit as the representational heritage object dropped like a petal into this water-like diagram. The pairing of the heritage object as a cultural value and the healing-intent of the indigenous research agenda is paramount to healing a vast cultural divide. Our technologies and perspectives meet the universal human desire to belong and to express one’s ideas from the heart. Smith states, “This chart uses the metaphor of ocean tides. From a Pacific peoples’ perspective the sea is a giver of life, it sets time and conveys localized environments which have enabled Pacific peoples to develop enduring relationships to the sea...The tides represent movement, change, process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas reflections and actions” (Smith 116).

With regard to the multi-directional flows and major nodes, Smith states, “The four directions named here – decolonization, healing, transformation and mobilization – represent processes. They are not goals or ends in themselves. They are processes which connect, inform and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional and the global. They are processes which can be incorporated into practices and methodologies” (ibid).

External and internal cultural and historical geographies are recognized as lenses that define personhood or personification; they are concepts infused with the power to define, assign, and in a more contemporary sense – to self-define and resist. As I write this, word after word is context laden from my experiences. These are going to be either lauded or denigrated from the frame of an individual reader’s relationship with their cultural ego and my attempt to lay mine bare – and therefore mapped in terms of a life-path unknown to the reader and captioned by me as “raced for suffering”. In order to finish this project, as painful as the subject matter has been, I have had to realize and release that I have only my story and perspective from which to speak and whether another person invalidates the lens I use is very much an issue determined by a different script – yet neither is written in stone and may, by sake of cross-cultural exposure and influence
become shifted through the medium of cultural alterity. The Smithsonian also offers the potential
milieu for the medium of cultural alterity through the culturally specific museums in its complex.

Heritage, as a complex geographic concept, is continually in flux and the center of
closest, whether the sites in focus are the cultures or histories of landscapes, individuals and/or
groups. The issue of heritage on display thereby connotes the dual positionality of power and
representation. This is clearly contextualized by a statement of Ivan Karp, one of the editors of
Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, edited by Karp and Lavine
(1991); this Smithsonian collection of essays was published following a conference on the same
topic.

The struggle is not only over what is to be represented, but over who will control
the means of representing...Exhibitions represent identity, either directly, through
assertion or indirectly, by implication. When cultural “others” are implicated,
exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not.
Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and “other” (Karp
15).

Within a national-scale institution of museum culture, a heritage framework offers us the basics –
a contemporary engagement with historically assigned or assumed socio-political meanings of
cultural exhibitions with regard to various aspects of identity and belonging from multiple
perspectives. In the same book, Duncan describes how the museum is a space to conceptualize
place in society:

...museums can be powerful identity-defining machines. To control a museum
means precisely to control the representation of a community and some of its
highest, most authoritative truths. It also means the power to define and rank
people, to declare some as having a greater share than others in the community’s
shared heritage – in its very identity (Duncan 101-102).

In their paper “The Universal Survey Museum,” Duncan and Wallach (1980) seek to identify the
driving force behind the construction and popularity of museums. Observing that some museums
draw millions of visitors per year where the average visitor spends only a few seconds at each
piece and tends to consume each exhibit as a thematic whole – the authors assert that museums
have become synonymous, functionally and architecturally, with temples and monuments – sites of contemplation that offer much more than just an opportunity for contemplation (Duncan and Wallach 448-449). At the national scale, the representation, production and cultural consumption of identity as heritage becomes referential (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge 33). Further, the authors contend that on the national domain, “It is not sufficient to recognize that different scales exist and make distinctive contributions to the identification of individuals with place, because scale itself is a potent source of heritage dissonance” (ibid 181). In this sense, a nationally situated culturally specific museum is a site where individual narratives meet and potentially conflict with meta-narratives.

**Conventional Museum Culture: From Principality to Didactic Education**

In *Birth of the Museum*, Bennett (1995) asserts broadly that museums, fairs, amusement parks and exhibitions facilitated a historical shift in the cultural field in the nineteenth century over which time “the public museum exemplified the development of a new “governmental” relation to culture in which the works of high culture were treated as instruments that could be enlisted in new ways for new tasks of social management” (6). The methods of processing heritage fodder collection and display included expeditions, inter-agency acquisitions, public lectures, museum construction, exhibits, expositions, and world fairs – yet these sites of spectacle were aligned in purpose with other types of public spaces where people began to go to *be seen*. As the museum-going public learned and acted according to codes of conduct, museums, like department stores, became sites where inner transformation and outer regulation were translated as spectacles of privilege and “high culture.” The public then became a self-regulating outgrowth of the exercise of new, albeit tacit, forms of government power (Bennett 8, 18-21).

The museum concept itself underwent transformation via transfer of its functional
impetus; from the “display of power” for the pre-Enlightenment imperial to the “power of display” to train and entertain various sectors of a class-ordered citizenry during the post-Enlightenment period of the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. Over time, museum forms shifted from the private royal collection exemplified by the “studiolo” of the imperial Italian prince to royal galleries where sovereign power was displayed to the bourgeoisie, to the French revolutionary’s citizen-captured Louvre – a precursor of the public museum – where a certain public could partake in citizen-ownership of formerly hoarded treasures. Simultaneously the types of displayed objects shifted broadly from representatives of the world in miniature owned by the royal; to depersonalized state images and landscape panoramas; to curiosities of faraway worlds unseen by the bourgeoisie; to the dually-organized museum collections of a national museum used by the pedantic scientist/curator – one reserved for research and one set for the public (Bennett 36-41).

The “studiolo” was a typical Renaissance collection for the prince; often a secretly located window-free room containing object-filled cupboards and drawers depicting a microcosm of the universe – or a miniature ordered reality – that was meant to inform and define the monarch of his supremacy and dominion via his exclusive access to objects and mysteries of the natural/artificial time-space ordered world in representational accuracy. Noting Duncan and Wallach’s observations of the Louvre (1980), Bennett observes that, “the royal art gallery also served as a context for organizing a new set of relations between the fields of the visible and the invisible” – the prince, in seeking to know his sovereign power and dominion over his universe enabled the universe to know itself by nature of this mediated exclusivity and ordered but closed access (Bennett 36). In the same fashion, modern museum culture utilized the exhibition’s spatial flow, specimen compartmentalization and architectural choices to depict the scope of human experience as a unidirectional flow of development.

The conclusion that humanity treads linearly from orders of savagery to orders of
civilizations is a functional representation of the post-Enlightenment period that invoked the hegemonic force generally called “progress”. The tendency toward ordering the universe by specimens, artifacts, classifications, labels and renditions is at odds with the Newtonian conclusion that the state of the physical world is fundamentally entropy. Yet modernity’s stagnant monuments, archives, and classification schemes have never been able to contain or explain the fundamental generative and cyclical nature of life itself. If our institutions are often used to control, contain and commodify, they will never truly represent the fundamental nature of nature/society, which is change and exchange.

Converse to the benefits of the display of power, the face of the governmentality in the public space of British museums in this period is also traced to discussions regarding the management of crowds or mobs – whose presence was desirable yet also feared in the wake of the French Revolution – as well as control over nature. Regulatory tools thus became intrinsic to the growth of museum culture as evidenced through historical records detailing crowd management techniques like hallway rope-barriers, guards, architectural design, and instructional materials outlining public decorum (Bennett 48-51).

Early natural history displays of dinosaurs simulated “godlike” powers to resuscitate the dead or even provide a site of modern repose inside the bony belly of a reconstructed whale (Black 23-24). James Wyld’s role as map and globe seller and Queen Victoria’s geographer provided the earliest example of a global panopticon and imperial largesse. “Mr. Wyld’s Model of the Earth” or “Wyld’s Globe” gave the public the chance to view the world as known at the time of London Exposition of 1851. The multi-tiered model was too large to fit into the Crystal Palace, so it was constructed in Leicester Square. Though Wyld’s notes were incomplete in areas such as Africa and Polynesia, his depiction of the U.S. Mississippi region was likened to a vast garden, surveyed albeit untamed (Black 26-30).

Scientists, replacing the dominion of the crown, stored their collections in museums; the
receptive public museum-goer diminutively received the benefit of their Enlightenment and god-like scientific projections replaced religious dogma. One person culturally empowered to do so could develop expertise and authority to thereby name some phenomena or object in the world for the rest of time (usually under his own name). I argue that these factors make the Smithsonian Institution an important site for geographers because of the overlapping hegemonic and activist uses of heritage established at a prominent cultural institution founded coterminously with the nation-state landscape and milieu of the District of Columbia as seat of the U.S. Government.

The Smithsonian Museum is a complex site, ideologically and spatially; it offers the opportunity for an important critique of scientific and social epistemologies. Similar to classrooms, museums are sites for education and have played a crucial role in constructing our knowledge base, collective memories and identities. As a site of socio-political ontology, the Smithsonian Institution’s museum culture is comprised of a museum/research complex that unofficially enshrines a “racialized” nation-state in its spatial geography as well as in its myriad ways of communicating place. At the Smithsonian, the science and art of hegemony arises through a pseudo-scientific code of categorical belonging in tandem with international scientific outreach and public displays reinforcing physical identifiers of categorical identity constructs such as “race” or “culture”.

Museum Anthropology: Constructing & Conflating Artificial Boundaries of Culture & “Race”

One of the earliest advisors to the Smithsonian Institution was Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Hinsley’s presentation of Schoolcraft’s philosophy, and the prospectus he submitted to the Smithsonian Board of Regents, contextualizes the Smithsonian’s production of a national identity through its consumption of the indigenous identity; it did this through the burgeoning subfields of
anthropology, which were broadly classified as “science of man.” Schoolcraft outlined a set of recommended disciplines including ethnology, physiology, history, archaeology, geography, geology and particularly philology – as he felt “utterance” better represented “ancient affinities” than did physiology. The prospectus was derived from Schoolcraft’s summary of a colloquium of his peers held in August 1846, oddly named the New Confederacy of the Iroquois, which discussed the fact that the vanishing indigenes held an important “mental geognosy” that was important fodder for the construction of the American as distinct from European institutions and relations. (Hinsley 20-21). This is one example of how the salvage ethnologies developed at the Smithsonian Institution catabolized and appropriated the intellectual and cultural heritage of indigenous people for the European American elite; a heritage which became assimilated as a nebulous “American” cultural achievement.

Henry’s resistance to rushing into theoretical underpinnings encouraged Lewis Henry Morgan to loosely espouse developmental theories coexistent with Darwinian evolution but within ahistorical and non-migration dependent classification schemes that pinned Indians in time and space as though waiting for European discovery (Hinsley 22, 28). Hinsley states that Morgan initially tried to explain human differences by moving past philology in search of a less mutable characteristic. Therefore Morgan began studying what he referred to as kinship groups. Unable to find a unifying principle, he resorted to three rigid coinciding stages of development: savagery, barbarism and civilization. His classification schemes were important in establishing the Smithsonian’s early anthropological voice, as it influenced the ethnographic track of the subsequent ethnographic research under John Wesley Powell. Simultaneously subverting the “racial” discourse and setting the American Indians in a pastoral and ahistorical landscape, Powell inherited Morgan’s use of aesthetic and value judgments that grouped all Indian cultures into one stage of development (Hinsley 28-29).
Research findings from weather, land survey and mapping divisions coupled with those arising from the Smithsonian’s early anthropology research fields (archaeology, linguistics - philology and ethnology - later cultural anthropology) were mid-nineteenth-century sources of Americanized environmental determinism philosophies based on eighteenth-century influences. Linnaeus defined the first “study of man” in 1735 - by subjective readings of what he saw as innate character or personality traits, behaviors, intelligence levels in four groups of human “races” - which became more rigidly “fixed” than the morphologies themselves. He categorized the four: *Homo Americanus* as reddish, choleric, obstinate, contented, and regulated by customs; *Homo Europaeus* as white, fickle, sanguine, blue-eyed, gentle, and governed by laws; *Homo Asiaticus* as sallow, grave, dignified, avaricious, and ruled by opinions; and *Homo Afer* as black, phlegmatic, cunning, lazy, lustful, careless, and governed by caprice” (Haller 4).

Blumenbach’s theories published in 1781 took Linnaeus’s four group scheme based on skin color and added a fifth using skin color, facial characteristics, hair, skull measurements to define race-groupings as Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, Malayan, and Caucasian. A Caucasian skull from a Georgian, according to Blumenbach, represent the most beautiful and fitting description for the group he saw as the biblical origin of humanity – arising from the theory that Noah’s ark landed on Mt. Ararat – and surmised that Mongolian and Ethiopian races had undergone the most “degeneration” of all the groups (Haller 5). Blumenbach’s groupings were further distorted in the nineteenth century, particularly in the comparison between Africans and orangutans using facial angle as one of the anthropometric indices – which provided, for the polygenist, the justification to conclude separate “racial” origins for different human groups (Haller 6).

Modern anthropological applications of the these two threads of early anthropology, are traceable to Philadelphia physician and anatomist Samuel F. Morton’s anthropometric analysis of nearly one thousand skulls in the 1830s and 1840s; his research largely focused on American
Indians – whom he saw as a “race” separate from the old world. His theories were popular and complimentary to polygenist theories of Louis Agassiz and were used as empirical evidence to justify slavery. Morton’s theories were based on only two indices of occipital growth and skull volume using millet seed, buckshot, and water (Haller 11). Unfortunately the unsystematic and low-rigor performance of his “race-science” enabled the exclusion of many in-group variations that even Morton noted – as these were largely ignored or explained away as cultural variation (Hinsley 26).

The most problematic aspect of museum culture as a site for the earliest anthropological systems for the categorical identifications of identity and heritage arises with the regress argument that “race” is a folk concept without biological underpinnings. The fact that “race” exists as a myth does little to undermine the vitriol of its persistent presence in nationalistic identity engines such as the census or in “race”-coded symbolism in exhibits and media. The fact that we perpetually choose to ignore the “myth” both enables its persistence and undermines the decolonization of the institutions on whose foundations the myth rests. Museology at the nation-state scale can be a root forum and safe zone for speaking powerful medicine to smooth the hackles of unsettled heritage by reviving the public consciousness of “race” and culture as constructions not incontrovertible truths – or – it can reify the myths. In order to interrupt this mechanism of circular logic, perhaps it is key to return to the situational roots of its partial-formulation and nurturance at the early Smithsonian Institution.

This oppression is facilitated by science, as it organizes bodies by gender-”race” categories, regulates space through property/governance, and promotes cultural memes such as progress, ascendance, blood purity, breeding, inheritance and moralization. This perspective invokes the socio-spatial implications of Foucault’s concept of “biopower” as interpreted by Matthew Hannah as literal exercises of power over life through the processes and constructs of govermentality (Hannah 2000, 20-22). “Biopower” operates through a complex web of relations
to exert control over a target population, “It constructs an object of knowledge, the social body, through discursive practices which, in giving it intelligible form, render this object at least partially susceptible to rational management” (ibid 24-25). This analogy, read within the Smithsonian’s governmental-science context, poignantly implicates internationally recognized mid-nineteenth-century scientists such as Samuel Morton, Louis Agassiz, Josiah Nott and George Gliddon with the explicit political coercion of U.S. Census Office to gather “racial” statistics for their research and train others to do the same, thereby anchoring polygenist concepts in their respective fields (Morning 44, Lurie 230).

Nobles states that, “The 1850 census introduced a pattern, especially in regard to the mulatto category, that lasted until 1930: the census was deliberately used to advance race science. Such science was a fundamental…that is, the discourse that explained what race was” (Nobles 51-52). The leaders of southern slave states favored polygenist theories, as justification for the removal of Indian communities for their land and the enslavement of Africans for labor under the rationale that non-Europeans were from separate and hierarchically inferior bloodlines. Though stationed at Harvard, Louis Agassiz, an avid polygenist, was a ubiquitous and well-entrenched influence in the affairs of science at the Smithsonian while sitting on the Board of Regents under the second Secretary, Spencer F. Baird; he served for twelve years beginning in 1861, having attained a seat as a citizen of Massachusetts during the institution’s formative years – a service that earned him a twelve-page elegy in the Smithsonian Annual Reports of 1873 (198-210). Agassiz trained the Smithsonian’s George B. Goode at Harvard, who later presided over the museum collections having to do with the “arts and industries” and “nature and society” as displayed along classificatory developmental and geographic lines (Hinsley 68, 94).

Forces within the co-production of culture and “race” vector between observation, assumption, definition, assignation, classification, relegation, legitimization, pacification, invisibility, resignation, recognition, resistance and so on. Under the Smithsonian’s rubric of
increasing and diffusing knowledge through science, the early anthropological study and representation of the New World was characterized by gender, “race” and class; therefore, early research objectives reflected the disempowered relationships held between objects of research and the male scientists and politicians making governance decisions and/or influencing the evolving materialist culture by sitting on the Smithsonian Board of Regents. For decades in the late nineteenth century, the European and American fields of cultural anthropology and psychology summarily ranked humans in a classification scheme that inferred that skill and intellect varied according to arbitrarily assigned body measurements, particularly of the skull and brain.

These measurements were used to rank various groups along a monogenetic “unilinear evolutionary path” from savage to civilized – or to assert that human groups arose from separate evolutionary paths suggesting polygenetic origins (Morning 43; Mukhopadhyay, and Moses 1997). However, during the 1850s Joseph Henry tried to avoid the political pitfalls of physical anthropology and the ever-present politicized conflict between devout theists, monogenists, polygenists, and atheists – instead focusing almost exclusively on collecting artifacts and mapping the physical geographies of New World phenomena (Hinsley 27-28). The act of collections and mapping was hardly neutral from the indigenous perspective, however.

As the distinctions and definitions are very murky, whether in colloquial or quasi-scientific references, “It is essential to keep the “racial” and cultural processes separate in our thinking, although they have taken place together in the same social situations. Races are groupings of human beings based on average differences in biological characteristics while cultures are group patterns of behavior and beliefs” (Davis 29). The “race” discourse, as pinned to black rather than American Indian communities, was inextricably tied to the use of successive generations of black labor for slavery as guaranteed by the one-drop rule, which also facilitated the demoralizing stigma against miscegenation (Davis 6, 33-34).
According to anthropologist Eugenia Shanklin, distinctions between these two anthropological terminologies were demarcated only in later years wherein “culture” often romanticized life ways of certain cultures as primitive “noble savage” precursors to Euro-civility, while “race” was imbued with the hierarchical classification and categorization of one cultural group with presumably similar ubiquitous traits over another (Shanklin 33). The shift in classification from black servitude from which a slave could buy freedom to inherited enslavement was a policy decision that arose from the perceived danger and pressures of an expanding underclass of black Virginia slaves emancipated in the last quarter of the 1600s, who became unemployed and disgruntled. Shanklin points out that the Euro-American propertied men resistant to sharing profitable land holdings became uneasy with this faction and petitioned for a rash of governance laws based on ancestry and related physical markers (8). These laws were designed to remove barriers to obtaining free slave labor by eradicating any basic rights for remnant Indian people and from captive populations of Africans and their descendants; thereby freedom and liberty were defined in inverse comparison to the captive “other” whose birth anthropometrics became a passport to a new era of deprivation and prejudice (Shanklin 9).

An internal critique has arisen, from within the field, that many anthropologists appear to have abandoned the subject of “race,” though its undeclared polemics suffused their earliest disciplinary ontologies (Shanklin 1). The critiques appear to be arising from the experiential perspectives of professional and social victims of applied categorical distortions – women and “racial” minority groups – who charge that the field is still normalized by ethnocentrism and patriarchy. It appears that in the new millennium, the Smithsonian Institution is intent on filling the void – again from a scientific perspective but one that is assertively inclusive of qualitative methods. Beginning in early summer 2011, they sponsored a series of exhibits and lectures questioning “race” as a biological fact and situating it as a social construct. That program was aptly titled Let’s Talk about Race at the Smithsonian 2011 (Smithsonian Institution 10). The
central exhibit in this program was on display at the National Museum of Natural History from June 18, 2011 to January 8, 2012 entitled “RACE: Are We So Different?” (Smithsonian Institution 11) and was sponsored by the American Anthropological Association, with a virtual museum exhibit called Understanding Race (Website 4).

On June 16, 2011, in advance of the opening day, Exhibit Board Chair and Anthropologist, Dr. Yolanda S. Moses, summarized the exhibit’s collaborative anthropological field research. Moses indicated that the impetus for the research came from realizations that anthropology was part of creating the problem to begin with. “Race” as a subset of anthropological categorization thus conveys deeper distortions with regard to truth versus perspective and objectivity versus convenience, as the entire concept is unsupported by evidential materials. In 1996, The American Association of Physical Anthropology issued an eleven-point statement that decried and discredited the race construct as formulated in early nineteenth and twentieth century sciences. They negated the existence of discrete biological categories separating people with different geographies, cultures, genetic traits and physical phenotypes and stated that racist doctrines underlie claims to maintain such categories. They categorically define all human beings as a single species descendant from the common ancestral group, Homo sapiens (Website 1). The Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association produced a more recent statement underlining the cultural factors in 1998 (Website 9).

Yet, according to Moses, critical anthropological arguments against the “race” construct have been marginalized within the field of anthropology to the inquiries of feminists, people of color and graduate students after the 1970s. Moses’ presentation noted the important but marginalized voice of James McCune Smith, who was one of the first scientists to critique the census. He was marginalized from the mainstream nineteenth-century scientific community and labeled a radical due to his activities in the Radical Abolition Party – whose members included
Frederick Douglas. McCune was also an early member of the American Geographical Society, founded in 1851 (Website 2).

In her presentation, Moses stated emphatically that misuse of the archaic “race” terminology is ubiquitous throughout academia and has serious implications in professional arenas where anthropologists and government statistics hold sway such as in education, medicine, and disparity programs. Moses and others on the scientific interagency advisory board strongly advised the pre-2010 Census survey-data planners in the U.S. Office of Management and Budgets (OMB) to remove the “racial” categories instituted by Directive 15, as they are scientifically unsupported, outdated with respect to national diversity, and harmfully based on outdated European folk taxonomies. The advisory board findings were dismissed by OMB, prompting objections from the advisory board (Website 3). When Moses was asked if the OMB would respond to a request to declare the categories as social constructs to inform the public on census forms – as they do on summary reports – Moses said that was certainly possible, since scientists had successfully pushed for the multiple-box and self-declaration of identity on the 2000 census form; thus setting a precedent for scientific influence on the structure of census forms. She stated that public attitudes and votes about the categories were being collected through a specific area of the interactive exhibit to inform the research.

Moses pointed out that the advisory board, under counsel from a former census administrator, pondered whether need-based questions would be the answer to race categorization, but the administrator cited budgetary concerns as a herculean hurdle to any such changes. The result is a stalemate; while anthropologists and other scientists struggle to reconstruct new terminology, government sits unwilling to disrupt the status quo for budgetary or other reasons. Walking into the Smithsonian’s exhibit, one’s attention is immediately drawn to the life-size photographic display featuring a “line-up” of various cultures of people posed in white t-shirts, whose bold black lettering iterate all the various census categories they may have
fallen into over time with a box next to each one as if to say, “Am I all, one or none of these – and why?”

The spatial inequality implications of “race” categories on the census cannot be taken lightly. The research presented by Moses is critical of factions of anthropological researchers and the Census Bureau who continue to convey the idea that “race” is a legitimate scientific concept or who seem to avoid the difficult political and social ramifications of issue altogether (Smithsonian Institution 11; Website 5). The enumeration clause allows for a regular count of the U.S. population for equal congressional apportionment, but the collection of “race” data continues to foster inequality even while trying to rectify it. Political bias and underlying racism continues undercutting the impacts of fair representation through gerrymandering, voter suppression tactics and various other measures to deny full citizenship and representation to the entire population.

As such, culturally specific museums are the landscape representations of the ongoing performance of “biopower” via culturally constructed “race” categories which take shape as both willing participation guised as mandatory data-gathering in all nominally classifying forms (e.g. “race” boxes on employment or national census) and within less voluntary official space-regulating forums and forms such as legal courts and birth or naturalization certificates. These museums are more pernicious spaces of naming, because they are disguised as spaces for diversity and cultural enrichment. Smithson’s bequest thus simultaneously signaled a kind of socio-political resistance, and gave birth to new politicized worlds of identity assignation – forming the ever-expanding conceptual and physically sprawling spaces of the Smithsonian Institution museum complex. Long overdue conversations about “race” at the Smithsonian Institution are now taking place and they must continue.
Chapter 3

James Smithson: The Founder, His Will & U.S. Government Beneficiaries

The establishment of the Smithsonian Institution was the result of a chancy and astounding inheritance by the United States government of over half a million dollars with no apparent strings attached. This chapter examines the Smithsonian Institution’s benefactor, mission statements, location, and political underpinnings to posit specific questions about the institution’s role as an important loom of our social fabric particularly with regard to the constructs of heritage as associated with legacy and belonging.

While Smithson’s benefaction bewildered the U.S. Congress to the point where some felt it best to send the money back to England, the contingent bequest to the United States was also perceived by the scientific community as a precedent for increasing philanthropic largesse to scientific institutions for the benefit of the wider public. The historical contexts and conjectures presented here, whether they seemingly discredit or rationalize the actions of the founder, aim to contextualize Smithson’s bequest in terms of his hard-earned ascendency in the rigidly guarded social and academic hierarchies of England.

In this system, where land, inheritance and governance were still tied together as a remnant of a quasi-feudal system, family name and nobility held specific legal advantages over the labor or gentleman-commoner classes. Smithson’s contested familial heritage and bequest are also examined for the purpose of establishing a larger narrative on heritage itself, as it embodies the concepts of identity, naming, inheritance, and the brokered currency of social status. Since the inhabitants of the United States have been ranked, ordered, filed and mapped by their relative ability to physically manifest a skin-color and pedigree to accommodate such concepts –
evaluating Smithson’s bequest, achievements and pedigree within the context of the English social system is equally important.

Neither financial nor familial bonds existed between this former colony’s government and an English benefactor, James Smithson [b.1765- d.1829], who named the United States as sole beneficiary of his will – contingent on the death of his nephew as heir (Annual Reports 1847, 26). The minimally defined mandate of the English benefactor James Smithson expressed his desire “to establish in the U.S. Capital an Institution for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men” (Annual Reports 1847, 7). Smithson may have fancied this whimsical provision in his will, as the design, scope, objects and methods of diffusing knowledge was left to the United States Government to determine. Smithsonian’s Board of Regents, inclusive of government representatives, were appointed to the task of implementing the mission statement. More recently, the Board has sought consensus from social agents with vested interests, including audiences.

James Smithson was a skilled chemical mineralogist, socialite, Oxford graduate and Royal Society Fellow by age 22 (Ewing 11). He was unmarried at the time of his death and his only brother was widowed and expired. His generosity to the United States, which he had never visited, was made possible by his fruitful academic associations within the powerful academic-leisure societies and a lifetime of careful investments yielding a substantial self-made estate (Ewing 15). Though the details of his professional life are mysterious in many respects, traceable facts place him at the pinnacle of important cultural changes. Smithson, his contributions to chemistry, and the newly formed United States were at the center of changing worldviews brought on by Enlightenment-age exploration/tourism, emerging intellectual trades, and industrial economies involving English and the American and French networks and cultural exchanges spun during revolutionary wars (Ewing 78-80).

The bequest, as laid out by Smithson’s will and testament recorded three years prior to his death, stipulated that his entire estate should be managed by the Court of Chancery and given,
with minor withholdings for specifically named parties, to the U.S. government contingent upon the death of his nephew, Henry James Hungerford and his wife and children, of which Henry had neither. The scant directive in the will specified: “I then bequeath the whole of my property…to the United States of America, to found, at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men” (Ewing 306-308). In doing so, Smithson became a “new-world” pilgrim in name only – presciently acting to pursue a posthumous legacy on unseen shores. His personal history and motivations are not certain, as his personal effects were lost to fire – yet they can be approached, speculatively, as an important springboard to discuss the importance of individuals’ circumstances in mapping heritage, identities and choices as they inform namesake institutions and era-defining cultural changes.

The Smithsonian Institution became one of the most important and earliest material expressions of the new government via government-sponsored science and display. The Smithsonian facilitated authoritative self-recognition, management of resource flows (especially land and people), and provided an establishment from which the U.S. government’s representatives extended an authoritative voice to the world. Similar to Smithson’s academic societies, his brainchild institution became a highly attractive site for propertied, educated, almost invariably U.S. Anglo-Saxon males to study the “natural” world in leisure. In the new world, the “white” men at cultural institutions and societies were driven by the unrelenting agenda to moralize, and extoll Euro-American virtue, and to map, collect, describe, preserve, and control the “natural world” under the rubrics of manifest destiny – where the Indian was a pre-historical savage, the land was prehistoric (Hinsley 22-23), and positivist scientific inquiry came to the moral rescue (ibid 38).
Naming Confers Power Over Space & Place: James Smithson’s Legacy

Indeed, I think that the name imposed on a substance by the discoverer of it, ought to be held in some degree sacred, and not altered without the most urgent necessity for doing it. It is but a feeble and just retribution of respect for the service which he has rendered to science.

James Smithson, from “On the Composition of Zeolite”
*Philosophical Transactions*, 1811, p. 175.

There are only a few extant biographies built around the relatively limited available information on the life and character of chemist James Smithson. Extensive records were lost in a fire that damaged large sections of the Smithsonian Institution castle in 1865 (*Annual Reports* 1865, 16-17). Nearly all of his personal effects were lost including his manuscripts, tools and highly valuable mineral collections. Gone too, were his correspondences – “evidence of the extraordinarily sociable and international network of scientists in which he labored, and the diaries of his travels” (Ewing 8). Situating James Smithson, therefore, has to rely on the few available biographical sources and from the writings of a few of his academic contemporaries.

James Smithson’s life path, as traced by Ewing, highlights his incredible contributions to the chemistry subfield known as crystal mineralogy or crystallography, in the context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century worlds of Enlightenment scientific inquiry. This was a period marked by rapid technological expansion, emergence from domineering religiosity and the generative forces of multiple cultural revolutions. Ewing’s biography paints a compelling picture by examining Smithson’s publications, letters, legal notices, travel logs of colleagues, and Smithson’s notations in library books that survived the fire. Born James Louise Macie, Smithson’s exact date of birth is unknown since his mother, Elizabeth Macie, absconded from England between 1865 and 1867 to secretly bear her son in Paris. Smithson was the illegitimate son of former haberdasher turned baronet, Sir Hugh Smithson, who became by marriage a Percy
and the first Duke of Northumberland. The title, resurrected from a deceased duke in 1750 by Act of Parliament, was therefore gained by his marriage to Lady Northumberland, Elizabeth Seymour, who was Smithson’s mother’s distant cousin (Ewing 27; Rhees James Smithson 1).

Ewing states that Smithson’s alien birth compounded his illegitimacy. Significantly, Smithson’s certificate of naturalization of English citizenship, filed at his mother’s request when he was ten, stipulated that he could never inherit property or hold any public office or place of trust (Ewing 46 - 47). Even so, the English territorial laws on alien birth standing at the time of Smithson’s birth in France may have been softer had he been the child of a legal union; therefore, both his and his mother’s illegitimacies were root disqualifiers.

According to the Blackstone Institute (Armstrong), William Blackstone, a legal scholar of “natural law” influenced by Judeo-Christian principles, was heavily referenced by the authors of the U.S. Constitution U.S. lawmakers. He wrote in Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765-1769):

To encourage also foreign commerce, it was enacted by statute 25 Edw. III. St. 2. that all children born abroad, provided both their parents were at the time of the birth in allegiance to the king, and the mother had passed the seas by her husband’s consent, might inherit as if born in England…But by several more modern statutes these restrictions are still farther taken off: so that all children, born out of the king’s ligeance [sic], whose fathers were natural-born subjects, are now natural born subjects themselves (Blackstone).

Ewing contends that Smithson’s illegitimacy and the inheritance prohibitions of his naturalization haunted him all his life (Ewing 47) – a stigma repeatedly evoked by a public knowledge of his name change and by instances where he could not claim his father or his ducal coat of arms – such as during his matriculation and register signing at Oxford; “as one of only two universities in England, was a rarefied rite of passage for the elite of the land” often undertaken by father and son (Ewing 50). The Smithsonian Institution’s 1880 biography of Smithson referred to him as the “natural son” of the Duke and Elizabeth as if to hide a blemish on his character by revealing his
patronage but not his illegitimacy (Rhees 1880, 1). Yet Blackstone’s commentary holds “naturalness” to confer with a subject’s legal parentage and place of birth (Blackstone).

On the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary, a celebratory Smithsonian Institution publication did, however, note that he was born out of wedlock and postulate that his bequest to the U.S. may have been from a sense of resentment of the restrictions as an illegitimate son with no rights to assume the noble status of his father and ancestors (Fleming xiii). There is some question as to whether the following quote was a paraphrase from a third person by Rhees, but Smithson is often quoted as saying, “The best blood of England flows in my veins…on my father's a Northumberland on my mother's I am related to kings but this avails me not…My name shall live in the memory of man when the Northumberlands and the Percys are extinct and forgotten” (Rhees 1880, 2; Ewing 356 see note 10). Regardless of this infamous paraphrase, an examination of the facsimile of the original will penned by his own hand and transcribed into the record, reveals opening lines that proudly trumpet his parentage and lineage (Rhees 1901, 5). He does not mention his illegitimacy or the lack of paternal acknowledgement – so follows the contention that he wished to promote the concept of a “high” birth for posterity. Ewing, summarizing the effectual context England’s hierarchical societal codes and rites of patronage, states:

In eighteenth-century British society name meant everything. It signified one’s source of wealth and prestige; it provided a palpable link to one’s ancestors. Smithson was raised by a woman who kept her pedigree carefully groomed and displayed, and he learned the twists and turns of his family tree out to its most remote branches (24).

Ewing’s research reveals that Elizabeth Macie initiated a long string of lawsuits over property. Though Ewing does not explicitly read it as such, Elizabeth Macie’s actions may also be interpreted as a feminist struggle against the overwhelming ownership rights benefitting the male heirs of a rigid patriarchy.
Elizabeth, whom Ewing calls “a defiant and much embattled character,” is quoted as saying, “‘Womens [sic] estates are so neglected & consequently incroached [sic] upon, that y.e. idea of their being even drove to dispose of them presents its-self to every one’” (Ewing 21). Despite having no publically recognized familial connections with the Duke, and having already established himself for over a decade as an acclaimed scientist, James Macie Smithson adopted his estranged father’s surname at age 35 – filed one month and legally registered one year after his mother’s death in 1800 (Ewing 20). The summary context gleaned from tracing Smithson’s life led Ewing to conjecture that his professional drive and the bequest were heavily influenced by the conditions of his illegitimacy and the constraints of heritage for a naturalized citizen of England: “Smithson’s childhood was fueled with stories of his ancestors… and his adult life was consumed with efforts to ensure his own name added some luster to the family pantheon” (Ewing 24).

This section’s opening quote by Smithson is notable, as it relates not only to contents of a technical paper describing his chemical analysis on a mineral but also because it points obliquely to a paradigm of dominion, where Smithson self-aggrandizes as “he” whose services are rendered to science. The quote also indicates Smithson’s belief that objects are rendered valuable to science by the act of “discovery” and by the imposition and sacredness of naming in homage to the discoverer. Smithson was a chemist at a time when chemistry was burgeoning from its alchemical roots into one of the most important sciences; his was the age of hot-air balloons, artificially carbonated water, and refineries for all manner of raw materials of England’s new industrial economy (Ewing 61-62; Thomson 1-2).

It is likely that Smithson’s underlying aspiration was to contribute – even sacrifice something of himself – in service to scientific heritage. He presciently envisioned that his fortune would, in time, and after the death of primary beneficiaries, create and endow an institution of knowledge, which would certainly display his manuscripts and his mineral specimens. Yet, it
seems equally reasonable to venture that Smithson entertained the deeper desire to be remembered by name, if not hallowed by society at large, as a scientist and a man deserving a secure place within the growing nineteenth-century historical canon and deemed worthy of a site fostering collective memory.

William J. Rhees was general assistant to the Smithsonian’s first Secretary, Joseph Henry, in 1853 and later served as the first appointed keeper of the archives until he died in 1907 (Smithsonian Institution 3). In James Smithson and His Bequest, Smithson’s first biography penned by Rhees, we find an account – amusing and perhaps sad – but certainly demonstrative of the tradition of naming objects of research and “discovery” to confer scientific dominion over the world of physical objects regardless of their original geographies. The following – also recounted by Ewing (p. 313) as a romantic-age tribute delivered one and a half years after Smithson’s passing – is an excerpt of a speech by Smithson’s friend, Sir Davies Gilbert, at the annual anniversary meeting of the Royal Society of London, November 30, 1830.

Mr. Smithson frequently repeated an occurrence with much pleasure and exultation, as exceeding anything that could be brought into competition with it…[he] declared that happening to observe a tear gliding down a lady’s cheek, he endeavored to catch it on a crystal vessel; that one-half of the drop escaped, but having preserved the other half he submitted it to reagents, and detected what was then called microcosmic salt, with muriate of soda, and, I think, three or four more saline substances, held in solution (Rhees 1880, 12).

Later in the appendix, there is a wishful eulogy by J.R. McD. Irby, written in 1878 on request of the Institution: “We could wish Smithson's name to have been coupled with some great discovery or with the apprehension of some far reaching law that would have formed a worthy inscription for the portal of his institution” (Rhees 1880, 143). Smithson’s careful research as a chemical mineralogist was earmarked in the development of early processes and standard methods of basic chemical theory.

Smithson, as demonstrated by analysis of the minute material of a tear, performed distinctive research on calamines using sample sizes barely visible to the eye. This research led to
the posthumously-named mineral “smithsonite” – a name ascribed to zinc carbonate in his honor. Calamines are a diverse mineral whose zinc-bearing form was crucial to early brass-making processes; thus the tests Smithson devised were useful until zinc smelting was developed (Ewing 209-210). Today, a trip to the Smithsonian Museum Natural History’s special mineral and gem museum store yields one the opportunity to purchase chunks of smithsonite priced $60 to $100 per palm-size rock – a re-named object of nature, commoditized as an legacy-artifact of the founder’s research. Smithson’s fame is primarily associated, of course, with the Smithsonian Institution, whose material outputs and immaterial social exigencies are the subject here. The recurring theme of scientifically objectifying, renaming and claiming dominion over the exterior world is clearly an important thread that evinces the nature and power of museology as a cultural worldview.

Smithson’s legacy as patron of the Smithsonian Institution may have been ultimately born of a combined stimulus of personal and professional ego that fomented a seed of discontent with the Royal Society – an icon, self-same heralded, as the oldest continuously existing academic entity of its kind (royalsociety.org). Smithson was a highly regarded scientist and well-connected fellow within the Royal Society until 1817 (Ewing 280). He was introduced to the Royal Society by Humphry Davy, an important early researcher on galvanism (Ewing 16). Davy’s exciting lectures at the newly established Royal Institution (c. 1799) – of which Smithson was also a member-patron (Ewing 202) – popularized science to the degree that he was able to set an early precedent for public investment in science by securing government funding for the Institution via an Act of Parliament in 1810.

This act also effectively abolished direct private investments in said institution (Ewing 261-2). Smithson was sponsored for a Royal Society fellowship by Henry Cavendish, who, though having broad knowledge and widely acknowledged influence in various physical sciences, is most referenced for his research on elemental gases (Ewing 16, 112). Once attaining status as
society fellow, Smithson frequently corresponded often with Royal Society president, explorer and botanist, Joseph Banks (Ewing 190), whose societal influence secured Smithson’s release from a German prison during the war of 1803-1814 between Napoleonic France, England and continental Europe (ibid 250).

In the 1930 *Annals of the Royal Society*, Smithson was remembered for his scientific associations, as the publisher of several papers in chemical mineralogy, and as the founder of a great institution (Geikie 286). Yet, it is noteworthy that special attention is rendered to the fact that: “He will be further noticed in the account of the Club's guests in 1825,” (Geikie 235) a tacit implication that he was no longer a “fellow.” The Annals also name him as the illegitimate son of the Duke of Northumberland (Geikie 286). There is, according to Ewing, no official statement from the Royal Society about the split. The split is assumed to be either Smithson’s reaction to the rejection of several submitted manuscripts or that he objected to the editing of the contents of one of his published works (Ewing 280-281; Rhees 1880, 22).

His disagreement with the Royal Society purportedly led to a precipitous change in his will, such that they were no longer the chosen institution he envisioned for his enshrinement, that is, according to statements by Smithson’s contemporary, Louis Agassiz – a Swiss naturalist (Ewing 280) who later presided as one of the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents. It was the Royal Institution that may have set the inspiration for the wording of the bequest according to Ewing (202) – not only for its government beneficiary but because it was founded – upon the inspiration of the American-born inventor, Count Rumford – as an institution for diffusing knowledge to improve common life and whose target audiences included both the layperson and the scientific academician. The Royal Institution’s embrace of the “common” audience and its inclusion of the laboratory and lecture hall marked a shift to open format, applied science, a marked departure from the formal induction, hierarchies, and hallowed halls of the Royal Society, into which commoners were barred entrance (Ewing 263; Wheelan 113).
While Smithson had difficulty during his lifetime eluding the social stain of his illegitimate birth, the legacy conferred to him by founding the Smithsonian Institution effectively trumps the circumstances of socially denied inheritance while simultaneously spawning hierarchical structures formulated through the Smithsonian’s socio-political knowledge paradigms. Smithson’s life and largesse are a demonstration in the power of naming and a poignant allegory of deferred inheritance met with resistance and self-determination. Deep debates and confusion pervaded the bequest negotiations in the U.S. Congress (Fleming xiv), in which some members believed that Smithson was a crazed eccentric or a status seeker (Hellman 32-33). The Smithsonian’s culturally specific museums similarly serve as sites of participatory ontological resistance with regard to the marginalized histories now being reconstituted as part of a general American heritage – a national narrative defined partly by the experience of resistance to tyrannical laws and deferred citizenship inheritance. The subtexts of Smithson’s illegitimacy and government-sponsored disenfranchisement set against the trumping powers of money, name, heritage and scientifically fostered hegemony are poignant.

**The Smithson Bequest: Tracing Its Monetary Values & Exchanges**

Smithson’s fortune came primarily from the shrewd investments of various bonds and stocks including holdings with companies constructing railways, tunnels and canals; he appeared devoted to improving England’s economic and commercial infrastructure (Ewing 207-09). His avid, lifelong gambling habits were relatively common among his peers (Ewing 53) and possibly risks undertaken regularly and fruitfully, as they bore similar stakes to investing in the extremely volatile stock markets of his day (ibid 108). About three years before his death, Smithson penned his own will, an action noted as aberrant to the norm for a person of his stature (Ewing 306-08). The content and framing of the will was also unusual and thought to be partly inspired in part by
an eighteen-page guide, found annotated by Smithson within his surviving library collection, entitled *Plain Advice to the Public to Facilitate the Making of Their Own Wills* (Ewing 308, Smithsonian Institution 4).

Smithson’s will first reserved a small lifetime yearly stipend for his servant, John Fitall. His nephew, Henry James Dickens was prime beneficiary – whose surname had changed to Hungerford. James Smithson, acting in his role as guardian, had overseen this name change to harken his maternal link to royalty and preserve a dying bloodline (Ewing 26, 216). Dickens’s presumed spouse and his heirs were secondary beneficiaries of the will, but, sadly Henry died only six years after his uncle, leaving no family but his mother, Mary Ann de la Batut, to lay claim to the inheritance. Though she was not legally married to Smithson’s late brother, Henry Louis Dickens, and had not been written directly into his brother’s will, she later claimed that part of the inheritance was justly due to her because Henry Sr. set forth in his will that she should be cared for; indeed she won the claim because both Smithson and her son had been paying her an annuity (Ewing 316, 319-21). Even more unusual was Smithson’s stipulation that his nephew’s children were to be beneficiaries whether they were legitimate or illegitimate (Ewing 306) – in fact the illegitimacy clause became the initial, but ultimately bypassed, ground for the Court of Chancery to contest the will citing its absence of precedent in the rules of the Crown (ibid 322). The inclusion is also a significant sign that Smithson was quite sensitive to the harsh obstructions that the vagaries of law presented to a person attempting to claim inheritances, having been subject to it himself and witnessing the same happen to his mother.

Rhees reproduced two separate one-thousand-plus-page archival books produced in 1879 (a single volume) and 1901 (two volumes) containing exhaustive internal and public records tracing the early institutional activities of the Smithsonian. Both tomes provide an invaluable resource through which to trace the inextricable nature of the relationship between the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. government. The books also provide key insights into the
tumultuous inner workings of the government as well as the individual motivations and governing principles of members of the 24th (1835-1837) through the 55th (1897-1899) Congresses, whose Smithsonian-relevant correspondences and proceedings are transcribed therein. Rhees extracted Congressional proceedings and debate records from the legislative House Journals, the Senate Journals, the Congressional Globe and the Congressional Record. Selections from John Quincy Adams’ memoirs are reproduced in the 1879 volume along with a record of the debates of the acceptance and use of the bequest (Rhees 1879, vii; Rhees 1901, vi).

The U.S. government inherited several boxes of Smithson’s remaining possessions, most of which burned in the aforementioned fire in 1865. In 1838, the cash and stocks were converted to £104,960 in gold sovereigns, which after currency conversion into U.S. gold coin amounted to $508,318.46 (Rhees 1901, 107-109). Via the lobby of the Smithsonian Institution’s first secretary, Joseph Henry, the body was established, built and enacted to run on the tightly budgeted trust fund interest from year to year starting from 1846. Requests for funds from said trust were made to the U.S. Treasury Secretary (Rhees 1901, 117; Smithsonian Institution 9). Eventually, years after establishment, the Smithsonian also inherited Mary Ann’s share, which had been invested as stock for yearly interest dispersals until her death in 1861. By 1865, the account had accumulated to £5,262; which, after conversion and interest, amounted to $54,165.38 (Rhees 1901, 112; Ewing 334).

After the funds were in the treasury, the Treasury Secretary initially tried to deny that the Smithsonian’s board had a right to this residual inheritance, and the Smithsonian Board of Regents promptly lodged a committee-appeal to Congress for the release of funds from the Treasury. A successful 1866 appeal yielded a Treasury-held trust fund total of $550,000. This sum was calculated as the interest-adjusted residual plus the original bequest (Rhees 1901, 117). Ewing and Wheelan present historical exchange-estimates that convert the bequest to a figure
upwards of eleven million dollars in contemporary currencies; this was equal to one sixty-sixth of the 1838 federal budget (Ewing 324, 409; Wheelan 111).

Complex power dynamics of the three-branch government, and deep debates over the nature, appropriateness, and logistics of accepting the bequest, meant that many uncertain years passed followed the bequest announcement drafted by President Andrew Jackson’s secretary on December 17, 1835. The letter was read to both houses of the 24th Congress on Monday, December 21, 1835, wherein Jackson declared: “The Executive having no authority to take any steps for accepting the trust and obtaining the funds, the papers are communicated with a view to such measures as Congress may deem necessary” (Library of Congress 1, 2; Rhees 1901, 125).

After Congress decided to accept the money, Richard Rush oversaw the pursuit of funds from London’s Court of Chancery. Rush was a well-connected government appointed lawyer from Philadelphia, whose father Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician, was a signatory of the Declaration of Independence (Rhees 1901: v; Hellman 37; Ewing 319). Using his connections in England, Rush was able to abbreviate the normally backlogged Court of Chancery from the usual decade to a two-year negotiation – after which he accompanied the gold bars in a transatlantic voyage along with the remainder of Smithson’s effects, announcing his arrival by letter to Secretary of State, John Forsyth on August 28, 1838 (Ewing 324; Rhees 1901, 100). Twenty-two days before the gold had safely landed ashore, the following public notice, documented by Rhees along with the multiple states’ responses, announced the Smithson bequest as available for investment in state stocks:

The money bequeathed by the late James Smithson, esq., of London, for founding an institute in the city of Washington, amounting to about half a million of dollars, will, it is expected, be received during the present month. By an act passed July 7, 1838, the undersigned is directed to invest the same "in stocks of States bearing interest at the rate of not less than five per cent per annum." He is now prepared to receive proposals from persons who have stocks of this description to dispose of.

Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury
Treasury Department, August 6, 1838
(Rhees 1901, 251)
The act referred to by Woodbury did not mention Smithson by name when it was passed. It appeared in the Congressional *Globe* on July 7, 1838 as follows: “UNITED STATES BANK BONDS. The bill to authorize certain bonds belonging to the United States, was ordered to a third reading, read a third time and passed without a division” (Blair and Rives). Congress and the Treasury Department were, therefore, not as expedient or trustworthy as Mr. Rush: "It took Congress eight years of uproar, following the acceptance and reception of the fund, to set up the institution that the fund was designed to establish; by the time it was established nearly every cent of the $508,318.46 had been lost" (Hellman 41; Rhees 1901, v). If one includes the time between the initial bequest announcement to Congress in 1835, the ensuing debates, securing the funds, years correcting a misappropriation of the funds, the Congressional Act of Establishment in 1846, institutional organization and establishment of the Board of Regents, and the Smithsonian Castle’s completed construction in 1855 – twenty years and eight U.S. presidential terms had passed.

John Quincy Adams, in his post-Presidential role as a Massachusetts congressman in the House of Representative, was a persistent and dogged champion for the bequest among many other unpopular causes including championing women’s political voice in the right to petition Congress, upholding of treaties with Mexico and American Indians and the abolishment of slavery, which he saw as a scourge on American morality. He was not only a staunch patriot, but had also lived abroad as a foreign diplomat to many countries including England, Russia and the Netherlands. This exposure gave him a world-savvy sophistication that was uncommon compared to many of his colleagues (Lipsky 7-10, 15-16). Adams mused that his anti-slavery positions yielded praise and requests for autographs from the north and west, whereas from the south he received “almost daily letters of insult, profane obscenity and filth.” The contrasts, he surmised, were “indexes to the moral sensibilities of free and of slavery tainted communities. Threats of
lynching and assassination are the natural offspring of slave breeders and slave traders” (Adams Diaries 149).

In the Foreword to The Great Design: Two Lectures on the Smithson Bequest by John Quincy Adams edited by Wilcomb E. Washburn, the Massachusetts Historical Society’s Editor in Chief (for The Adams Papers), L.H. Butterfield, summarized the vigor and importance of Adams' efforts to honor the bequest by delivering two Boston lectures in 1839 which were posthumously republished from Adams manuscripts and a Boston religious journal. Butterfield muses, “Adams had the conviction, so novel at the time as to seem ridiculous to many of his contemporaries, that governmental power and intellectual power are natural partners rather than adversaries…and that Washington as the capital of the greatest republic should become one of the capitals of the world of letters, arts, scholarship, and science” (Washburn 10). Smithson’s bequest was an opportunity for Adams to enact a plan, as chairman of the House committee overseeing the bequest, that carried forth the essence and some particulars of his grand but failed goals endeavored as President of the United States from 1825-1829; he wished to support scientific research and exploration and he favored an astronomical observatory above all (Washburn 13; Wheelan 112). The Observatory was eventually realized not by the Smithsonian but by the Naval Observatory at Foggy Bottom, which initially functioned as the supplier of navigation equipment to the Naval division of the military (Wheelan 119-20).

The Smithsonian Institution might not exist were it not for Adam's strong feeling that the new government should uphold its obligations and promises. On the same day as the announcement in 1835, Adams was appointed to a House-run select committee tasked with the legislative examination and administration of the bequest (Library of Congress 1; Rhees 1901, 125). “He opposed including provisions for the investment of the fund in a bill which related to West Point and objected particularly to granting the Secretary of the Treasury discretion to invest the fund in state stocks” (Lipsky 81). Adams' insisted that U.S. actions concerning the inheritance
of the gift and the highly estimable nature of Smithson’s will and intent made the squandering and misapplication of the funds a matter of national dishonor. His fight to uphold the terms and use of the money is illustrated in both his speeches and political actions. Adams’ memoirs on the bequest describe his deep curiosity about Smithson, his excited endorsement of the potential uses of the funds, his active committee role through which he proposed the initial bill in 1836 to acquire the funds, and successive actions including a series of bills he submitted to outline the use and thwart the misappropriation of the funds (Rhees 1879, 764, 775).

On November 29, 1838 Adams expressed his strong hopes that the U.S. would honor the bequest to Levi Woodbury, when the Treasury Secretary invited Adams to a dinner with President Van Buren. Woodbury assured him that all would proceed well, inasmuch as the fund, already invested in state stocks at six percent a year, would make at least $30,000 per year for the administration of the institution (Rhees 1879, 768-769). Adams was already deeply frustrated as early as October 1839 stating: “If I cannot prevent the disgrace of the country by the failure of the testator's intention, by making it the subject of a lecture, I can leave a record for future time of what I have done, and what I would have done, to accomplish the great design, if executed well” (Adams quoted in Rhees 1879, 775 and Washburn 16).

However the states in which the half million dollar windfall had been invested, Arkansas, Michigan, and Illinois, would ultimately pay next to nothing on the principal or interest – such that by 1841 Adams despaired that Woodbury and his successor in the treasury, Thomas Ewing, did not care enough about the fund or the reputation of the U.S. to aggressively remedy the situation (Rhees 1879, 781). In addition to that, the fund had been debited ten thousand dollars for recouping costs of the fund’s appropriation – a bill snuck in under Adams nose, which he called a “dirty trick” (Rhees 1879, 774-775). To add insult to injury, Woodbury was later appointed to head the National Institute - vying to Congress unsuccessfully in 1845 – for the same Smithsonian funds he had squandered as Treasury Secretary to be absorbed and managed
under his new position as National Institute president (Rhees 1879, 793; National Institute Proceedings 376; Hellman 52-53).

The mismanagement of the Smithson bequest and Adams’ fight to preserve it hold great allegorical significance to the current global fiscal quagmire; a government that cannot recover its investments and pay its bills must sometimes resort to sleight of hand to honor its promises. According to Adams memoirs in February 1840, the money was somehow entangled in military budgets and annuities paid to Indian communities during territorial expansion:

I inquired of the Secretary of the Treasury what was the present condition of the Smithsonian fund. He said the interest upon the Arkansas and Michigan bonds had been regularly paid, and reinvested in Michigan bonds, which had been purchased at seventy-five per cent. He said the Secretaries of War and of the Navy had been much annoyed to obtain payment of the interest, to enable them to pay the Indian annuities and navy pensions (Adams quoted in Rhees 1879, 777).

The funds were “recovered” by an Act of Congress passed on August 10, 1846, which simultaneously established a Smithsonian Institution trust and outlined its organization. The only way to erase the states’ debt was by its assumption into U.S. stocks. The sum was calculated as the principal amount $515,169 (the amount of the bequest prior to disbursement of fees to Mr. Rush for brokerage and travel expenses) plus the interest due from the unpaid state bonds and proceeds of public land sales – such that the account was capitalized to $737,597.68 (Rhees 1879, 637-642). Essentially, as Hellman summarizes, “the bonds (and any cash in the account) were swapped with the government for a mythical deposit…on most of which six per cent interest was to be paid to the Smithsonian in perpetuity. The money was down the drain, but Uncle Sam had made it up, in more ways than one” (Hellman 46).

This series of intrigues mark key instances of the government’s covert and convoluted management of capital – and they demonstrate how institutions, like the Smithsonian, can be used to launder the financing of pet projects and investments. These are, however, easier to trace than the vast yet nearly invisible global heritage commodities exchanges taken up during the
Smithsonian’s natural history expeditions. When treasures were collected, the Smithsonian
Institution stored them and sporadically recorded inventories, which were published in the Annual
Reports.

Symbolic perhaps of its standing as an internationally recognized site of value exchanges,
one-hundred years after the events in 1871, a set of negotiations called “The Smithsonian
Agreement” were conducted at the Smithsonian upon the Nixon administration’s decision to
render fiat currency – completely decoupled from its gold backing on the international exchanges.
Nixon’s action precipitated a global monetary crisis in 1972 by undoing the fixed exchanges
established in the1944 Bretton Woods decisions and officially making U.S. currency an oil-based
currency (Rothbard). At that moment in time, the lives of human beings living on the earth’s oil-
rich landscapes became as forfeit as any African or American Indian life during the U.S. post-
colonial expansion. The Middle East, and its ancient Muslim heritage and cultures, would become
the new “savages” – the newest victims of a weaponized democratic propaganda promoted by
U.S. war profiteers.

The Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents: A Liaison Between the Learned, the
Leisured, & the Legislator

In this country, there is perhaps, no precedent for an investigation in all respects
like this; simply because, before the existence of the Smithsonian Institution, there
had not been, under the direction of our Government, any establishment for the
promotion of knowledge in general. But we are not at a loss for precedents. The
British Museum served as a model with many of those actively engaged in framing
the charter of the Smithsonian Institution. It is under Government control.

Mr. James Meacham, of Vermont,

(House of Representatives debate, Meacham quoted in Rhees 1879, 630)

In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, academic disciplines such as
biology, anthropology, and geology began to take shape in part by their relationships to museums,
who utilized the abundant collections of private entrepreneurs and naturalist societies. Some early museums also offered dioramas for the “cultured” public citizen with disposable income seeking spectacle and curiosities (Alderson 23, 29). National museums foster an academic paradigm within the categorizing environments of museum “exhibitionary complexes” that evolve alongside governmental need for national culture constructs and systems of order (Bennett 6-7, 75). At the Smithsonian Institution, natural sciences evolved into an efficient subject/object positivist research paradigm, and the collection displays and lecture series functioned as a culture cauldron – a saving grace for the failed port-of-commerce aspirations many held for the city of Washington, DC (Hinsley 17).

The debates over the nature of the Smithsonian’s contribution to science and the relationship between the Board of Regents and the Congress were sources of confusion and consternation. The Smithsonian, as a new kind of institution in the U.S., was strange and unfamiliar territory to U.S. lawmakers. Sir Humphry Davy’s name was invoked by Mr. Meacham, another House representative, who was sitting on the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Meacham drew attention to a similar situation between the British Museum and its regulation through select committees of the House of Commons by quoting Davy: “there must be a general change in everything belonging to the Institution before a proper system of radical improvement could be affected” (quoted in Rhees 1879, 630).

After the establishment of the institution by a provisional board formed from the three branches of U.S. government in September 1846, the negotiations and appeals came from both those employed at the institution and from the members of the Board of Regents, which was designed to be comprised of government officials and private citizens. The provisional board prescribed, and subsequent configurations thereafter fulfilled, the formula of the Board of Regents to include: Vice-President of the United States, Chief Justice of the United States, Mayor of the City of Washington, three members of the Senate, three members of the House of
Representatives, and six citizens from different states chosen at large (Annual Reports 1847, 2-3) which initially included members of the now extinct National Institute, founded in 1840 (Hinsley 17) and for whom Levi Woodbury had vied for the bequests funds (Fleming xvi; Smithsonian Institution 5).

The delineation of relationship between legislators and the Smithsonian was, thus, never mutually exclusive; as the institution was a product of government, its operations as an entity have always been deeply infused with conflicts of interest traceable to personal, political and cultural motivations of members of government placed on the Board of Regents. The Smithsonian Institution’s role – in facilitating the philosophies and operations of the U.S. expansion, and the cultivation of a hierarchical citizenship standard – co-evolved with the construction of archival, architectural, and monumental structures as the preeminent cultural institution sponsored by the government.

When set beside each other, the overlapping hierarchical systems within the academic and sociopolitical societies of the post-revolutionary United States and England comprise a hybrid American/European ontology. The unprecedented bequest itself speaks volumes of Smithson’s strong feelings about institutions devoted to expanding knowledge. Yet, Smithson established himself as a patron among the elite of England through his academic ties, joining other scientist/financial patrons funding a spate of casual coffeehouse societies arising in the 1780s, and he was one of the first signed on for the Royal Institution in 1799 by invitation of Joseph Banks (Ewing 202). The Royal Society was founded in 1660 as an “invisible college” (royalsociety.org) for and by gentleman-scholars and an enforced hierarchically rigid decorum that involved no discussion of facts presented and to which one gained entry by nomination and acceptance by a white-ball vote or rejection by “black-ball” – the Royal Society is apparently the site of origin for this turn of phrase (Ewing 103).
By contrast, the Royal Institution, aforementioned as the potential inspiration for the Smithson bequest, became a freer site for a gathering of minds already steeped in Royal Society codification. The interests of the Royal Institution were to push philosophical boundaries into the exploration of utilitarian sciences – that is, science as it benefits the laborer and general society. Smithson was a Royal Institution patron and was elected to be a member of the Royal Society governing council in 1800 – though he is reported to have been absent from meetings after 1801 due to deaths in the family (Ewing 203-04) and other priorities including industrial infrastructure investments and his own scientific research (ibid 209).

The early Smithsonian Institution became a hallowed site of practical and aesthetic arts, modeled in this vein, for the leisure of “men of science” doing “non-speculative” research and presentations in the laboratories, offices and lecture halls of Smithsonian Castle alongside a storehouse of curiosities inherited from the Government Patent Office and a continuous stream of artifacts collected through the rudimentary infrastructures of a government-sponsored scientific exploration paradigm. Leisure here refers partly to the privilege and status of joining the ranks of “discoverers” wherein the gentleman scholar blended work and pleasure in societies and clubs. The actual work was no-doubt incredibly taxing, for the monumental task and focus was on mapping, collecting, cataloguing and describing the linguistic and cultural artifacts from all of the rapidly disappearing Indian nations who were seen as doomed to extinction (Hinsley 20).

Early Smithsonian Institution leadership, activities, and infrastructures provided the central repository for the fodder of a new, sprawling material-based culture based on the spoils of war and expansion, rooting itself in the European scientific society models of empiricism, exploration and acquisition, anthropological delineation, propaganda dissemination, competition and peered hierarchies. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were both keen advocates of science and had strong communications with European societies. Many Old World society members in turn found great inspiration in the inventive, revolutionary spirit of Americans, which
they identified with progress and liberty (Ewing 200). Ewing contends that the U.S. resistance movement inspired anti-establishment thinkers in England to espouse libertarian ideals - some of them emigrating to the U.S. as a result (ibid 141-142). At the same time, the Smithsonian’s provisional Board of Regents, with some of its members still strongly linked to pre-revolutionary modes of organization, looked to the mother country to inform the Institution’s design, academic standards and practices to spread or “diffuse knowledge.” Representative, Robert Dale Owen, serving on the Committee on Organization for the Board of Regents, stated in a report to the on January 25, 1847:

In connexion [sic] with this branch of Mr. Smithson's purpose, your committee are reminded of the widespread and beneficent influence, reaching to the remotest hamlet and the humblest hearth, exerted not in England alone, but in other and distant countries, by the British "Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge," its Scientific Tracts, and its Penny Magazine (Annual Reports 1847, 22).

The interpreters of the will collectively decided that acquiring and disseminating knowledge was best accomplished through a *didactic* ontological philosophy whereby, research, teaching and learning are achieved through specified means; i.e. through peer-approved channels of sciences and arts. “Increasing and diffusing knowledge” was so broad and unspecified a mandate that the Congress included a statute in its 1846 Act establishing the Smithsonian which expounded upon it via inclusion of five elements not addressed by the will. Representative Owen continued:

1. “a library that shall contain valuable works in all departments of human knowledge”
2. “a hall or halls suitable for a museum capable of containing, on a liberal scale, collections of natural history, including geology and mineralogy, and objects of foreign and curious research; the large collection now in the Patent Office being transferred to the Institution”
3. “a chemical laboratory”
4. “the necessary lecture rooms”

5. “a gallery of art” (*Annual Reports 1847, in passim* 18-19).

Science at the Smithsonian was thus not really designed to be any more “open” than the Board and the elected secretary deemed prudent. The architect of design for the methodology was Joseph Henry, elected on December 3, 1846 by the Board to be Smithsonian Institution’s first Secretary. He assumed his duties on the twenty-first day of the same month (*Annual Reports 1847*, 11, 16). He set forth detailed institutional principles in a document called the “Programme of Organization” (Smithsonian Institution 7), which outlined that his seat would be the sole one from the Institution to inform and entreaty Congress on institution business – which he did yearly in *Annual Reports*. Henry lodged appeals to request that the interest-bearing account be paid in gold rather than paper notes – which he won. He also offered the opinion that the Congress’s additional five elements added a burden to the institution’s executing the will of the testator (Smithsonian Institution 8).

The *increase* of knowledge was outlined by Henry to include research in all branches of knowledge gained through recognized methodologies. The Programme of Organization suggested possible branches to include natural history, geology, chemistry, geography (meteorology and topographical surveys for a U.S. atlas), standard weights and measures, philosophy and “Ethnological researches, particularly with reference to the different races of men in North America; also, explorations and accurate surveys of the mounds and other remains of the ancient people of our country” (Smithsonian Institution 7; Hinsley 40). Henry was an electromagnetic physicist with a background as a teacher and associations that led him to conduct early research on the telegraph. He infused these interests into the founding principles of Smithsonian such that under his guidance, meteorological observations were sent to the Smithsonian by a nationally recruited set of over six hundred volunteers via a new network of telegraph stations. The telegraph-reporting systems devised by Henry were turned into the first full-blown
meteorological maps and The National Weather Service was an outgrowth of work he conducted (Smithsonian Institution 7; Hinsley 34-35).

It is also important to note that the Board of Regents and Joseph Henry’s budget-conscious directorship promoted a fascination with the moral exercise of progress coupled with the titillation of the desire to engage in such pioneering pursuits; ideally taken at leisure and without the prospect of payment (Annual Reports 1847, 12, 14). The volunteer has always proliferated among the tight ranks of the Smithsonian’s small staff (Hinsley 43, 95). The gates of knowledge were only open to a Euro-American male population with prior education, scientific exposure, and money in the form of property or other assets elevating their social standing; this effectively relegated even the non-moneyed white male to a vast unpaid class of volunteers and aspirants.

Further, Henry interpreted the diffusion of knowledge aspect of the bequest by establishing popular outlets for the research undertaken at the Institution; thus many publications, lectures, and circulars were planned and distributed (Hinsley 47). Papers commissioned or obtained through the offering of competitive premiums to external bodies were to be published in regularly published “transactions” known as the Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge. The committee also advised that “courses of free lectures be delivered during the session of Congress…by its officers, or by able men in the different branches of knowledge…It should also…be made the duty of the Secretary and his Assistants to exhibit, in these lecture rooms, at stated periods, experimental illustrations of new discoveries in science, and interesting and important inventions in the arts” (Annual Reports 1847, 22).

In addition to the competitive annual premium, it was recommended that specific budget appropriations should be made for lines of research supporting “important objects only, and where there is fair promise of speedy result,” and its decision-making body would be modeled, “after the manner, perhaps, of the British Association…that in deciding the kind of research and
the amount of money to be appropriated, the Board avail itself of the suggestions of a council of scientific men” (Annual Reports 1847, 13-15). Thus in the early Board’s summation, it was deemed necessary to recreate well-established research facilities and models for new research in the new nation that would simulate knowledge structures of the Old World associated with an elite scholar with time to kill:

This stimulating and cherishing of research in unexplored fields seems to your committee the more necessary and proper in a country like ours, where but few have at command that easy leisure, common in older countries, and there permitting the prosecution of researches through years, or a lifetime, without expectation or necessity of pecuniary return. (Annual Reports 1847, 12)

Henry, speaking in the Annual Reports of 1865, was of the opinion that the Smithsonian had diverged from European influence to operate a model unlike that of British societies. It seems that he had a very narrow and certainly academically elitist interpretation of the diffusion parameter, which may or may not have echoed that of Smithson, when he stated that, “It can, therefore, scarcely be too often repeated that the Institution is not, as our foreign correspondents often suppose, an association of learned men similar to the scientific societies of Europe and America…” (Annual Reports 1865, 13). Therefore, Joseph Henry was more focused on a tightly controlled flow of knowledge such that it should not replicate existing functions of schools or universities, “but primarily a foundation for enlarging the boundaries of science by stimulating and assisting the researches of original inquirers, wherever found, and for gratuitously diffusing the results of such researches wherever they may conduce to the intellectual or material interests of men” (ibid).

Henry’s approach was key to the institution becoming the dominant site for American anthropology until the turn of the century, as his emphasis was defining the Smithsonian as a place for rigorous research. He did so by promoting science to scientists through widespread distribution of publications and by enforcing a strict gather, observe, describe then induce empiricist approach. Henry supported institutional activities that downplayed commercialism,
discouraged collections for the sake of popular aesthetics or curiosity and rejected anything he deemed to be speculative research. Successive secretaries such as Spencer F. Baird emphasized the collections as a way to encourage public edification through the exhibition of museum objects and by hosting collections as a means for diffusing scientific knowledge (Hinsley 34-39). Yet, it was not until the 1876 U.S. centennial celebration exposition in Philadelphia that a deeper divergence of American and European anthropologies took place, owing to the fact that “by the 1880s American materials were simply refusing to fit Old World categories” (Hinsley 47).

The Smithsonian Institution evolved within a government-sponsored scientific milieu – arising from tenuous financial footing and deeply debated ideological beginnings as a site for a small but privileged set of scientists who treasured applied-science education for its contributions to moral uplift and progress (Hinsley 84). Science and its material displays of “objectivity” were the tangible expressions of the observer’s privilege due to the culturally biased assumptions drawn from the analysis of cultures and their artifacts.

On April 25, 2012, Joseph Henry was “resurrected” in a bizarre but enlightening re-enactment interview at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, at a symposium entitled (Re)Presenting America: The Evolution of Culturally Specific Museums (Smithsonian Institution 9). The event was significant in several ways. Most significantly, the symposium marked an official acknowledgement by the Smithsonian that culturally specific museums represent a phenomenon needing study. The symposium enabled a reflexive engagement with the decision to augment the Smithsonian suite of museums in a way that houses separately the significant contributions of specific cultures and highlights the alterity they have experienced.

A European-American male representative (actor Dwayne Starlin) was placed on display in the portrayal of a cultural icon whose period dress and language harken back to the antiquated ideals of a pinnacled “white” civilization. His responses, utilizing discarded descriptors such as
“negro” and “savage”, seemed both jarring and illustrative of concepts of evolutionary stagnancy inherent in conventional approaches to museology where living Indians depicting themselves in role-play were common. The reenactment of Joseph Henry references the romanticized live and mannequin diorama displays of American Indians of conventional museology, similarly depicting Henry as the representation of an extinct culture – though the performance may have been read by some attendees as merely as an honorarium since the subtext of the presentation was not explicitly discussed by the presenters.

Much to the real Joseph Henry’s chagrin, the Smithsonian lecture hall had become the site for a series of twenty-two popular abolitionist lectures in 1861-62 sponsored by the Washington Lecture Association (WLA) during the Civil War; a series produced under the influence of the republican faction of the Board of Regents who had ties to the WLA (Conlin 310-311). In the reenactment, Henry’s opposition to Frederick Douglas as a final speaker to the series was discussed in the dual context of his role as Smithsonian secretary and his pre-Smithsonian relationship with Smithsonian’s first black employee Solomon G. Brown (hired in 1852), who trained and served as a technical assistant to Samuel B. Morse (with whom Henry was an associate) to test the viability of, then install, the wire-pole infrastructure of an electromagnetic telegraph system between D.C. and Baltimore (AM & CAAHC 48, 56).

Joseph Henry’s reenacted responses to this inconsistency were that he wanted to stem the tide of political incendiary that may have been provoked by Douglas’ speech and the personal belief that Mr. Brown had improved himself above the ranks of most negroes, who were expected to be as prone to extinction as the American Indian if they could not adopt the path of the “civilized.” The final, and most stunning, revelations at this portion of the symposium were that Henry had worked directly with Abraham Lincoln on a plan of “Relocation” for ex-slaves to Columbia to mine coal and eventually to Liberia for settlement, and that, as Secretary, he straddled personal ties to confederate president Jefferson Davis with political demands for the
Smithsonian Castle to be used as a Union Outpost. Henry is noted to have expressed relief that the lecture hall burned in the 1865 fire and did not have it replaced (Smithsonian Institution 8).

D.C. & the Smithsonian Roots of a New Material Culture: Slavery, Personhood & the Fodder of Nationhood

In the foreword of the Smithsonian Institution’s 2005 publication, *The Black Washingtonians: Anacostia Museum’s Illustrated Chronology 300 Years of African American History*, D.C.’s current House delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton sets Solomon Brown’s achievement in a poignant geographic context: “Why the District? It was hardly a beacon of Freedom [sic]. Not even whites had the self-government and the congressional representation that other Americans took for granted […] Not unlike our country, two overarching issues have haunted the city – race and democracy” (AM & CAAHC viii). Holmes further frames the lack of “racial” reconciliation in D.C. – purposefully setting her current, but unsuccessful, efforts to push for D.C. congressional representation in Congress within a historical framework:

Throughout American history, as for most of the city’s history, aspirations for equality and democracy warred with white fears of black domination. In Washington, D.C., [sic] most whites preferred their own disenfranchisement – no elected local city government and no congressional representation – to the risk of sharing power with the black minority (ibid viii).

As to whether there is more to the decision than an active will to exclude we can look to the post-Civil War era of Reconstruction for clues as to the progress made by the African American population at that time – it seems that the location itself was a representation of embattled identity; the wedge between slaveholding southern states and the north.

Before the District of Columbia was chartered, Congress wrangled over where to put it. Congressmen representing slaveholding states were determined that the capital be in a region favorable to slavery – somewhere under the influence of wealthy plantation owners and out of the hand of eastern industrial capitalists (AM & CAAHC 3).
In February 1871, the seat of territorial government and its Corporation was writ and established upon a ten-square mile landscape known as the municipal corporation of the District of Columbia (D.C.). D.C. was assigned the functions of municipal government in support of the federal government, which, in its contentious and heavily embattled place between the Northern and Southern slaveholding states, had just undergone the ravages of the Civil War. However, at the earlier time of the Smithsonian’s congressional establishment in 1846, the United States lay in coexistence with two presiding areal agencies: the Corporation of Georgetown, D.C., and the Corporation of the City of Washington, D.C. The same year of the Smithsonian’s establishment, part of the Southwest quadrant of the ten square mile quadrant under the agency Corporation of Alexandria, D.C. had been ceded back to Virginia partially due to the dependence of Alexandria on slave labor (AM & CAAHC 48).

In the midst of prosperity, moreover, the capital had a complex population profile that produced ambivalent feelings among European Americans, northern or southern. Until its antebellum abolition law passed in 1850, a lively slave trade existed in the District; indeed, as James Renwick’s Smithsonian Building began to rise on the Mall in the late forties, construction workers could view proof of its existence across the street from the Smithsonian Castle’s rear entrance – where the slave pens for two of the major traders of the District were located (Hinsley 16). After the law passed, D.C. became a site of massive immigration for free and escaped slaves in both antebellum and post-war years (AM & CAAHC viii, 80). Hinsley states, “In 1840, the Black population of the District comprised nearly a third of the total; over the next decade the general population increased by twenty percent” (Hinsley 16). As a significant sign of the early progress of African American people during Reconstruction, 1871 also marked a significant achievement for Solomon G. Brown, who was in that year elected to the newly established House of Delegates for the District of Columbia while still employed at the Smithsonian. For the first
time, in 1871, D.C. residents also had a voice in the House of Representatives – yet still no vote (AM & CAAHC 105).

At the same time as African Americans made modest strides toward representation, some American Indians were witnessing backslide in their treatment as sovereign nations via the United States government. Approximately forty years after the Indian Removal Act was signed into law by Andrew Jackson, 1871 marked the year that treaty negotiations with Indian nations were formally ended by Congressional legislation. Prior to that, there had been controversies over inconsistent handling of treaties – because some were negotiated as they were with foreign nations and some were ad hoc agreements. From both presidential and congressional perspectives, this inconsistency begged the contrivance of a solid procedure on who was involved in final ratification decisions. They opted for complete exclusion and denial of sovereignty to the First Nations (Currie 26-28). There was ample reason for this from the United States, operating as a corporation – to deny any rights and claims to land was to cut overhead on investments in administrative costs and minimize its treaty obligations going forward.

As explored in a previous section on John Quincy Adams, many former heads of the U.S. corporation, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, had keen interest in the investment of resources toward construction of facilities for the educational sciences as primary functions of federal government. By establishing the Smithsonian as a house of collectibles from the frontier and calling it science, the government replicated the roots of imperialism and colonization, which encouraged mapping of resources and natural wonders. That, in turn, led to a rise of demand for cultural attractions; museum culture would eventually fulfill that void by altering the landscape to provide an American version of said imperial designs. Harris emphasized that it is important to explore not only the underlying narratives of indigenous inferiority, but to expose the colonial mechanisms of power and control over space:
A central goal, therefore, of colonial discourse theory is to identify the assumptions and representations inherent in colonial culture—in the binary of civilization/savagery, in the erasures of Aboriginal knowledge of time and space, in assumptions about race and gender, in the concept of the land as empty (terra nullius)...This work has focused much scholarly energy and has yielded important theoretical and practical results, but it is less clear that it has revealed the principal momentum and power relations inherent in colonialism (Harris 165).

The Smithsonian clearly provided a colonial mechanism and momentum by which the U.S. corporation could thoroughly identify and map resources and provide justification strategies for complete domination and control – the power to claim possession of land from “savages’ who by anthropological standards were not equipped to fully make use of it. Yet, as suggested by Harris, any post-colonial research, done from within the perspective of North American linguistic and ideological contexts, might miss the underlying imperial designs of this hegemonic outgrowth of nation-building. As well the geographic inquiry that fails to address the post-colonial conflagration of D.C.’s original landscape is an unwitting participant in partial historical narratives of exclusion, unless the material and immaterial remnants of imperialism are discussed with relation to its landscapes and institutions from an engaged indigenous perspective (Harris 166).

In Europe, indigenous representatives from various areas of exploration such as Palau Island’s Prince Lee-boo became adored as delegates of “noble savagery” (Ewing 98-99), whereas others became victim-participants of display and a savage objectifying gaze, such as the French displays of “the Hottentot Venus” (ibid 275), a Khoisan African woman. As a result of this cross-cultural insensitivity, the scientist-as-observer gaze placed xenophobic material values on people of other cultures as the arts/articles/objects of fetishist display. The extent to which the scientific devaluation of the worth of persons deemed “savage” is epitomized by the vast collections of human remains collected by the Smithsonian as anthropological research items (Hinsley 70).
The U.S. government and the Smithsonian Institution were bedfellows, whose marriage made the District of Columbia into a nationalized cultural landscape where division of labor was clearly demarcated by class, race and political connections (Hinsley 15-17); the results were perhaps close to an elitist aristocracy without a crown. Washington died before the federal government’s relocation to the Potomac region from Philadelphia. In his first State of the Union address to Congress in 1790 in Philadelphia and again in his final address in 1796, Washington advocated, unsuccessfully, for a national university to be established or for allocating federal subsidies to such an institution (Washington 1790, 1796).

Currie surmises that this unpopular proposal fell prey to a general distaste for government overreach of state-enumerated powers under the deeply debated “general welfare clause” – designed by Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, who, as committee-head for the 1796 promotion of the national university, indicated it was fitting to locate the university at the seat of government (Currie 71-72, 222). A national university, therefore, would provide a civilization nursery of sorts – which, through government’s large, steadying hand, would diffuse knowledge to its invaluable citizens and benevolent domination to dispensable Indians – backed by military force if needed. The speech addressed care of land and liberty (wealth of and through knowledge), but what of labor? Washington did not raise the slave issue – as he evidently saw free labor as an uncontested part and parcel of providential blessings at the time.

Washington’s 1796 speech was dominated by the issue of how to keep peaceful relations by honoring treaties with those Indians nations who behaved while punishing those with unruly individuals in order “to draw them nearer to the civilized state and inspire them with correct conceptions of the power as well as justice of the Government” (Washington 1796). The United States’ presence on the land was seen by many, including Joseph Henry, as a divine dispensation and as a civilizing cause (Hinsley 39), which should be met by indigenes acquiescently or by coerced cooperation. Resistance was futile under the benefaction of this dreadful providence. The
1796 speech outlined an expanded national university proposal that included divisions for useful arts and manufactures, sciences, government as science, and a separate academy for the military.

In a fate-twist of contested heritage, by a 2002 directive of Congress, the National Park landmark at George Washington’s house in Philadelphia memorializes the African slaves whose quarters occupied a site adjacent to the Liberty Bell and the Declaration of Independence – spurring one blog-journalist to explore the irony. Philadelphia Tribune journalist and blogger, Linn Washington Jr., presents the conflicted reception for the memorial, citing the feelings of those who laud it as a long-overlooked acknowledgement versus those who feel that the slave-context emphasis at the site is over-worn baggage, yet one more landmark of black bondage rather than a hallmark of contributions to American culture (Washington, L. Jr.).

Chronicles describing the scientific, literary and nation-building pursuits of Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, also present compelling and museum-relevant perspectives from which to explore the self-appointed authority exercised by founding fathers via their legitimated – yet virulently pathological – assumption of control and governance over the inhabitants and landscapes circumscribed and demarcated as the United States of America. Jefferson was the “expansionist” president, whose defining characteristics are bifurcated by the conflicting ideals of early European-style see-and-take colonialism of the western-frontier and his authorship of the consumptively expansive American liberty paradigm in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Monticello.org 1).

Since these rights were, though not explicitly expressed by Jefferson as such, exclusively conferred to the propertied Euro-American male– as proven by the 1790 census – he fully exercised the associated rights and privileges of his “race” and position. Meanwhile, “othered” identities could expect death, servitude, un-happiness and the pursuit of a benevolent creator.
Perhaps Jefferson’s own words also best express the “infectious” quality of liberty ideals: "The disease of liberty is catching; those armies will take it in the south, carry it thence to their own country, spread there the infection of revolution and representative government, and raise its people from the prone condition of brutes to the erect altitude of man" (Monticello.org 1). Jefferson seemed to consider the infection benign – but to his elite class, it was obviously beneficial. When liberty is thus contextualized, and to liberty is ascribed the dutiful performance of manifest destiny, Jefferson’s philosophies are framed, but not betrayed by his actions as a slaveholder and a desecrator of Virginian Indian burial grounds (Monticello.org 2, 3).

According to anthropologist, David Hurst Thomas, Curator of the American Museum of Natural History, speaking as a member of the first Board of NMAI at the symposium (Re)Presenting America, when Jefferson commissioned the Lewis and Clark expedition and displayed the cache in his Monticello, Virginia mansion, he replicated the trifecta of ownership exploration, renaming, and collection that initiated the colonialist expansion to the New World (Smithsonian Institution 9). His extensive stratified gravesite excavations and description protocols dating to the 1780s earned him recognition as the first American archaeologist. Thus, his work with excavations and expeditions predated and informed anthropological research of the Smithsonian Institution by nearly a century. (Hinsley 23; Zechmeister 2010).

To the descendants of slaves and aboriginal peoples who inherit the traumas of forced labor, dispossession and desecrated burial sites, such actions and philosophies are difficult to rationalize as anything but hypocrisy – yet the true nature of atrocity is usually dismissed as the casual consequence of war, governance or scientific knowledge-acquisition. Perhaps Jefferson’s voluminous antislavery rhetoric entranced everyone but his own slaves. The “Enlightenment” crucible of science married ideals of liberty with positivist knowledge at the Smithsonian museums – even as the anthropological method was built upon Jefferson’s liberty to freely explore the his curiosity and prowess at dissecting the aboriginal landscape. The resulting
narrative of Jefferson as a friend to the slave and champion of liberty was perpetuated to belie a moral darkness in his actual conduct – unfortunately, this exemplifies the conflicting actions and philosophies in both Washington and Jefferson legacies.

David Hurst Thomas also recognized that although the Smithsonian began to return vast collections of bones to their communities in the 1990s, some may remain untraceable and anonymous in museum drawers – making the National Museum of the American Indian an important site to memorialize our ancestors – but more importantly it is a place for extant communities to celebrate survival, write their own histories and break down stereotypes that their culture is extinct or forever primitive (Smithsonian Institution 9).

The Smithsonian Institution, as the federal heartland’s emergent cultural institution was a convenient and yet inconsistent caldron; convenient, as the government needed a venerated site in which to legitimize, solidify and hallmark its presence on the landscape, yet it is inconsistent, as the hearts and minds of colonial subjects turned new citizens reflect shifting demographics demanding new approaches from the Institution with each successive generation. When the nineteenth-century U.S. Government carved a diamond-shaped wedge in the cultural landscape forming the limbo location of D.C. – giving its heartland to the Smithsonian – it began defining its new role as an institution of authority, representation and meaning. It was a boundary landscape reflecting in its edges the contrasts between slavery and freedom, and between the leisure of naming and the living hell of being named. As Eleanor Holmes Norton, states, “Slavery and then segregation were cemented by the domineering power and will of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Executive, all suffused with the ideology of racism” (AM & CAAHC viii).

A clearer set of associations between the early Smithsonian and the U.S. government can hardly be traced. Yet a backward glance at the roots of their dual facilitation and utilization of a Victorian materialist museum culture of dominion is certainly germane. The collaboration
between the Smithsonian as cultural gristmill and its government proprietors comprised its identity from the collected spoils of western territorial expansion as it spun outward from the center of the District of Columbia seat of government. As seen in the earliest Smithsonian Institution Annual Reports and on the foundation stone for the institution, the United States Government is referred to as the Corporation. Didn’t the new government corporation assume the role of an aggregate body of persons whose activities see to the active inventory, monetization, ownership and regulation of the continent’s natural resources and labor – as would a vastly wealthy financial enterprise? Wasn’t the Smithsonian Institution used as both a warehouse and gristmill for the fodder of this enterprise?

It is hard for me to visualize the historical flows of wealth and knowledge from this institution without also associating cultural commodification activities with the acquisition of territory; thereby providing the justification, means and securities for attaining more wealth. Respectively, cultural and governmental institutions were the mechanisms of hoarding and domination operating under the same imperialistic auspice of divine right as did the former colonizers imparted the will of Europe’s crowned rulers. As the Crystal Palace of the South Kensington museum set London as a pinnacle of industrial and cultural production, so did the completion of Smithsonian Castle in the mid-1850s help to mark the District as a hegemonic conglomeration of scientific authority, governmental rule and military power toward the establishment of nation-state.

It is frustrating to contemplate that the ideals of liberty coexisted with some of the worst atrocities perpetrated to human beings and the earth, yet the paradox dissolves by understanding the dualistic mechanisms and boundary setting inherent in the assignation of western values. This chapter attempted to historicize the growth of government of the United States through its institutional inheritance from a legacy-seeking English nobleman and through its resulting cultural currencies. As presented in the online Smithsonian exhibit “Legendary Coins &
Currency,” the exercise of understanding history can be done by taking a look at politics, socioeconomics, and militarism (Smithsonian Institution 6). Positivist science was one face of the artifice of spatial and ideological dominance. Thereby, in essence the government commissioned, mapped and collected the fodder as treasure speculators and called it scientific research and museology. The growth of currency – symbols of exchange value with varying intrinsic value or “standards” – came to replace and devaluate non-currency values such as cooperation, barter and intrinsic worth in human and ecological systems. Similarly, science was both sign and signifier, and Smithson and his contemporaries valued science as the means to progress and growth. But the outputs of science and museology are not objective, unbiased or universally progressive. The Smithsonian Institution under Joseph Henry gingerly sidestepped the moral question by attempting to avoid the political implications of standing on either end. However, the outputs were never benign because they recast living human beings into value categories along with the inanimate things they made.

As Ewing demonstrates, disenfranchisement has a palpable emotional geography that can be mapped culturally and historically. This work centers Smithson’s life and that of his Institutional progeny as the canvases upon which the maps are drawn. One of the most significant means of establishing dominion to attain authority is the act of (re)naming – which mapping for expansionist designs has demonstrated. Naming – or, conversely, denying others’ claim to name by caulking the channels of self-determination – is a tool for maintaining ownership of land, labor or ideology in certain hands. The ability to name pits the empowered and disempowered in an interpretative and epistemological conflict. Accordingly, culturally specific or identity museums have become the dominant forum for the embattled negotiation of cultural legitimacy and historical narratives; they are the cultural institutions that mark the map with ideological monuments of visibility over former states of invisibility.
In the symposium (Re)Presenting America, Clement Price, Rutgers University Distinguished Service Professor, drew a brilliant spatial analogy for culturally specific museums by referencing a partial quote by author, Audrey Lorde: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Price went on to explain that even prior to the evolution of these museums this paradox was hidden by the appearance of neutrality (Smithsonian Institution 9). As a function of its inner dynamics and outer expressions, the Smithsonian has fully engaged in both the creation and retooling of identity-based systems of knowledge. Thereby, the institution operates as both the “tool that built the master’s house” and as a site housing tools for self-mastery.

In some ways the Smithsonian Institution was a socio-political metastasis, the outgrowth of war-industrial economic complexes which deprived the indigenous of their sovereignty while simultaneously nurturing their post-colonial oppressors. The museum culture industry in the U.S. evolved to feed the public and community of scientists with the material and immaterial fodders of leisure, legitimacy and privilege, provide the ethnological and survey-mapping tools to conquer land and subjugate the indigenous through deterministic cultural development theories and to mask a consciousness of fundamental inequality beneath the veneer of cultural edification. Yet, paradoxically, culturally specific sites are attempting to use these tools toward a powerful resistance; engaging approaches that dispense a healing salve to counter conventional museum culture invectives. Perhaps, the fuller picture arises from Lorde’s quote set in a fuller context – a radical feminist critique of a “racialized” patriarchy:

…those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change (Lorde 110).
Perhaps the Smithsonian can simply be held as a site of struggle and reinvention; a convenient place-space from whence to begin collecting and constructing cross-representational tools. In an indigenous framework, everyone has voice – if they are willing to share the tools and the power. Could Smithsonian’s culturally specific museums represent an opportunity where James Smithson’s heritage is exhibited in the same contextual spaces as “sheroes” and “heroes” of non-European’s lineages? It is possible; because it is a place to start. Perhaps the question of how and where to incite a radical perceptual shift toward a genuine paradigmatic change lies as much in the use of the occupied space as it does with the use of the master’s tools.

There are, for example, opportunities to radically shift the use of museum culture as a space for promoting the aforementioned intercultural dialectic dipole between the present cultural shift and conventional museums’ use of heritage as tools for hegemonic ritual and political propaganda. This prescribes the present challenge at the Smithsonian for the constructions known as culturally specific museums – for they are charged with using the master’s tools to empower and liberate rather than to oppress by reifying myths, objectification and hierarchical privilege. As I will discuss later, there is a difficult negotiation here. Cultural brokerage, even as influenced or mediated by the descendants of oppressed and indigenous peoples, is a process still fraught with pitfalls and power-plays.
Chapter 4

Hegemonic Landscapes & Heritage Interventions

In this chapter, I discuss polarizing issues that are relevant for myself as an indigenous researcher and as a person in a body labeled “black,” “female” and sometimes “exotic.” Having lived for five years in Washington, D.C., I speak as a participant-observer from within the museum cultural hinterland, having frequented Smithsonian museums, and from within its conceptual borders after working as an intern at the first culturally specific museum, the Anacostia Community Museum. Yet I maintain that even as I speak to these labels, I speak beyond them because these arbitrary categories cannot contain my experiences any more than a watershed can impermeably contain flowing water inside its erosion-prone boundaries – and no more than the label “white” contains the identity or experiences of anyone labeled as such.

I maintain my voice as a participant-observer and indigenous person who is ever cognizant and critical of conditions of power, empowerment, marginalization, situated knowledge, and multiple levels of authority and otherness potentiated by the housing of artifacts within any building designed as the landscape artifact of hegemonic nation-building. I have shifted occasionally to first person throughout – noting that, as in previous chapters, I speak from a position of “non-white” indigeneity – as both an audience to exhibits and as a potential identity-subject/object within a culturally specific museum.

My feelings of otherness within otherness is a critical marker of locating an important contemporary groundswell of class-based geopolitical discontent with the forces of spatial and economic inequity – where nationality, ethnicity, and “race” labels are not adequate containers for the upsurge in ideological solidarity in the face of widespread disparity, poverty and
segregation across those categories. Indeed, these never were adequate containers – but a set of socially expedient devices used for division and control; they served to distract the masses from the understanding that solidarity lies in the commonality of the human experience of both suffering and celebration. Prior to becoming global, for example, the “Occupy Wall Street” protest movement was characterized as a fleeting “white” youth-driven phenomena modeled after the Civil Rights Movement but without a singular unifying cause beyond the broad rejoinder, “We are the ninety-nine percent.” College courses were discussing the phenomena, as it was difficult to ignore even as it struggled for true representation in conventional media circles (DiBlasio 2012).

This global movement of 2011-12 created a new polemic against general wealth inequality stemming from unconscionable banking and corrupted corporate-government financial practices – alongside a pre-existing narrative of identity-based suffering from disinheritance and marginalization. The resulting narrative transcends the concept of a identity-linked “culture of poverty” associated with “non-whites” and city ghettos, toward broader discursive inclusion reflecting class struggle and contested public/private landscapes. Public spaces such as parks and culturally specific museums are the stages to form, perform and experience new narratives of unsung history and representation.

In the twenty-first century, Smithsonian Institution museums, most of which are centrally located on the National Mall, have become intercultural contact zones where commonality of experience – of the human condition or rather the privileges of relative citizenry – are readily available to the seeker and teacher. The deeper inferences remaining to be drawn beg the reader to juxtapose the contemporary uses of the National Mall’s heritage-meaning alongside the subtexts of the historical landscape.
Ritual Landscapes: The Smithsonian Occupies The National Mall

I have already drawn parallels between the preeminent location, the mid-nineteenth-century timeline of the construction of the Smithsonian Institution during the first half-century of museum culture, and nation-building. Hinsley and Darnell-Smith associated the anthropological search for human origins, where the non-Anglo Saxon were diminutive cultures in development-stage and evolutionary models, with the near worship of object-study and identity-mapping functions of anthropology - while “progress of civilization” narratives obfuscated and downplayed the horrors of war and hegemony. But there is also a parallel in the reading of the national museum landscape. In a very tangible sense, national museums facilitate and hold space for hegemonic power by delineating, sorting, categorizing and displaying material cultural products (arts and industries) and people (live human exhibits, photographs, narratives etc.). There are real consequences engaged within these activities which amount to the promotion of dominant worldviews and the dispossession of the subaltern worldview from its own cultures, heritage artifacts and land. They serve to venerate and situate a nation’s status in the nexus of “First World” civilizations under the auspices of education, leisure, and patriotism – i.e., they are not neutral spaces (Duncan 89-90).

In Cultural History and Material Culture, Thomas Schlereth’s homage to formative geographic theory from the likes of Pierce Lewis prompted me to begin reading the National Mall in D.C. as a landscape artifact (Schlereth 318-322). The Smithsonian thereby acts as supra-artifactual evidence of government dominion over the New World through government-science and museology. The Victorian object-study focus contextualized the predominant moralistic scientific epistemology of that time and facilitated a dehumanizing distance between human cultures deemed cultural observers and the cultural “others” – thus setting in motion devastating chain of atrocities in the practice anthropological methods for object/human subject collection
and display. Leisure tourism and the illusion of “free” cultural entertainment – paid for by the interest on the Smithson public trust and tax dollars – are conditioned by notions of citizen privilege. Together, the scientific founts of knowledge and a new culture of liberty, wealth, patronage, and patriotism were physically expressed in a series of monolithic museum structures on a vaulted structural landscape.

Museums are celebratory, political and ritual spaces, which attract the population en masse: “Museums do not simply resemble temples architecturally; they work like temples…In all ritual sites, some kind of performance takes place…Ritual is often regarded as transformative: it confers identity or purifies or restores order to the world through sacrifice, ordeal, or enlightenment” (Duncan 91-92). If it is also possible to claim that in 2008 museums drew six times more people annually than sports events nationwide (avg. 8.5 million to 1.4 million, respectively) and that they are critical sites in our education infrastructure and cultural memory (Mondello), then their interconnections with our mundane and spiritual lives are certainly worth looking at closely. Placing buildings that feature cultural heritage centrally in national public spaces is a ritual act of commemoration and legitimacy (engendering a sense of place or belonging to a culture); thus, it is a site for deep critical engagement and conflict.

As our material landscapes are historical and cultural artifacts, the Smithsonian Institution is a physical and social site rich in information that enables us to trace the mutable knit patterns of a highly constructed social fabric. The Smithsonian Institution – as a site for displays and researches on artistic, cultural, and natural histories as well as a site for contemporary engagement and ritual – combines all of these potentially volatile components and presents it as national and multicultural heritage. This institution sits on a nationalized landscape writ large in our consciousness as a center of power and authority, yet the buildings placed there are not questioned until the time comes for an underrepresented culture to claim space for writing its history on the landscape. Gauging whether the Smithsonian remains a key government instrument
as in the early years of nation-building or whether it now serves primarily as a site of affordable (free) public entertainment is one anticipated impact of thesis.

The Smithsonian’s suite of separate cultural or ethnic museums has been called both balkanization and fair representation, depending on one’s point of view (Bedard and Huey-Burns; Young). Considering the central location of the Smithsonian in the seat of federal governance and the regular performances of citizenship or conflict that take place thereupon, it is a space which engenders a range of feelings in the visitor including pride, discontent – or both. Philosophically, a “true patriot” might feel the impetus for demonstration even when not satisfied with conditions of citizenship – and could express both feelings simultaneously or in varying measure depending on how one finds oneself placed with respect to the cultural environments that fosters those feelings. In times of contention and celebration affecting a group-identity, the National Mall (as public space) provides both an ideal and intimidating setting for the development of a nationalistic and democratic sense of place. With regard to the representation of a wide range of group-identities in a museum, the National Mall (as national heritage artifact) also seems ideal – but does landscaping cultural artifacts of a balkanized identity lend a consensus representation effect, can it create a crucible for epochal shifts or is it ultimately a space of momentary venting and pacification?

Countless demonstrations and gatherings have been held on the National Mall over the years, but it was the August 28, 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that set the contemporary standard. The march has become the best-known march and demonstration in American history and almost every mass event on the Mall since that time has been inspired by it or measured against it. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, the climactic event held at the Lincoln Memorial during the march, was the defining moment of the Civil Rights movement (Penczer 41). The U.S. federal and state governments function as a corporation and pseudo-guardian – dispensing identity-conditional permissions and restrictions via the inalienable
rights of citizenship. The conditional rights and title of “citizen” has and remains restricted based on historical assignations of gender, “race,” and, recently, sexual orientation. Many aspiring U.S. citizens over time have engaged in battles for individual sovereignty, constitutional rights, voice, fair wages, representation and restitution.

Protests occurring under the “Occupy Wall Street” motto initiated in New York City on September 17, 2011 inspired a global mobilization in public squares – echoing the massive organized protests during 1960s Civil Rights movements that led to legislation for full citizen rights and equal employment for Black Americans. Each city participating in this global movement had different approaches on public land. I recall there was some criticism when “Occupy D.C.” approached the National Park Service, the agency who maintains the grounds, for a permit to protest on the National Mall in January 2012; yet they were perhaps cognizant of potential for violence to prevail over voice during a protest on a federal space – thus they posted the permit application on Facebook (Feldman). Then as now, the National Mall – its lawn lined by seats of government and government museology – is a symbolic and landmark site for both constructing one’s own perception of identity and for purposeful culture-defining activities through use of public space for demonstration.

What better are concerned citizens to do with their leisure or unemployed free-time but to visit symbolic buildings and open spaces and either celebrate, explore, and vacation in the best of times or to protest, redefine, and postulate new ideologies when things go dark? Regardless of this landscape’s status as a public trust via act of congress or its status as the preeminent house of cultural heritage, leisurely visits draw National Park Service guards while protests escalate guardianship to city law enforcement. Surveillance, resistance and oppression in occupy movements and other, more recent, protests on public land are visible conflicts denoting an underlying shift in “biopolitics” according to political geographer Matthew Hannah. Domestic security in these movements is not as much about protecting wellbeing or property as it is about
preventing the population from reclaiming ideological place within nationalized space – i.e. establishing a “biopolitics that cultivates the global population of capitals” (Hannah quoted in Efferink). The concepts of occupation and ownership are poignant issues in the historical and cultural legacy of the National Mall and deserve to be included in a discourse on landscape heritage.

The Piscataway are the original indigenous inhabitants of the land and surrounding territory demarcated as the District of Columbia. Early explorers documented Piscataway settlements in the area, yet, according to Penczer, no documents were found in archives noting their settlement on the exact area of the National Mall. Piscataway descendants did not receive official recognition of their existence as a First Nation until May 2012 from Maryland governor Martin O’Malley. Significantly, the recognition of their tribal status is still limited to state government, and the federal government has not seen fit to act in kind – thus they have no federal recognition or benefits such as reservation land (Dresser). The omission is glaring and displays a strategy of purposeful omission to prevent indigenous peoples from attaining and acting on a sovereign standing and First Nation status under statutory law for resource claims.

I surmise that records of original Piscataway settlements of the federal diamond and any treaties are matters of intense scrutiny for the tribe – a matter which would prove interesting avenue for future study given that at least one direct descendant, Gabrielle Tayac – historian and co-author of the book and exhibit that inspired this thesis, *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* – is currently employed at the Smithsonian’s second culturally specific museum, the National Museum of the American Indian. In her words, the direct painful experience of land dispossession looms large: “Four hundred years ago in the land that we now know as Virginia, a foreign force catastrophically and irrevocably changed the lives of thousands of people who had been living on American soil since time immemorial. The foreigners spoke English, and they established the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown in 1607”
The capacity for First Nations peoples attempting to make a case for re-possession is a bureaucratic maze - wherein recent state recognition is only one positive turn. Only two years ago, the Piscataway people were recognized by the state of Maryland:

Under state law, in order to secure the recognition, the Piscataway had to document that the tribe was native to Maryland before 1790 and that it has been in the state continuously since then. Savoy said the Piscataways had to complete an extensive genealogy of their members, as well as a tribal history. In addition to opening the door for federal aid programs, formal recognition will allow the state to deal directly with the Piscataways on the reburial of Native Americans' remains when they're found (Dresser).

There are natural human rights borne of a historical and spiritual relationship to the landscape that transcend the artifice of citizenship. It is deeply troubling that original inhabitants of any land must appeal to a government entity for recognition in order to reap benefits they should enjoy according to their inherent and ancestral sovereignty. Since Piscataway ancestral lands of record coincide with some federal land – it is no wonder official recognition has been a reluctant four-hundred year exercise.

The National Mall was loosely conceived as a broad two mile grassy swath lined by trees and mansions design by French engineer Peter Charles L’Enfant, as part of the initial 1791 design for the City of Washington commissioned by George Washington – who was given the choice to locate the new city in its present location forming a diamond on ten square miles hence designated as federal land (Penczer 8). By the time L’Enfant had completed plans, the entire area was “owned” and utilized by planters and tenant farmers. Contrary to myth, the city was not built on a swamp but mostly inhabited dry land and Tiber Creek, a broad, slow tidal creek once flowing on an area north of the Mall that was later backfilled (Penczer 10).

As government and cultural pursuits had subsumed the port of commerce as the primary activities of the region, the locale that would become the National Mall became a laughing stock for its dogged landscape, poor sanitation and lawlessness. Toward the 1850s, city planners projected instead that D.C. would be an emergent scientific and artistic hub of exchange (Hinsley
The final designs of landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing were not completed until after construction began on the Washington Monument and the Smithsonian Castle in the 1840s. These plans included dense vegetation, Victorian buildings and carriage paths (Penczer 7).

Figure 4.1. “A Map of the City of Washington: established as the permanent seat of the government of the United States of America; taken from actual Survey as laid out on the ground (1818).” By: R. King, Surveyor of the City of Washington. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA. Call No. G3850 1818.K5
Figure 4.2. (Inset detail of figure 4.1) Showing plans for the heartland of Washington, D.C. overlaying the 1818 survey rendering of the landscape. Of note, the only two buildings on the map are the primary seats of governance – and the Tiber river, which was later backfilled and landscaped to construct the foundation for the National Mall and U.S. Capitol.

A decade past the end of the Civil War, the Mall lay in relative disarray, fraught with scattered development, pestilence and pockets of criminal activity due to underinvestment by Congress – even leading to a political movement in 1870 to relocate the Capital. After President Grant authorized establishment of the territorial government in 1871, public works were undertaken to improve the citywide landscape of the seat of government. Congress began to fund these projects substantially; by 1875 the public began visiting the National Mall for the landscaping and the Smithsonian Institution to study cultural “curiosities” (Penczer 16-17, 19).

The National Mall site was not radically altered until after 1901 to a more open and uniform monumental geometrical design known as the “McMillan Plan” at the direction of Michigan Senator James McMillan and the American Institute of Architects who advised McMillan to develop the Senate Park Commission. The commission employed planners and

However, the inspiration for the layout remained European, as the commission members traveled to all the major cultural centers for inspiration and combined models to make Washington stand out amongst its political peers (Penczer 6, 21-23). The intent of the commission was to construct the landscape as a monument to government power – enshrinement meant establishment. The National Mall – with the Smithsonian Institution Castle and Washington Monument as its first major tourist attractions – became a symbolic archetype of institutional and ideological site dynamics for the new seat of government in the United States (Penczer 6-7; Annual Reports 1847, 7-8).

Governments build nation-states and global hegemonies by delineating land, categorizing cultures and bodies through census taking, mapping, allotment of resources, and oversight of social infrastructures such as education. The Smithsonian’s main suite of museums is still the dominant presence on the National Mall bracketed by the U.S. Capitol Building and the Washington Monument. Museums and monuments are powerful brand markers of national heritage. Yet with any icon, symbol, image or label, it is more interesting to trace the stories beneath the surface value. When the undercurrent of biopolitics and ancestral sovereignty is applied to the discourse, it is routine for those in the position of power to see their stories as normative – whereas the cultural “other” must fight for “official recognition” and must resist having their stories commoditized for consumption. Space on the National Mall is becoming prime territory for redefining place in the historical and cultural canon.
Chapter 5

Culturally Specific Museums, Spatial Identity & Itemographies

Its formative role in the field of American anthropology situates the Smithsonian Institution as a key to issues of public understanding of identity, belonging and representation. This is a compelling angle from which to approach the subject of unsettled heritage, with the basic underlying questions being: Who gets to have their own museums and why? Is it fair and necessary to house any culture separately? What is the rationale for placing an identity museum on the National Mall versus remote locations? What significance do these museums have to dispossessed or marginalized groups? Should normative group “whiteness” also be unpacked into its myriad ethnic origins, and should these identities be housed separately too? As boundaries of the decennial-census self-identification shift, will these sites lose or gain meaning? Can we draw specific conclusions about our national problem with “race” by seeking answers to these inquiries at national heritage sites? I believe that the Smithsonian Institution is now engaged in addressing some of these questions through a shift in their display languages.

On their website, the Smithsonian Institution’s mission has retained the reference to the founder’s will but removed the “among men” portion of the original statement. Alongside an etching of James Smithson (1765-1829), the following quote appears: "I then bequeath the whole of my property...to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the increase & diffusion of knowledge..." (Smithsonian Institution 12). Approaches to that mandate differ between museums in the complex. Over time the Smithsonian Institution has been forced to reconcile with changing sociopolitical climates that challenge how it has undertaken the chartered mission – slowly
expanding it beyond the original male-gendered European-American “among men” scope while being called to serve as a public trust for an ever-evolving, diverse populace – whose ranks of citizenship have only in the latter half of the nation’s history included women and non-Anglo Americans.

At the turn of the twentieth-century, during the early period of professionalization in the field of anthropology, some of the first public display-narratives of national heritage were written at the Smithsonian Castle and the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) - sometimes referred to as “the Big House” between employees. NMNH was constructed between 1904 and 1911 to house the overflow of natural history collections (Penczer 70). Until the late 1960s, NMNH and the National Museum of American History (NMAH - established in 1964) were less burdened with the political correctness of fair representation, contextual meaning, sensitive placement and descriptions of artifacts and power agendas involved in classifying objects and curating displays and companion narratives.

The post-Civil Rights era witnessed the rise of culturally specific museums, which would highlight these areas and create new areas of museum scholarship. By housing the symposium RACE - Are We So Different? at NMNH, Smithsonian may have been trying to revisit and create opportunities for engagement at the fundamental level of the very classification mindsets it helped create, now ingrained into the public in taxonomic science displays – and speak to the average tourist about the prejudices and fallacies of early sciences when applied to humans for socio-political reasons.

The first culturally specific museum, Anacostia Community Museum (ACM), was founded in 1967, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in 2004 and the National Museum of African Art in 1964, first housed in the former Frederick Douglas home until it was merged with the Smithsonian Institution in 1979 and moved to the National Mall under pressure from Congress (Penczer 69-71, 75). In the 1980s there was a concerted effort to rectify the lack of
representation for ethnic and cultural minority groups within Smithsonian Museums, and one of the earliest voices criticizing the poor treatment of African American history came from John Kinard – the acting director of Smithsonian’s Anacostia Community Museum (Kurin 94).

The Anacostia Community Museum is currently the main Smithsonian site for the display and collections of African American culture pending completion of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in 2015. Until then, the staff and gallery for NMAAHC resides on the east-wing of the second floor of the National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution 13). ACM is important due to its location near the sites of some of the earliest black settlements in D.C. as well as its role as the first museum of its kind in the Smithsonian Institution. NMAI is an important site due to its location on the National Mall and its representation of original and extant cultures of the American Indian, some of which have begun to explore the hybridity in their ancestries.

The social dynamics of the 1960s prompted a shift in the Smithsonian Institution’s approaches particularly through development of the concept of a “community museum” in the predominantly African-American neighborhood of Anacostia in the eastern section of the District of Columbia. Significantly, ACM was the first major museum within the Smithsonian complex located away from the National Mall for ease of access to the community it aimed to serve – it was such a new concept that it was referred to as a “new laboratory for exhibition training and production…a museum whose primary focus is directed toward the history and local concerns of the community” (Goodwin and Harkison 59).

Dillon S. Ripley, eighth secretary of the Smithsonian from 1964-1984, was so dedicated to the establishment of a local museum that he lobbied Congress for the funds. Ripley felt that it was extremely important to reach all communities including those underserved by the Smithsonian’s main suite of museums on the National Mall, and he worked directly with the representatives of
Anacostia to find out what would work. The secretary stated in the afterword to *The Smithsonian Experience* (1977):

"Coming to Washington in the mid-1960s, I felt that the Smithsonian, in addition to being looked to as the National Museum, had an obligation to lead in museum techniques... We should have a message for everyone [...] Now our neighborhood Anacostia Museum has an identity of its own, a training and exhibits center, identification with its own history (The Anacostia Historical Society started in 1974), and a keen sense of belonging to a larger extended town, the United States (Ripley quoted in Goodwin and Harkison, 243-244)."

This makes ACM a key site to revisit the dynamics of anthropological “race” constructs, structural poverty, national identity, segregation and representation. The push and pull of how to self-identify within the constraints of marginalization varies over time, space and certainly with respect to socio-political context.

Candelario’s review of these issues is set inside an examination of ACM and its 1994 exhibit *Black Mosaic: Community, Race, and Ethnicity Among Black Immigrants in Washington, D.C.* (Candelario). The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, with its purposeful location in a low-income community and its community engagement-based and politically-driven design foci, was purportedly one the first of its kind in the world. With rich cultural ties to the Civil-Rights and Black Power Movements, ACM was initially designed as a site for African-Americans to re-define their community (Candelario 57). However the relationship between the museum and the community has changed over time. Institutional and internal changes that have impacted the daily operations to the effect of removing many of the interactive elements present in the initial museum, as administrators sought to expand beyond the African American segment of the population to the wider community (Candelario 57).

The Anacostia finds itself in the complicated position of being a local museum with an institutionally national base. On the one hand, as a Smithsonian Institution museum, it must answer to a national constituency that runs the gamut from those who are relatively unaware of African American history to those who are actively hostile to representations of it. On the other hand, its founding mandate was to
serve the residentially proximate yet politically disenfranchised and economically distant Anacostia community (Candelario 58).

So even though its location was intentionally remote from the National Mall, ACM now suffers from relative obscurity even within the community of Anacostia. It was relocated in the 1980s from the town center to a parcel of land purchased from the National Park Service, up a steep hill with no other businesses around it and no unifying cause like the Civil Rights Movement (Young 2011).

Over time, ACM has sought to give forum to multiculturalism as a construct that explores these spatial and contextual issues of race categorization and identity given the ethnic/cultural diversity and continued segregation present in the community of Anacostia and the District of Columbia in general (Candelario 55-56). Candelario points out that many naturalized Dominican immigrants have subverted “race” by holding tightly to their language of origin in order to escape the harshest of treatment suffered by extant African American populations (67-68). This phenomena – ascribing to foreignness as an escape from the civic abuses toward “blackness” – is also noted by Adele Logan Alexander in the Introduction to *The Guide to Black Washington* by Sandra Fitzpatrick and Maria R. Goodwin (1993).

Before history became my vocation, my mother enthralled me with stories about her youth in Washington. She grew up in black Washington, not “official” Washington…They all attended the “colored” schools and patronized segregated restaurants, movie houses and amusement parks. Sometimes they would attempt to circumvent the degrading Jim Crow restrictions by claiming that they were “of foreign extraction” (Alexander quoted in Fitzpatrick and Goodwin 17).

Even as African American citizens created the landscape and participated on the life-stages of American history through their labor, slavery and military service, they have struggled to gain recognition as co-creators of American history apart from that which they create themselves through community networks (Alexander in Fitzpatrick and Goodwin 19).

Candelario further notes that the impact of geography is significant when comparing relative rates of race-coded self-identification – such that Dominicans in New York City are more
likely to identify along ethnic over “racial” lines whereas the opposite holds true for District of Columbia Dominicans. There they identify by “race” more often due to the relatively smaller number of Dominican immigrants and the geographic location of D.C. adjacent to the Southern States - significant given the associated “racialist” history of the South (Candelario 56). When it comes to representation of marginal identities, geography matters all the more.

Michèle Gates Moresi explored the history of ACM and the concept of representation in her 2003 dissertation *Exhibiting race, creating nation: Representations of Black history and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution, 1895-1976.* Moresi is now employed as a Curator of Collections for NMAAHC. ACM was an “experimental museum,” which was “to bring the Smithsonian to the people, not to be a museum of and for the people.” Their intended audiences, at the outset, were populations who never visited the National Mall because they did not feel represented there (Moresi 155-156). In fact, the subject matter of the exhibits attempted to address familiar problems experienced by those in the community including real documentation and artwork depicting disinvestment-driven urban decay such as rat infestations in urban dwellings – but also to inspire pride by exploring the rich historical narratives found in the everyday culture of Anacostia (Moresi 146, 149).

Moresi charges that in the wake of the Civil-Rights Movement, the site dynamics evolved ACM into a “museum of black history and culture,” which thereby came to be marginalized from the larger scope of the Smithsonian echoing the social marginalization of the people it came to represent – disinvested African Americans (147). Anacostia Community Museum became an early forerunner representing the newest type of museum in the historically mutable lifespan of museums in general – the culturally specific museum, also called an “identity museum” (Rothstein). The rationale for these museums is simply that the stories placed there would endeavor to evoke not only singular experiences of how one person might feel but what they represent as a larger group experience that transcends region and reaches something toward a
questionable universal cultural otherness. While it is seen by many as a major achievement, the same questions of how to approach fair representation appear to be playing out in the Smithsonian’s newest culturally specific museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), now under construction.

Henry Louis Gates, Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and the Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, has long published research that ponders the rich cultural and literary history and challenges of black heritage representation (Website 7). Following his 2009 arrest by a police officer in his home leading to the White House “Beer Summit,” he has commenced a public campaign to challenge notions of “racial” purity and underline the complexity of every American citizen’s heritage with interviews, books and a widely publicized public website and public television broadcast – all designed to reveal the potential of genealogy to inform and ignite a national debate on race constructs and heritage.

Dr. Gates subsequently launched Finding Your Roots, a 2012 television series questioning race constructs through genealogy. Through DNA testing, Gates found that his own ancestral lineage was overwhelmingly European – though he appears physiologically “black” according to one-drop rule census standards. Of particular interest to Gates are those persons whose lineages which reach back to the time of nation-building, where issues of indigenous displacement and chattel slavery created the conditions of inherited poverty and upon whom the ever-changing categorical census enforced a physiological feature and color-ranking system eventually formally but inconsistently tracked in the U.S. census. Along with enumeration, part of the initial reason for collecting such anthropological data was to track property (the exclusive dominion of European American males); however it came to other uses as the constrains of class struggle demanded a tool to limit access to citizenship for some, while granting privilege to the new construct category of “whites.” This new “racialized” class also grew in population numbers
by including ethnicities such as Irish, Italian and Polish – who were initially balkanized until their nativisms (language, clothing and other cultural identifiers) were conditioned by normative standards and privileges of whiteness.

Following his traumatic experience with “racial” profiling and arrest, Gates donated the pair of handcuffs used to arrest him to the Smithsonian’s NMAAHC museum collection. The handcuffs were initially an object of concern for National Museum of African American History and Culture Director, Lonnie Bunch, who thought they might be too politically charged. Bunch later accepted them. Bunch wants NMAAHC to be perceived by the public as a site to learn “American history” through the experiences of African Americans, so items such as the cuffs are likely difficult to curate without a polarization effect (Taylor).

If I were a curator, I would also find such an object difficult – but important – to place. Based on experiences of how objects like this are typically exhibited, I imagine the handcuffs might be placed alongside a narrative or video of Dr. Gates’ experience within a larger exhibit on civil rights (historically and contemporarily). However, the same cuffs/narrative might also be placed next to shackles of slaver ships and a reproduction of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) slave narrative collections. This would – to a more startling and politically-charged effect – prompt recall or association with a long history of disenfranchisement and abuse suffered by “persons of color,” slaves and descendants of slaves. It might also invoke deeply divisive and defeatist notions that the concept of “blackness” is an inherited condition of suffering and disempowerment and reify false notions of genetic inferiority for the uneducated. The stakes are quite high when dealing with any item that evokes deeply held emotional scars.

The culturally specific museum presents the opportunity to present quite a different trajectory (of heritage use) from an American history sanitized of suffering and disenfranchisement – they are museum cultural interventions. Are these types of exhibits, promoting the concepts of a general Americanism, or survival, or the pioneer spirit - to the same
extent or to the same audience? They do not and they perhaps should not. Different coded languages evoking different qualities of experience are used to different effects – there is no general “American Experience” because to different degrees our heritage must speak to different experiences of personhood and citizenship. As such, museum exhibits can only speak to one segment of any given audience. Skin color does not equate to an exact predictor of experience for the viewer either, since recent immigrants or persons who are not inheritors of early American heritages will perceive the displays differently. The object display is and only ever can be a culmination of the historians, curators, collectors, and interpretations of or from artifact contributing persons/cultures involved. Heritage artifacts and curated displays are filters: represented as different items with different geographies because they speak to different heritages – and even these are only traces of the fragmentary moments of identity-contingent perceptions of the past.

As the Smithsonian is an important institution for challenging identity categories defined through sciences and arts, we can approach the Gates donation of handcuffs as a reading of the qualitative-science behind objects and as an interpretive artistic narrative. Thus I coin the term “itemography” – which invokes a decentering timelessness that goes beyond tracing the object-provenance of “artifacts” and implies a direct association between artifact histories, the politicization of space within the charged context of the national museum, and contemporary uses of heritage. The itemography can also arise from peer argument or agreement (publications, affiliations and science societies) and/or public conflicts over artifact heritage. Thus an itemography of any material trace of cultural history becomes immaterially reflective a series of politically charged ideologies extending to those mechanisms that denoted social order and place.

Items have the connotation of something that is named, listed and separated from a body in space. Of themselves they are benign but in proximity to narratives or other named items, they can arouse very immediate pride or envy, praise or resentment, veneration or scandal, gossip or
protest, or any other set of dialectics and polemics associated with sense of otherness and/or privilege. The item is a placeholder for something we place value upon as a status symbol, benign curiosity or that which we disregard or despise. Items might arise within any category, context or culture and are therefore both irreplaceable and replaceable.

Imagine a display of handcuffs from a group of people jailed during the civil-rights movement and apartheid movement – or even better, the cuffs alongside a picture of their cuffed hands with no names or faces attached only to be revealed at the end of the exhibit as attached to someone of public regard or scrutiny. The item of handcuffs has just developed a community identity apart from any celebrity or personality – but as a group it is now rooted in a powerful ideological space evoking emotional place-holding without a singular space. Gates seemingly felt that his gift was symbolic of all the handcuffs ever placed on a man identified as “black” and wrongfully profiled and jailed just for walking in his own neighborhood in “Anytown,” U.S.A.

In place of sanitized histories, itemography can recover – by investigating an oral history, memory, manuscript, map or text – any and all traces of a history that could have been preserved and marked on the landscape and makes a statement about what is left out of representation in museums and memorials. Buildings such as culturally specific museums may polemicize space, but they belong to the greater narrative that assumes power to define history through landscaped remembrance because they are meant to be place-holders for telling heritage stories erased by time and marginalization.

Sana Butler’s itemography of the site where the Civil War ended highlights a problem that haunts marginalized populations and outlines the greatest challenge to accurately reconstructing history within conventional museum culture. Historical amnesia cannot help but breed a collective sense of resentment when finding celebratory spaces is hard, and finding spaces of remembrance is even harder. According to her personal and cultural historiography, *Sugar of the Crop* (2009):
The Appomattox Court House National Historic Park is a replica of the way the village stood in 1865, with tour guides dressed as if they were extras from *Gone With the Wind*...I looked for the women’s restroom on the map. It was a few yards away, near a slave house I wanted to check out on the way. There was a line for the stalls that gave me just enough time to figure out how I could have missed the slave quarters in the short walk from the visitor center...Every building on the map was accounted for in the area – the county jail, three storehouses, a tavern a stable. I turned around to face the bathroom, slowly looking at the map to make sure. The slave quarters had been turned into public restrooms (Butler 62-63).

The effect of such an omission says much about an overall cultural resistance to the painful and shameful aspects of history. Large-scale decolonization is necessary to bring truthful representation to itemographies – in the form of revamping memorials on the landscape that have been cleansed of African American’s legacy experience and reexamining the broad landscapes of the Americas that render the First Nation peoples invisible aside from sports-team labels and place names. Decolonization cannot be complete where a complete absence, disrespect and palpable silence speak louder via the interpretive misrepresentation of an artifact of any scale or origin.

Power over alterity and temporality are embedded in the selection of which stories to tell, how to tell them, when to tell them and to whom you target a message of questionable representation or collective memory. All of these conditions are fluid representations of the landslide of political considerations and moral responsibilities of “cultural brokerage” that must take place in a National museum setting (Kurin 23-26). The same applies to all cultural museums – whether culturally specific or not. Consequences arising from an honest engagement with alterity and temporality beg one to question if audiences are ready to hear hardest truths within the great diversity of stories of the American past. The Smithsonian exhibited the story of the *Enola Gay* in 1995 to a deeply mixed reception and controversy leading to the resignation of the director of the National Air and Space Museum (Kurin 71-72). Power and representation considerations help us ponder how far we have actually come toward equality or fair-share in
staging perspectives – but when the itemography awakens trauma, there is a price to pay for the telling.

Culturally specific museums can create zones where it is safe to wrestle with conflicted emotional responses about how one’s heritage is portrayed as well as celebrate histories long hidden or forgotten. Audiences, whether on the giving or receiving end of historical trauma, will react strongly to exhibits displaying their heritage. As important as it is to tell stories with respect to multiple perspectives, it is equally important to take responsibility for errors of the past, honor the processes of grieving and provide the spaces for healing. It is important to start the discussion and healing somewhere, even if it is impossible to tell every story to the satisfaction of every point of view. In the conclusion, I mark the Smithsonian culturally specific museum as an experiment of landscaped resistance and remembrance on the National Mall, but I also note the ironic aspects of the placement of said institution at the seat of power for the United States – usurper of indigenous land and sovereignty.

Museum Culture’s Ontological Shift: Representational Sovereignty

For me, the National Museum of the American Indian represents a broken promise, no less consequential than the many broken treaty promises made by the United States to Native people. It represents a betrayal of our trust that this museum would be the Natives’ museum. In place of the stories of the Native past, it focuses on arts, culture, and commerce—the stuff of commodification. To paraphrase the historian Paul Kramer, cultural recognition and power do not connect. Sitting there in close proximity to the Capitol, one might think that the Indians were finally within reach of social justice, political power, and economic change. Not yet...cultural recognition is a distraction for Native people, a painless amusement for non-Natives, and a way for U.S. government politicians and bureaucrats to avoid the hard questions raised by the history of U.S. internal colonialism (Rand 2007).

It remains to be seen if participation by marginalized people in activities within museum culture will ultimately shift power toward a dialectic fulcrum of equality in systems of knowledge and representation. There is a reason why some indigenous persons refuse to visit the National
Museum of the American Indian, for example. Jackie Thompson Rand, associate professor of history at the University of Iowa history department, was one of the first indigenous (Choctaw) persons to be hired to work toward an inclusive engagement of indigenous perspectives at NMAI. In Rand’s editorial piece quoted above, “Why I Can’t Visit the National Museum of the American Indian: Reflections of an Accidental Privileged Insider, 1989-1994,” there is a first-hand perspective concluding that there is a lack of truly empowering engagement, gender inclusion and the truthful representation of the profound impact of American Indian resistance and contemporary struggles.

Rand surmised, by looking at the process of building the executive committee, that there was a stark underrepresentation of native voice in the preliminary construction plans. Rand also asserts that there was underrepresentation when gathering information provided by native-community informants, notes the fact that it was non-native persons primarily constructing budgets and exhibits, and ultimately concluded that there was not enough consensus and consideration of gender or tribal diversity when defining “Indianness.” Therefore, Rand noted a relative slant toward survivalist group-think or a sanitized history in NMAI’s evolution, which does disservice to the general populace but more importantly missed the profound needs of the target audience with its early focus on commodity-driven exhibits.

Art and material culture were the preferred media for transferring knowledge about Native America to an unknowing audience. Why art and culture? For many artists, Native creative expression is a presumed window on Native inner life and culture. The exhibit teams have thus relied on art and material culture, the ultimate expressions of Native inner life, as a vehicle for teaching unfamiliar visitors about Indianness…(Rand 2007).

In constructing an exemplar of representational sovereignty within museum culture, I am focusing mostly on the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) for several reasons. First, because it is at this museum that I received the inspiration for this thesis. Second because the Smithsonian Institution, as a hegemonic entity for U.S. expansion of territory, focused almost
exclusively on mapping American Indian lands and artifacts in constructing anthropologies.

Third, the many cultures of American Indians have at once been victimized and resistant to the forces of colonization; while some tribes participated in the colonial paradigm by choice or necessity, there has been a long-recognized openness toward kinship inclusion by many tribes which helps facilitates a fundamental questioning of anthropological boundaries. Fourth, the issues of indigenous sovereignty (or its western derivative, native pragmatism) are perhaps best highlighted by those segments of the population who are most marginalized (invisible) and yet closest to enacting and/or obtaining sovereign nation status. I believe that these arguments can be used as a baseline for the reclamation of human sovereignty overall – regardless of “race” or lineage – thus allowing indigeneity and kinship to supersede adopted citizenship status.

Are cultural objects, once divested of their contextual meaning, still able to tell valid stories about indigenous sovereignty – the state of belonging to oneself, one’s community and environment as a natural human being – or do they become “dispirited” objects for the consuming western gaze in an institution or gallery? If Smithsonian-held artifacts are considered government property, even when their return is requested, how are we to read these objects? To what extent have contemporary curatorial processes changed with regard to the degree of respect paid toward indigenous cultures? How do approaches to museum cultural displays and approaches differ when driven by those who have experienced the worst effects imperial directives and its mechanisms of colonial oppression?

In 2013, over 170 Hopi ritual masks were sold at a French gallery auction generating a total of $1.2 million, despite intense public outcry and diplomatic appeals from the U.S. government not to do so. The value is assigned via the emotional meaning they hold for the cultures, and is directly used to increase the asking price. Auctioneers even used an image of a deceased tribal leader holding the mask. Regarding significance of these objects to members of the community, “The Associated Press reported that after the most valuable piece was sold – a
“Mother Crow” mask dating from about 1880 that fetched $209,000 – a woman protester shouted, “this is not merchandise, these are sacred beings!” and was led from the room in tears” (Boehm). In Boehm’s article, former NMAI director W. Richard West, a member of the Cheyenne tribe, called this incident “Unfortunate” and stated that it is crucial to consult with the native community because it is their culture being represented and some objects are considered sacred and not for public view. West stated that galleries and museums in the U.S. are more sensitive to this process (ibid).

Boehm stated that since a UNESCO convention “adopted in November 1970 to discourage looting; auction houses and museums have become reluctant to sell or acquire artifacts when there’s evidence that they left their homelands or native grounds after that date” but added that, “The Hopi masks sold in Paris dated from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and were believed to have been taken from a northern Arizona reservation in the 1930s and 1940s” (Boehm). Thus, there are extensive time periods when collections practices and artifacts are not overseen and protected by international conventions and an increased social awareness of the sensitive nature of such practices – neither are there set international laws for punishing those violating the convention.

The display of emotion surrounding this type of sale demonstrates that there is deep significance to the process by which material objects obtain and diminish in their immaterial or spiritual meaning versus their commodification and cooptation as fine-art objects. The Annenberg Foundation secretly purchased a large lot of Hopi artifacts for over $1 million at another French auction in 2013 and repatriated them to the Hopi in Arizona. During the auction, Hopi tribe members were watching with sadness – not knowing what was transpiring behind the scenes.

…but they became dispirited as item after item sold. Sam Tenakhongva, a cultural director for the Hopi, said when he turned off his lights at 2 a.m., he felt he was saying goodbye to the spirits embodied in the headdresses…[for him] the fact that the Katsinam had to be bought and paid for, even by benefactors, was a bittersweet nod to the reality that some American Indian artifacts have become highly sought,
expensive commodities. “No one should have to buy back their sacred property,” he said. “But now at least they will be at home with us and they will go to rest” (Mashberg).

Interestingly, the Hopi requested that a revision to the article be made by referring to the artifacts as “stolen” – despite a French court ruling that the auction house had good title to them (Mashberg). The sense running through both of these examples – among countless others – is that there is no consistent redress for the losses suffered, that the pattern of exploitation will be repeated indefinitely, that the value of objects is increased when there is an intense emotional geography surrounding the artifacts, and that indiscriminate business practices create an additional violation on top of the original loss.

The 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) regulates federal agencies and museums with regard to the sensitive nature of handling human remains and other cultural artifacts. Unfortunately the Act does not apply overseas. Even in the U.S., the ownership of human remains and sacred artifacts only applies to institutions and agencies that receive federal funding. The General Accounting Office reports that even after twenty years, most institutions in the U.S. has failed to comply with the repatriation provisions of the Act. Nor have federal agencies rigorously adhered to those standards requiring the establishment of direct cultural affiliations with the affected tribes. These are important standards wherein it is required to communicate with tribes and post public notices when the contents a historical collections contain regulated artifacts and human remains (GAO-10-768). Smithsonian Institution proudly announces its efforts to repatriate objects. On the surface, their statements may stand in contrast to still-common practices of material exploitation and cultural disrespect shown by some art galleries.

According to the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), NAGPRA legislation was the result of a small group of tourists visiting the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History – the visitors happened to be Cheyenne chiefs. The group was not only horrified to learn that
human remains were stored in museum drawers, but the nonchalant attitude of the tour guide who informed them of the collection caused them to lead the national movement which resulted in the passage of Public Law 101-601 known as NAGPRA.

As we were walking out, a Northern Cheyenne woman who worked on Capitol Hill later recalled, “we saw [the] huge ceilings in the room, with row upon row of drawers. Someone remarked that there must be a lot of Indian stuff in those drawers. Quite casually, a curator with us said, "Oh, this is where we keep the skeletal remains," and he told us how many -- 18,500. Everyone was shocked” (NARF Legal Review 1).

Smithsonian has also been previously cited as non-responsive when it comes to repatriation, even in cases of direct requests from established nations and tribes. As recently as the 1930s, an anthropologist from the Smithsonian was gathering human remains from a burial ground in Kodiak Island, AK.

Many remains and artifacts have even entered the commercial market – some artifacts having been sold in flea markets, private collectors and museums after burial plots were sold to “pot hunters” in the South.

In addition to this commercial exploitation, NARF knew that federal agencies, particularly the Smithsonian Institution, were refusing to cooperate with requests, based solely on humanitarian grounds from tribes who had demanded the return of the remains of their ancestors for reburial. In supporting the early repatriation effort, NARF ran headlong into academic and museum interests who believed that Indian human remains were not entitled to the same respect accorded non-India remains, but instead existed primarily for the advancement of science. (NARF Legal Review 2).

As a result of NAGPRA, Smithsonian Institution is finally taking repatriation seriously. They are now tasked with not only repatriation but a complete overhaul of the anthropological racism which continues to facilitate disrespect to the people and products of American Indians. The recent exhibits at the Smithsonian highlighting “race” are just the first step in rectifying this horrifying situation.

The Smithsonian Institution, as the earliest centralized storehouse of scientific knowledge transfer for the post-colonial United States, defined realms of meaning wherein the act of
assigning relative value to humans and landscapes directly fostered the hegemonic aims of the United States government. The Smithsonian Board of Regents, a regulating body comprised mainly of government agents, in turn signaled to the international community that the U.S. could provide the scientific authority and culture-mapping tools of a new nation. They were as well-equipped to exploit the rich heritage commodities of the “uncivilized” world as well as any imperial power of Europe. Our general concept of civilization has evolved to the point that many now consider it an atrocity to have human remains in a museum – while others still consider it an apropos practice of a civilized society engaging in the privileged authority of scientific inquiry to exhume and dissect the remains of someone’s ancestors and put them on display.

Civilization itself is a pejorative noun-turned-verb. When invoked as estimations of value, civilization’s categories and comparisons acted to simultaneously romanticize and reduce the intrinsic sovereignty of non-Europeans while monetizing the value of their cultural artifacts as heritage commodities. Marking the national museum as an actual and metaphorical gristmill of hegemonic power simultaneously contextualizes the effectiveness of cultural institutions in regulating space, and in establishing a sense of place known as a social order where morality and meaning are heavily relative constructions.

Both Silverman’s and McMullen’s essays in Sleeper-Smith’s edited work, Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives, assert that the museum’s role in hegemony raises many important considerations about the presentation of cultural objects as heritage. Referring to the “salvage ethnology” which characterized the field methods at the time, Silverman’s question as to how these objects can truly represent or tell stories about their source creators is an extremely important one. Relevant here are the questionable and unsystematic means by which and for whom the artist/collector George Gustav Heye’s field agents obtained artifacts. Heye’s collections agents are presented as less than rigorous in collecting contextual information to inform and preserve the “intangible tradition” along with the materials – this being
an important observation when considering that the Heye collection makes up the bulk of materials for NMAI in D.C. Traditions are as important as preservation considerations to the Native American communities from which artifacts were obtained – and hence Silverman draws attention to the often inadequate ethno-geographical tracing of artifact provenance and the atemporal assignation of meaning in contemporary exhibits (Silverman 11-12).

McMullen contends that there is a pervasive attitude of disdain toward Heye, echoed in NMAI’s press kits due to the fact that, “his image has been shaped by NMAI’s need to serve a different mission than Heye himself espoused. Because NMAI simultaneously holds part of the national collections and supports Native empowerment, explicating Heye’s collection involves both U.S. and Indigenous nationalism and generates interesting rhetoric” (McMullen 66). Yet McMullen sustains that there are nuances about Heye’s intense focus on American Indian antique ethnological collections that fail to reach his detractors, in that his actions should be construed by understanding his historical context – where objects represented the only easy texts between what she called “nonliterate peoples” and ethnologists. Thus, in McMullen’s estimation, our contemporary interpretations of Heye’s actions as obsession or fetishism, misses the mark - even suggesting that the collector, set betwixt the museum authority and the American Indian staff of NMAI as community advocates, can assume the position of “other” if not understood with historical context accuracy (ibid 68-69, 78).

Unfortunately, the lack of truthful historical engagement by museums and insensitivity to the deep hurt and trauma of colonization and its contemporary remnants by society at large leaves many unaware, or rather willfully deaf and blind, as to why collections agents and museums are perceived by indigenous persons as “crazy white men” – and with a nod to McMullen, leaves indigenous persons mystified as to why their belongings were taken by people they didn’t know and placed on display (McMullen 68). Pondering what else may have been lost of the true story behind the cultures, the collectors and the objects over time is interesting. The fact that the Heye
collection underwent another location and stewardship transfer to the D.C. collection site from
the Museum of the American Indian in New York City creates an additional illusory filter to the
collection’s ontological profile – another fundamental loss to contemporary moment – the answer
is unknowable.

The transfer of the Heye collection was not an easy process and involved leveraging of
extensive state and federal government committee and New York jurisdictions and
administrations. The published record of the Joint Committee hearing for the resolution granting
the Smithsonian’s establishment of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) holds
great significance to all of these considerations and is a public record with pertinence to the
discussion of heritage (commodification) and identity herein. The record examines the testimony
of presenters with varying stakes, interests and involvement in the establishment of NMAI.
Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye (deceased) served to officiate the proceeding and orchestrated the
legislation to transfer the objects as chairman of the Select Committee on Indian Affairs. (United

The lengthy account, near the end of negotiations, opens with ebullient statements of
congratulations between both parties including those from Senator Inouye, Robert McCormick
(then secretary of the Smithsonian Institution) and various officials, senate and committee
members. Senator Inouye, who had worked tirelessly to garner funding for the establishment of
the museum, offered the following well-meaning but still-injurious statement:

>This museum will be a living memorial dedicated to honor the magnificent
>contributions that Native Americans have made to our society. It will provide an
>opportunity for all Americans to learn not only of the historic grandeur and the rich
>cultural legacy that the ancestors of today’s generations of Indian people have
>brought to us…Perhaps most importantly, with our eyes toward future generations,
>this museum will foster a sense of self-esteem and pride in Indian children – to
>know that they come from a great and proud heritage… (United States Congress
>1989, 2).

This statement, contending that it is the jurisdiction of museum culture to reinstate pride in First
Nations peoples after having contributed to the conditions of degradation and poverty, is not uncommon. Hearkening back to the original establishment credo, this fundamentally pejorative sentiment was strongly echoed by Smithsonian Secretary, McCormick. Tempered with an admission that the effort would help correct historical injustice, he strongly emphasized the personal opinion that NMAI’s primary mission was to contribute to a general audience edification:

This is an agreement which has been reached through an understanding of the extraordinarily broad appeal of the Museum [sic] – as an instrument for change and improvement in American society, as a whole. This is, I would say, above all, a museum for all of the American people and, in fact, all people everywhere, I think this is a museum that will make available to the whole world a record of achievement that is uniquely associated with this continent, with its earliest peoples, with a continuing stream of contributions to the American cultural tradition, as a whole. I think, of course, we also are engaged in righting a wrong here, which is an element that has been touched on by others. But beyond that, we are concerned with instilling pride in Indian people and their children, as was mentioned (United States Congress 1989, 30-31).

A equally insensitive but very telling statement was offered early by Kentucky Senator, Wendell H. Ford, chairman of the Senate rules committee, expressing hope that the matter of restructuring of the New York Custom House museum and the transfer a bulk of its housed objects to a new building in Washington D.C. be smoothly resolved in order “…to have that ready for one of our most important observances in the history of the United States, the 500th year anniversary of the arrival of Columbus…” (ibid 25).

Redeeming the integrity of government officials present, Senator Jeff Bingaman, New Mexico, was keenly concerned that the provision of regional museum affiliates close in proximity to Indian communities would remain in the bill, as his work with community leaders had shown extensive interest in being able to have direct access to the artifacts and receive the benefit of training programs in curation [sic] and museum management and cooperative agreements with local Indian museums. Senator Patrick Moynihan, New York, agreeing with Bingaman, gave an important statement as to the true geographic scope and magnitude of the collections, stating
“Perhaps this is an appropriate point…to observe that this is a collection of Indian anthropological artifacts that extends from Point Barrow to Tierra del Fuego. It is not simply the 50 states of the United States, but it is the Northern Hemisphere, the Southern Hemisphere, the Isthmus – the whole rank of it…” (United States Congress 1989, 27-28).

The indigenous perspectives at the hearing marked an even sharper reversal in tone at the proceedings of record. Lloyd Kiva New, Cherokee artist and the Founder and Acting President of the Institute of American Indian and Alaskan Native Culture and Arts Development in Santa Fe, New Mexico spoke to both the excitement and confusion in indigenous communities as to how to read the museum’s construction. “Psychological confusion and damaging effects transpire when a member of the present generation of Indians experiences an expanding sense of nationalism, but finds the system to be indifferent to his impelling need to learn more about himself” (United States Congress 1989, 46). Noting the over-emphasis on marketing the collection by the representatives present at the committee (ibid 44), New spoke to the importance of negotiating the safe and integral transfer of irreplaceable objects and about securing availability to the various peoples represented in both geographic reach and museum programming;

I would urge the new museum to think through the matter of how to reach Indian People in other ways short of taking over other institutions throughout the Indian World…Most Indian museums feature the old, the “authentic,” for that is the nature of the museum discipline. Unfortunately this approach adds to the romantic illusion that the past holds more for the Indians than does the future, that Indians have somehow passed the peak of their cultural virility. Indians are easily caught up in this myth and move toward their future in a near state of apology, or certainly confusion. The new National Indian Museum is in a powerful position to break the bonds of this mythology…(ibid 45).

Perhaps most poignantly, New raised the bar of tremendous responsibility that NMAI carries – stating that to see the need but withhold information critical to the advancement of individuals and collectives would be an unforgivable act, and it would be both morally corrupt and neglectful to deny access to materials which could address these deep metaphysical concerns (United States Congress 1989, 46). On the other hand, New stated that “Handled properly with the real Indian
input, not token Indian input, and the use of the latest technology for the dissemination of information, a new curriculum on American Indians based on the items in the collections – which are totally unknown to most Indians – could enliven the entire American cultural scene in ways beyond our present comprehensive capabilities” (ibid 47).

The next indigenous speaker, Rick Hill, a New York artist, abandoned his prepared statement to scathingly address the overall problem of perceptual gaps in the proceedings as well as the underlying impetus, methods and philosophies at museums: “We have a problem between Indians and museums. It is an old wound that continues to fester…Part of the problem I see…is in terms of helping Indians regain some sense of pride or culture. We already have that. It is not the Smithsonian’s job to give us a sense of pride” (United States Congress 1989, 48). Hill spoke at length about the inadequate access to materials, inadequate representation and a denial of indigenous responsibility for cultural artifacts, experienced as a violation on top of the original unethical collections processes:

Usually what happens is that two weeks before the opening we get called to see whether we can deliver a dance troupe…We don’t have access to the cultural legacy of our people. It went so far as to the point that to even borrow one object from the Museum of the American Indian [New York] could run you up to $1200 in expenses just to borrow it and bring it out to the reservation…what got us to this point is not sharing; it usually was theft, and it usually was the denial of our responsibility and our right to those objects. That’s why they end up in these collections (ibid 49).

Hill also responded directly to Ford’s ebullient statement about the opening of the revamped New York facility to commence on the 500th anniversary of Columbus, stating:

If people think it is an honor to us to have the new museum in New York open on Columbus Day, they’re woefully wrong, because it recognizes an ethnocentric point of view. If you want a statement from us in 1992, we can do that. That would be significant. In 1992 this country finally hears the voice of Native peoples and talks about history and talks about culture. Then they have a testament to the living vitality of our people. But if it is a celebration of the conquest of Indians, of the discovery of America, then we’re going backwards…But this is the nature of the problem – perceptual problem – over who we are. (United States Congress 1989, 52).
Senator Inouye’s response was defensive and somewhat frosty even as he assured the artist that, “the director and curator of this museum will be of Indian blood. That is the highest position…Second, on the 500th anniversary, the people who are in charge looked upon this as an opportunity not to celebrate the discovery of Indians, but what Indians were already exhibiting and contributing to mankind at that time…” (my emphasis - United States Congress 1989, 52).

Inouye stated that Hill was invited to share his views because all of the points raised were important and yet the words spoken by Hill were clearly taken as an offense.

The fact that Senator Inouye used the words “Indian blood” and “exhibiting …at the time” is not insignificant and will be addressed in the final section. It is an assumption of paternalistic atemporal universality that underlies both the idea that having Indian ancestors is a “pass-key” for understanding “Indianness,” and the idea that the museum as an exhibitionary complex could replicate the cultural lifestyles and belief systems of “the Indian” of the past. It is a far stranger assumption that a display of cultural simulacra could be deemed an appropriate anniversary for the murder, diaspora and cultural obliteration of the many diverse First Nations.

What was the committee expecting of a contemporary response from inheritors of the cultural legacy of hegemony. They were likely expecting gratitude – which they did receive from the indigenous representatives in good measure – along with the rebuke.

I would argue that NMAI has made strides in the intervening years between the timeframes that the Joint Committee concluded hearings, the Congress passed legislation and subsequent when Rand wrote her article. In fact, there are striking examples of radical engagement with subaltern historical geographies that should not go unrecognized. Is the Smithsonian’s museum culture still predominantly creating a market for indigenous arts and culture or are the educational invectives driving the conversation in a more pertinent epistemology of empowerment? As to the collective impact on audience impressions, it would be difficult to say without extensive audience survey and analysis beyond the scope of this thesis.
However as a frequent visitor myself, I surmise that it is not an average everyday visitor who wishes to subvert the usual cultural programming inherent in the national museum as a heritage artifact of dominant culture. Therefore, if “walking, talking” subjects and objects are what you are looking for, you may miss some of the incredible educational opportunities available there. As a visitor, you may already have to hold an awareness of the problem of representational dipoles to read the subtexts in front of you.

**NMAI & Cultural Identity Representation: Resistance or Reification?**

“If you know I have a history, you will respect me,” a Black Indian student told a conference of New York teachers a decade ago. Her words still ring true. Those who assume that a people have no history worth mentioning are likely to believe that they have no humanity worth defending. An historical legacy strengthens a country and its people. Denying a people’s heritage questions their legitimacy.

William Loren Katz

*Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage, 1986 p. 9*

I turn to the examination of the indigenous, and more specifically African-European-Native American cultures, which are invisible in the lived experiences of those who of similar lineages to my own. Some of us can no longer tolerate the categorical denial of their existences and stories. Black American Heritage is an ever changing cultural construction as is any heritage – all are subject to varying shades of representation within actual material and immaterial experiences. Heritage, in all its vagaries, is partially a product of the enforcement, embracing and/or display of “race” categories over time and space – especially the spaces of national museum culture. It is important to discuss the historical and contemporary epistemologies in play with regard to our contemporary understanding of how “Indianness” and blood-quantum relate in direct and different ways to “Blackness” and the one-drop rule. In cases like my own, blackness,
whiteness and indianness are inseparable. To question is to confound these space-place constricting categories toward a general awareness of the political motivations and strategies garnering their reification – even when ostensibly done for the rectification of wrongs in the past such as culturally specific museums.

Given the context of the aforementioned mock interview with Joseph Henry during the (Re)Presenting America symposium on culturally specific museums, it is interesting that the use of the word “negro” by the actor portraying Henry was so personally jarring. Yet, it reverberates within a larger contextual realization that the word is still used in an official capacity as part of a census-form category, along with “Black,” “Mulatto,” and “African American” et cetera. The official explanation for this inclusion, though offensive to many, is purportedly an attempt to represent older African Americans who identify with this categorical identification (Memmott 2010; Website 6). Historically, hierarchical associations of non-white inferiority were promoted as scientific fact and widely promoted to the public as unquestionable truth, thus our present dilemma of how to represent ourselves sans “race” labels.

Emancipated Black Americans were far less interesting as subjects/objects of Smithsonian researchers and collections, but they were often studied by anthropological folklore societies. The presence of Africanism in remnant artifacts, such as folktales and religious practices, became barometers of the social behavior and gauged attitudes toward assimilation, progress and “civilization” (Baker 34-35). Baker suggests that although the fields of anthropology and sociology have similar anthropologic roots, “racialized” political agendas and differing motives for managing the problematized identities of American Indians versus Black Americans caused the field to split roughly along “culture” and “race” respectively (Baker 10).

It is also important to note that a strong history of “racial” oppression has corresponded with racist categorical associations (see Davis 1991), a fact that warrants questioning why “race,” though rejected by contemporary science, is still held as a key identifier by our system of
government in conducting the U.S. Census. It is true that the identifiers are now measured for a range of social equity premises: to fund equal opportunity programs in education, assess fairness in employment practices, identify underserved populations for social services, ensure compliance with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, administering bilingual programs, and so on. Prior to the Civil Rights movement, unfortunately, hierarchical associations of non-white inferiority that were falsely correlated with intelligence quotients and promoted as scientific fact of anthropological validity were widely promoted to the public as unquestionable truth. The good done with instruments such as the census cannot be uniformly raised above these faulty foundations.

Race mixing in geographic regions where slavery prevailed subverted clear classifications but slave codes stemming from the one-drop rule exploited superficial physical differences as barriers to movement and privilege. Anthropological underpinnings informed these laws – thus color-based gradation and physiological features of the nose, hair and lips became the basis for attaining place and security. Geographic associations of fear corresponded to slave-labor economies of the South and while hope for education and opportunity drove the escape-migration to “freer” lands in the North. Even so, states such as Maryland, Delaware and New York were erstwhile participants in slavery, thus “the South” was largely a mental construct arising after the Civil War (Jordan and Skemp xi- xiii).

For those with blended genealogies, psycho-social and geographic barriers limited one’s ability to move through space (on plantations or across state lines or the Mason-Dixon line) and freer movement was contingent on the skin/hair/facial features allowing one to “pass” as “white” or some other lesser reviled “non-white” category. The categorical underpinnings of national identity formation were domains of physical and cultural anthropology, while the tools of geography (and consequently government control of space and movement) underpinned one’s enumerated status as free or non-free. The biological origins of one’s identity were thereby corralled into statistical boxes by categorical definitions and subject to the assessment of a census.
Both fields became agents of “biopower” such that within the ranks of the pseudo-scientific physical anthropology discipline, self-reflexive exercises to challenge hierarchical assumptions have somewhat paled in the wake of established disciplinary blind-spots and the media alternating presentation that general populace believes that “race” is a boon under affirmative action – or – that it is the ultimate barrier upward mobility, equal opportunity and fair representation.

These categorical associations between various categorical assignments of identity and heritage and actual humans become problematic for a hybrid nation like the United States. They are a problem because the labels and categories of nation-statehood do not account for the ever-expanding diversity and hybridity of lineages and cross-cultural blending through adoption, cohabitation and procreation. Though they may provide a useful tool for arranging populations in reports and museum displays, these are the elements of ordinary resistance that will always challenge the nature of boundaries and invoke control measures such as immigration law and additional iterations (more boxes to check) for “racial” categorization.

When we hold cultural institutions such as museums and schools responsible to multiple histories and highlight the violence resulting from historical fiction, the research and display paradigm and its corresponding institutions of “objectivity” are held to higher standards of scrutiny. In the Enlightenment period when scientific dominance was creating itself and its domains of power, no evidence of the actual existence or the truth or validity of objectivism was requested of the institutionalized rationalistic authority; science had replaced the god-force in its theoretical self-containment and pontification (Gramsci 1979). The oppressed have now asked scientists to prove the validity of their claims to objectivity. Indigenous perspectives demand broadly on whose grounds are researches performed; on whose standards are cultural ascriptions based; who is benefitting from the knowledge acquired; who will receive the results and compensation for our intellectual properties and artifacts; how will they be displayed; who are
we; and who are they? These dialogues and internal engagements could be mutually beneficial means of intercultural communication if both the power and the tools are defensible ideologically and utilized sensitively per the indigenous research strategies discussed by Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

There is no certainty that all the artifacts in museums had use values to indigenous peoples in times past or now – in fact, at the time of collection, some utilitarian objects may have already been discarded or replaced by other objects such that they were already useless to those communities. Paradoxically, though a lack of rigor and contextual knowledge on the part of collectors may have skewed understanding about the value or function of artifacts - resulting in misrepresentation on the other end of the spectrum (more value attributed to the artifact than the community held).

All the same, the dedication to accurate preservation of objects with contextual and consensual context provides an avenue for sharing (as Mr. Hill indicated) and responsible repatriation and use of archaic knowledge and cultural treasures. If the artifacts are deemed to be of contemporary artistic and/or utilitarian value by the community, they can become reclaimed heritage if given back to the community of origin; they can become a way to tell stories, fill gaps in knowledge and foster new ways of seeing the world. Yet if artifacts are tightly controlled property, as indicated by Mr. Hill at the Joint Hearing, the monetary or cultural value assigned to these objects as art, craft or representation allows the museum to collect interest on stolen property and continue to benefit from and perpetuate the imperial/colonial paradigm.

Whilst situated within the prevailing social paradigm fraught with inequality based on physical differences, identity-based display and culturally specific museums still operate within traditionally rigid identity schemes that subvert self-representation. Now that the historical and cultural origins are pinned to the Smithsonian Institution, will these museums be useful stages in which to develop a new heritage of final settlement on the national landscape? Yes – and no. This
paradigm remains in place as long as we attempt to know each other predominantly through the ephemeral observations and categorizations of physiognomy. For example, those whose identities lie between categories of recognized ethnic and cultural groups find themselves being even more marginalized than those who identify “more or less” with a box on a census form or with the name a building on a landscape. These stories, my stories, reflect otherness within otherness. For the truly disenfranchised, issues of identity in a display or census category are not only tied to alterity, temporality, or power but are fundamentally semiological questions of what is represented, who is represented, what tests of authenticity are used, and who performs the tests.

One of the most troubling aspects of my citizenship experience is the feeling of being and belonging to all and none of the assigned identities. The experience is the embodied essence of pride and prejudice; the liminal citizen sees through the layered lens of a double consciousness where one is ritually schooled in the mythical origin and nature of the problem – the “color line” elucidated by W.E. B. Du Bois (1903, v) – and being proud and resistant all the while knowing that some may view your very existence as the problem.

Multiculturally or “multiracially” identified persons with African ancestry, are left wondering how to be and how to belong to ourselves or to a community that for the most part is invisible because the census, one-drop rule, social-passing and blood-quantum are conventions that simplify our complexity for sake of power and convenience. The same argument extends to the museum culture audience; are the “questions we ask” and “how we see” still bound by the dis-empowering aspects of our language around “race,” class and gender etc.? It would be nice to assume that quality identity-themed displays – those with deep community engagement prior to exhibition – would cause us to ask different or at least critically informed questions. In addition to the previous discussion of bias in visual representation, it is instructive to challenge the very nature of categorical boundaries along with the resulting effect on sense of belonging, privacy
and the threat to political rights of those families and individuals depicted in identity displays communities they represent.

As I posit these questions, I acknowledge that asking sets my own internal identity mapping in motion. I peer uneasily from within the limited cadre of my nation-state identity and breathe expansively within an indigenous perspective of one member of the narrowly categorized but broadly diverse communities to which I am most closely associated. I preface this closer analysis on culturally specific museums within the context of hybridity in ancestry. As people have always homogenized through breeding, categories such as “race” are what give a sense of coherence while at the same time fostering the well-explored yet prevailing disgust with “race” politics. I approach the question of hybridity by exploring two exhibits which I have read as culturally subversive displays: *Quantum Leap: Does Indian Blood Still Matter?* (Figure 5.1.) and *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* (Figure 5.6.).

Tension arises between official recognition, self-definition and the desire for belonging. When attending the series of lectures at the National Museum of the American Indian Museum in 2011 for the exhibit and symposium *Quantum Leap: Does Indian Blood Still Matter?* – I was struck by the number of people posing questions often with a preamble of legitimacy to speak based on a bloodline inclusive of a distant Indian ancestor. Many referred to extensive research proving it. Many of the speakers raising this question self-identified as African-Native American – and I believe it is because acknowledgement of this blended identity has tremendous meaning due to the ravages of chattel slavery which removed nearly all access to knowledge, rights and riches of our blended cultural heritages and expected silence and compliance in return for violent oppression (Tayac, G. 2009, 15).

Perhaps NMAI is perceived as a safe zone to speak about Native ancestry – it lies between the prohibited claim to white ancestry (unless your physiology could “pass”) and the demonized African ancestry – all the while trying to find a place for one’s African – or “bad
blood” – as was jokingly euphemized by Malinda Lowery, one speaker with African-Native ancestry at the Quantum Leap symposium. The description of the symposium from the flier is an excellent partial summary of this thesis argument:

Unlike other ethnic minorities in the United States, American Indians are defined not solely by self-designation but by federal, state, and tribal laws. Blood quantum—originating from archaic notions of biological race and still codified in contemporary policy—remains one of the most significant factors in determining tribal membership, access to services, and community recognition. This concept, however, is not without debate and contestation. This symposium will feature Native scholars who approach this important and complex topic from various perspectives... (Smithsonian Institution 15).

“If some of my ancestors are Indian, then who does that make me?” – a question posed by one of the self-identified African American audience members at the conference – yielded two of the most telling and poignant responses about the lingering liminality of identity for African Americans and the struggle for continuity and cohesion for American Indians: One speaker said, “You should know who you are” and “If you want to be Indian, then start doing Indian things.”

The concepts of blood quantum versus traditional kinship beliefs exemplifies the fundamental difference in perception between Western scientific ways of categorization and “indigenous” ways of being and knowing; one can be part-something (a collection of parts) or part of something. But on the other hand, how can one know, claim or become something when they are not held in the estimation of one’s community.

The juxtaposition of two paradigms (sovereignty and scientific objectivity) in the discursive, physical and virtual spaces of museology creates a heritage schism. The heritage schism is located where the historical construction and contemporary use of “the past” meet and conflict. Therein, the empowered struggle to maintain stasis over the constructs of personal and collective identity whereas the marginalized attempt to seize power as a flux toward decolonization, dominion and self-realization.
Figure 5.1. “Quantum Leap: Does Indian Blood Still Matter?” Exhibition Flier (Smithsonian 14).
As part of the exhibit for the Quantum Leap symposium, a poignant set of images from collections and government archives spoke directly to the use of blood quantum to measure authenticity as “Indian” and more directly to the impact of such policies on actual material experiences. The exhibit description, by Jolene Rickard, guest curator, and Gabrielle Tayac, NMAI 2004, read:

Is my identity in a scientific chart? Scientific measurements for determining race were often used to promote the idea that non-white communities were inferior. Sociological studies pointed to the lack of “progress” and material wealth of Native communities. In many cases these studies were used to justify the denial of civil and treaty rights to individuals and communities (Smithsonian Institution 15).

Next to this evocative text was an installment containing a heartbreaking letter of appeal addressed to the President, written by Mr. James Edward Moore of Denver, Colorado in 1938, and a separate document certifying his Christian baptism. The letter and baptism record was submitted as a request for acceptance to a tribal enrollment for benefits. The contents of the letter state that all of his people were dead and that he was half Indian. These documents were displayed next to a letter of rejection from the Commissioner’s office (of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs) stated that there was not enough proof of his identity thereby disqualifying him from the claim to such benefits (see figures 5.2 and 5.3). The symposium and exhibit made clear for the audience that American Indians are still impacted by the physiological and “race”-based allotment guidelines which removed sovereignty; indeed many are still waiting for the full expression of promises made in treaties signed between their leaders and the U.S. government.

This is just one example of the many burdens that blood quantum restrictions imposed on the descendants of indigenous persons. Often, due to the extremely subject and variable physiological and census standards of blood-quantum, persons in the same family might fall into different marginal categories of “race” which then constrained privileges to citizenship, personhood or sovereignty. These restrictions are felt deeply by those whose identities are liminal to the accepted sociopolitical categories on the U.S. Census and other instruments.
The point here is not to question whether or not Mr. Moore and the other millions of other applicants had the “right documents” – that is obviously an assessment relative to the subjective rules and conditions of the BIA. Should arbitrarily determined conditions of one’s relative ancestral make-up constrain the right to live as a natural human being on a plot of land and be applied to anyone, anywhere? The point is to recognize that the United States is indeed running a corporate enterprise, which has always found ways to maximize resources (land and people) while minimizing costs of operation through unequally applying the rigors and “rights” of citizenship according to physiology, gender, sexuality or any other barrier.
Figure 5.2. A Letter from James Edward Moore to the President. Part of the companion exhibit for the symposium *Quantum Leap* (Bailey, Teresina 2011, Jpeg.)
Mr. John Edward Moore,
1455 Elati Street,
Denver, Colorado.

Dear Mr. Moore:

I have now reviewed your application for registration as an
Indian which you submitted in accordance with Section 19 of the
Act of June 18, 1934 (49 Stat. 984).

After giving the matter careful consideration I have come to
the conclusion that the evidence submitted by you in support of
your appeal for recognition as an Indian of one-half or more
degree is not sufficient to establish your right to such recogni-
tion. I am therefore rejecting your application.

My decision is based on the evidence before me and if you
have additional information to present at some future time you are
at liberty to do so.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) R. J. Armstrong
FOR THE
Commissioner

Oct 26 1934

Figure 5.3. Response Letter from BIA Commissioner Representative E.J. Armstrong to James Edward Moore. Part of the companion exhibit for the symposium *Quantum Leap* (Bailey, Teresina 2011, Jpeg.)
Citizenship, then, is quite an unnatural state of personhood, which confers no advantages in life outside of its constructed demographics, political grids and socio-temporally variable constraints. Simply put, the Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology and the BIA were part of the management system for controlling and dominating both human subjects and landscape inventory.

A striking example of how to invoke the power of historical reflection and resistance at a museum is demonstrated by performance artist James Luna, Puyoukichum or Luiseño Indian from Southern California. Luna placed himself inside a display case as a “living artifact” in a San Diego exhibit reproduced for the symposium/exhibit, *Quantum Leap*. The following is the text embedded in the plaque entitled, “On Display,” as context for images taken during Mr. Luna’s powerful performance art piece depicted in Figure 5.5:

Is my identity an artifact, frozen in the past? The artist James Luna (Luiseño) lay motionless in a 19th-century museum display case. Labels commented on the scars on his body. Nearby cases contained Luna’s family photographs, Luiseño medicine objects, and other personal items, laid out like early anthropological displays of arrowheads, pottery shards, and tools. This work of performance art, entitled *The Artifact Piece*, was first shown in 1987 at the Museum of Man in San Diego. In it, Luna subverts the practice of regarding Native Americans as objects or artifacts. By placing his living body on display, he criticizes museums that display Native cultures as dead or solely part of the past. Jolene Rickard, guest curator, and Gabrielle Tayac, NMAI, 2004. (Figure 5.4)

Embattled territories of identity classification and resistance include tangible artifacts such as artistic/utilitarian objects and images, labels, exhibits, maps and written narratives as well as intangible artifacts such as oral histories, live demonstrations and protests, object/image construction and object/image interpretations. Museum spaces are both places for hegemonic territorial/ideological encroachments over land, bodies, and intellectual property – and – places where striking and subversive use of the performance and display space can engage the very mechanisms that were used to create the problem of “race” and culture.

How effective are national culturally specific museums when the same faulty concepts
are used to codify cultural existence as heritage? This question is particularly germane to the person engaging with museum culture from within a lineage and cultural heritage of hybridity – the advanced state of decolonization renders such a person incapable of neatly embracing one category or another, for they are able choose to engage with the material from a liminal state or categorical margin as they see fit. The person able to do this is a cultural subversive, whose skin tone, language, chosen perspective, economic status and/or empowerment networks allow fluid movement across socially conditioned boundaries and whose internal processes intentionally mark graffiti statements on permanent or virtual images and displays of distinction or discrimination. The heritage fodder of resistant identities have perhaps less power in the sociopolitical environment but continue to influence market appeal – as they are assumed by mass culture as taboos or, as the early museum culture may have codified them, curiosities.

Does an exhibit like *Quantum Leap* or *InDivisible* make headway toward creating a sense of true belonging? Does a museum in which to conduct education and uplift for indigenous communities and to communicate to other communities help realize sovereignty? I think it does, because for me, sovereignty is a way of thinking – it resides in the heart, and informs the expression of one’s life going forward. In many traditions identity formation begins at childhood when you begin to become an actor, a light and a reflection in the cultural stories told to you, and if you have good teachers – they will show you how to question that reflection to find the shadows and imperfections toward becoming a whole person, a part of a larger Spirit body and community.
Figure 5.4. “On Display.” Part of the companion exhibit for the symposium Quantum Leap (Bailey, Teresina 2011, Jpeg.)

Figure 5.5. “The Artifact Piece.” Detail photograph from a reproduction of James Luna’s live-performance art exhibit of that title. Exhibit described in figure 5.2 (Bailey, Teresina 2011, Jpeg.)
Another notable performance art piece by James Luna creates a sense of surrealism for the NMAI audience by inviting them to “Take a Picture with a Real Indian.” The YouTube video of a February 3, 2001 performance, archived on the “SmithsonianNMAI” channel, shows Luna performing a time-loop simulacrum of “real Indianness” in various styles of clothing, from pre-modern indigenous to contemporary. He is not only interacting with his audience as the “Real Indian” but with himself – and with life-size cut out images of himself. All the while repeating the invitation, Luna is filmed willingly and repeatedly taking pictures with the audience while wearing loincloth and holding a tool, or wearing jeans, sunglasses and a T-shirt. He is filmed walking up to these images of himself as an observer while simultaneously performing the ontological distance between himself as both audience and “curiosity.” Luna captures perfectly the crisis of identification that many indigenous persons feel when they walk into museums (Luna).

Performance art can create a backdrop and ongoing opportunities for deep questioning and healing where former prejudices are hidden, because it is nearly impossible to escape the living quality of performance. This is rather different than interacting with a historical monument or glass case exhibit, for example. Yet – when set against the aforementioned quote about the civil war reenactment exhibit at Appomattox Court House National Historic Park from Butler’s *Sugar of the Crop*, or the reenactment of Joseph Henry – we can see that performance art can, similar to static objects, either highlight or reify problems depending on the interpretation and awareness in the audience. Performance, just like static exhibits, needs the engagement of the persons deeply held perceptions and belief systems to be effective. A historical re-enactment in which slave quarters are turned into a restroom is the epitome of regional historical amnesia that cannot help but breed uneven representations on the cultural landscape and a questionable or “ironic” collective memory of the past which is absent of certain heritage stories. This is especially problematic in places where it is controversial to remember troubled histories (Dwyer
and Alderman 10-11). One would not think to look for the slave quarters if unaware of its existence in the first place.

*InDivisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, introduced previously, was a controversial 2009 display and accompanying book compiled by indigenous curator and historian, Gabrielle Tayac. The exhibit, first housed at the National Museum of the American Indian, is now a traveling exhibit within the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service (SITES).

*InDivisible* has been controversial in some communities due to the fact that at the very core of the exhibit, the notion of race and heritage is questioned, and thus new versions of old histories are being written.

This movement to re‐define Black American Heritage as inclusive of Native ancestry is disquieting and problematic to some populations because of power differentials between the populations arising from questions of heritage authenticity, contentious associations during slavery, political standing and land rights. Yet, it is highly meaningful and validating to others who have oral histories, census records, or other artifacts affirming such ancestry. (Tayac 2009; Katz 1986) Again, extreme tensions arise when heritage connotes as an as economic good vs. cultural good (Graham et. al., 2000). This is part of the tension which underlies this controversy, but the deeper issues are of the heart – of having one’s identity reified and/or questioned, of finding a reflection of one’s lineage complexity for the first time in a public space, and of finding a space for telling stories – thus this exhibit and tour can represent either a rebirth or an injury depending on the individual perspective at hand.
Figure 5.6. *IndiVisible - African-Native American Lives in the Americas*: Screen-shot of homepage for symposium, exhibit and book curated by Gabrielle Tayac et. al. (Smithsonian Institution 15)
There is also a danger of reifying the very categorical qualifiers which undergird the system of “race” as well. In creating the materials for *IndiVisible*, the cultural itemography invokes the subtly pernicious idea of qualification. How does one communicate the cross-pollination of cultural heritage except through the display of cultural items such as clothing, food, music, language, art – in short, one puts oneself and one’s heritage objects on display. Yet if the reasons for doing so are to create a community bond, doesn’t this represent opportunities for healing and raising awareness of marginalization? How does one fairly represent or perform the liminal? The feeling that follows witnessing a (mis)representation, along with the struggle for clarifying the cultural lens you are taught to see through, is the perfect blend of excitement and confusion alluded to by Lloyd Kiva New at the Joint Hearing for the construction of NMAI.

NMAI curator Paul Chaat Smith published an online article discussing a particular work of James Luna that memorializes Pablo Tac, a historian from Luna’s lineage who traveled to Rome and disappeared after having written a story about how missionaries had impacted his people. In it, Smith quotes Henry Louis Gates’ 1997 book *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man*, “‘Authenticity’ is among the founding lies of the modern age” (Gates quoted in Smith, P.C. 2010). Smith in turn eulogizes Luna, for his effective use of space at NMAI. Luna’s performances help us construct an inner place for finding what authenticity can mean to us in a contemporary sense – making the best of what we have and never ceasing to resist the boundaries.

Indian agency has often been read as a demand to return to a utopian past that never was. Another emendation would suggest that we know very well such a return is impossible: instead the conversation is about a different kind of today, where we are present in the world like anyone else. We always have been trying to be part of the world. Pablo Tac did what he could. And that big stone barn of a museum off Independence Avenue in Washington, D.C., is, in its own imperfect, earnest way, trying, too. So is James Luna. In his costume of feathers and empty bravado, he uses his crutches as wings, and though he never leaves the ground, he almost seems to take flight (Smith, P.C. 2010).
This creative tension is necessary, because so ingrained are these ways of seeing, that most exhibits of marginalized populations serve to create and reinforce collective identification with racist agendas in the general public. In other words, many aspects and problems of representation are important such as histories of scientific racism which heavily relied on public exhibitions of cultural and physical traits of non-whites taken out of cultural context and used to reinforce assertions that Blacks and Indians were inferior to whites and that among the human populace, even Indians were superior to Blacks.

These hierarchical associations with race still permeate society and marginalized groups still maintain a struggle against the problematic concepts underlying museology whereby certain cultures are placed on display and others are not. In his book, Smith reinforces the quandary of museum representational authenticity: “...the act of remembering turns you into a heretic, a revolutionary, a troublemaker…to assert the relevance of an Indian past and present makes one hostage to identity politics, multiculturalism and other narrow and suspect agenda” (Smith, P.C. 2009, 91).

Stereotypes of “Indianness” or “blackness” are exaggerated truths with biases long associated with the false sense of “reason” and “enlightenment” ascribed to the imperial gaze. Even if they are distortions of truth or scoffingly performed for the audience, when reclaimed they can function as teaching tools for the consumer and the performer of satire and activist displays. Many communities have made a living performing the narrative of stereotype – whilst inciting resistance in the hearts of those who understand the satirical underpinnings of the performance.

The stereotype of deterministic nativism, such as “the noble savage,” is another layer of cultural programming that strips power from the indigenous person – and distorts the truth and beauty of being a person in balance with one’s environment. “Savage” in this context becomes a “savant of nature” and nobility does not enter the equation, it being a different cultural qualifier
entirely. To know oneself as indigenous is to forcefully extract important aspects of our cultural heritage from its pejorative connotations, and become insistent on finding a multiplicity of worldviews as truth – as long as one’s means to self-represent and sustain one’s existence in balance with nature is defended and reclaimed as an equally valid and advanced way of life.

The pejorative assignment of certain materials/construction techniques to primitivism belied the advanced knowledge intrinsically woven into the making of the artifact as a function of the environmental cues - as they may have been intimately tuned to the environmental conditions and therefore sustainably reproductive rather than extractive in ecological balance. This is a reverse challenge to those aspects of cultural richness written off in the environmentally deterministic and anthropological subsets of western thought.

Outsiders looking at a utilitarian or ritual object through a pejorative ontological prism will interpret data through their own cultural biases and potentially miss the fundamental beauty and complexity in simplicity. What if, in ethnological terms, a museum space or object and its contemporary history is viewed not only a fragment of a story, but a purposeful redirection of the “real” presented by the wisdom holder; who guards the pathway to more a more sophisticated history of our interpersonal relationships as well as our nature-society interdependence. Perhaps it is okay to permanently let go of some of the objects in archives – to return the objects and let their sacred uses inspire different trajectories within the communities where they have “spirited” meaning. What if the wisdom gained from subjugation is now ready to stand in partnership – not domination – for when the materialist and positivist world view has run its course?

I have chosen an indigenous stance within the rather polemical position that nation-state defined race categories should be abolished. I have attempted to demonstrate the history and legacy of destruction resulting from the hegemonic agendas of the institutions to possess land and control populations through nation-state defined race and identity constructs – and to highlight the confusion and representational myopia experienced by marginalized persons for whom the
constructs of cultural heritage have been overwhelmingly negative (Kertzer and Arel 4, 10). The cultural mechanisms have been anything but benign, and as a result the indigenous must struggle to remember through a lens of multiple identity assignments and deeply ponder their construction – because identities which without proper historical qualification are ghosts of an illusion.

In short, I wish to contend that it is difficult to negotiate a sense of place and space when your identity is problematized and tied to a history of “racial” oppression, environmental destruction and identity confusion. On a positive note, correcting these imbalances in representation presents curators, museum-goers, and cultural geographers involved with making and utilizing contemporary tools of heritage and identity with endless opportunities to be inclusive, reflexive, deeply qualitative and honest in their work. Perhaps, especially within the contemporary climate of extreme “racialized” contention in the United States following a continuing string of law enforcement killing unarmed persons of color, the reconciliation of traumas can only be done by holding institutions responsible. If we have full representational license and accountability, we can begin “belonging to each other” determination to continually refine the use of our heritages germane to the contemporary moment.

One of the most beautiful aspects of the InDivisible exhibition is that it speaks to a higher vibration in our representations as a function of fully recognizing our fluid genealogical histories and geographic relationships. The idea that we can “belong to each other” – is a direct intervention on the commodification of our bodies and labor. It fully undermines the categorical separation that we have endured for so long, speaks to the intangible love and interdependence which can never be truly represented by museum culture, and rejects all cultural myths and politically expedient categories that continue to prevent us from interacting with each other on the basis of what we share; our kinship as a human family.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have endeavored to demonstrate that the national museum culture of the Smithsonian Institution is linked ideologically, contextually and spatially to performances of hegemonic authority and citizenship for the categorical “dominant” – whereas the categorical “other” has witnessed and sometimes performed their own marginalization upon vaunted landscapes. This juxtaposition of marginalization to power eventually manifested a representational dipole; creating points of resistance reflected in citizenship demonstrations on that same landscape where dominance holds reign. The search for equal representation and voice within museums including the civil-rights movements has directly culminated in the construction of the Smithsonian’s culturally specific museums on the National Mall. These sites can ostensibly increase interest, access and awareness of the power leveraged in utilizing museum materials, thereby creating space for identity-formative displays and self-representational speech. If done properly, these spaces can help marginalized cultures make specific strides towards inclusion in the cultural brokerage process necessary for developing/deconstructing curatorial displays. Then we can, as a whole culture, begin shifting our heritage perspectives away from histories of dominance-versus-alterity and toward multiple centers of sovereign engagement.

Therefore, the underlying function of the Smithsonian’s research/display complex also functions as a dynamic itemography – whereby exclusionary belief systems and prejudices have become the new heritage items on display due to shifts in socio-political climate; shifts that are often performed on the National Mall. Museum culture’s ideological constructs promoted particular histories in the form of imperialist architectural and landscape expanses where preservation of Victorian sensibilities and “white privilege” were set against non-Anglo Saxon
ways of life as markers of civilization versus “savagery.” Anthropological categories derived from biased, pseudo-scientific lenses for viewing cultures assisted in creating and educating a narrowly defined, and exclusionary, citizen republic. These pseudo-science “race-science” instruments were developed through pre-Boasian anthropology and subsequently reinforced as “biopower” through the U.S. Census, segregation of property, black codes, forced migrations, miscegenation statutory laws and so forth. Together scientific instruments and laws permeated the public consciousness and perpetuated the harmful constructs and prejudices of “race” and cultural myths about non-Anglo Saxon leading to general class-based disenfranchisement and control of populations using strongly enforced “racial” boundaries.

This means that the culturally specific museum is both a remnant landscape of these place-shaping identifiers as well as a potential site of empowering engagement. In short, as alluded to in the final paragraphs of Chapter 3, the use of the master’s tools – the use of hegemonic space – has changed dramatically but not enough to declare decolonization a complete success. This shift is a direct consequence of sovereign resistance and the increased demand for places to ponder and perform the constructions of empowerment and equality within and despite cultural differences. If the heritage intervention at culturally specific museums is to have a wider impact on the hegemonic enterprise upon which the Smithsonian Castle and the “big house” National Museum of American History were constructed – the world views constructed within the culturally specific museum must rise to the same level of voice, and perhaps speak even louder, especially where issues of categorical “race” construction and representation are concerned.

To determine which unfavorable and which favorable aspects of museum and professional anthropological sciences survived the societal shifts brought on by civil-rights movements, one must begin to unpack these constructed categories and the political impetus upon which museum artifacts were/are collected and try to understand the difficult negotiation of their
brokerage and application at contemporary museums of art, history, and/or culture. These categories and placements strongly reflect power relations and determine whose bodies and artifacts become objectified. We must study what the landscapes, sciences, categories, displays and iconic power of the Smithsonian’s heritage signify to the oppressed and to the oppressor. These factors determine the kind of artifacts collected, and they may be reflective of archaic understandings of “race” and/or culture – but their contemporary heritage uses are shifting in response to the growing awareness of the reality that “race” is a social construct – quite an insidious one. Anthropological categories of race, though disavowed by most contemporary anthropologists as social constructs not biological facts, are still hugely problematic in the United States as experienced through “racial” profiling, disproportionate incarceration rates, enduring economic disparity, and other material experiences of immaterial identity mapping.

Imposition of a strictly male-Eurocentric point of view upon another culture is a process driven by perspective anamorphosis. I draw this artistic analogy in context of the Smithsonian’s museum culture paradigm because this technique involves creating an image which is distorted when viewed from the standard “face-to-face” ninety degree perpendicular – and the distortion only resolves when the image is viewed at an alternate angle or with a mirror. As a proposal to future work beyond this thesis, looking at the visual cues in curatorial research and exhibits helps us to understand several aspects of the methodology of creating heritage including: how curatorial historians are trained to view, create and display texts, use of artifacts for propaganda and political indoctrination, internal site selection, consultation with communities depicted in the exhibition, and of course understanding the phenomena surrounding shifts in public reception.

The methodological tools to interpret visual cues are described by Gillian Rose – who denotes a relationship between the sites where image meaning is made and modalities or aspects of the processes utilized at each site – together they are understood to “contribute to a critical understanding of the images” (Rose, G. 16). For the purposes here, again referencing Duncan and
Wallach’s observations on how the average museum visitor consumes “themes” – not necessarily individual objects or images – I interpret image as either the actual image portrayal of persons/environments or the entire field of view when looking at any exhibit including any curatorial prompts such as labels and summaries. Both interpretations include a consideration of preconceptions held by artists, curator, and viewers – all of which alter the portrayal, performance and perceptions of the image and field of view. The three sites identified by Rose are production, image, and audiences; the modalities in relative but not mutually exclusive relationship at each site are technological, compositional, and social (Rose, G. 17).

Both sites and modalities are crucial in understanding that images of subjects situated in a museum exhibit have significant implications depending on the relative empowerment of the subject and their ability (or lack thereof) to direct the use of the image. Yet, our choices of self-representation are also situated in cultural context and influenced by the relative understanding of self within nationalized identity-formative structures.

Further research into how actual exhibits are formulated and how they address cultural heritage representation involves deep inquiry into how these forces have changed over time; this work is necessary and beyond the scope of this thesis. In exploring the deleterious impacts of museology and its humanistic scientific researches on this landscape and indigenous peoples, I do not assert that its institutions have not proved useful; rather, I concur with the fact that they have served as quintessential boons to the western-male paradigm – yet, the “Enlightenment” and “progress of civilization” projects under which these forces operate have proved quite the opposite of beneficent to the populations researched, categorized and displayed under those auspices.

Out of the fields of anthropology and museum culture arose panaceas to Victorian guilt and a coddled sense of self and privilege. Perhaps, as evidenced by the early museum culture bent toward “salvage ethnologies;” beneath romanticized images of doomed native landscapes and
people, the persons behind museum culture knew the tools of post-colonial U.S. land acquisitions were greed, theft, murder, torture, enslavement and treaty-dissemblance. Anthropological methods for collecting and scientifically ordering heritage artifacts both filled and deepened the moral hole of colonization and widened the cultural divides. Thus, mid-nineteenth-century sciences and institutions of museum culture defined nearly irreversible pejorative socio-political relationships that continue to denigrate indigenous peoples. Since the mid-1980s, the agency of research and museum display has become more cross-representational through qualitative methods like participatory research and initiatives to protect intellectual property rights. However, there are also counter-research paradigms that call the entire museum heritage approach into question, and this heralds new decolonizing potentialities in representing culture and artifacts from within communities.

By design, the Smithsonian Institution has had global reach from its nascent beginnings as the product of a bequest from James Smithson, a well-heeled and well-traveled European chemist. Ironically, though the founder never reached American shores, the Smithsonian Institution became a perfect microcosm of the western macrocosm from which Smithson was both privileged and exiled – the embodied properties and materials of imbedded imperial worldviews. The mandate for the Board of Regents to construct an institution that would ‘increase and diffuse knowledge among men’ set forth a broad rejoinder under which a grand exploratory chaos ensued – speaking from a considered indigenous perspective and experience. This mandate is a key point of reference for understanding that a gendered, mechanistic worldview underlies a well-codified set of hegemonic colonial practices associated with the spirit of imperialism – the remnants of which are still extant. The mandate thus represents a key ingredient of colonial acquisition tactics. Naming confers power over “object” identity, while military-industrial and cultural-institutional power dispossesses and oppresses. Additionally, the mandate asserts socioeconomic privilege via a capitalist modernity which devalues indigenous
knowledge and humanity, while massively profiting from indigenous knowledge, heritages and disenfranchisement.

In this thesis, the Smithsonian Institution has provided a lamppost to honestly illuminate the context of national museums’ as spatial representation power sites – by neither glorifying, sanitizing nor erasing a difficult past. Hence heritage concepts in national museum culture transcend personal edification and leisure and enter socio-political realms of power in the most subtle yet profound ways. By tracing the bequest of James Smithson to the U.S. government as a function of his search for a lasting monument to his un-validated heritage as the son of a duke, I have drawn a parallel to the contemporary ability to “speak our will to power” using the existing tools of museum culture. There we find the artifacts and socio-political traces of class and “race” and yet we can choose to engage in the struggle to contest the way identity and heritage constructs are inserted into or over our perceptions of personhood, space and place.

As a researcher resituating my identity and geographical perspectives through this particular thesis research, it has been a journey of expansion resulting in a feeling of deep kinship in experience toward James Smithson in his struggle against illegitimacy via his socio-professional achievement. By tracing the evolution of the Smithsonian Institution national museum complex back to its origins, I have widened my perspective from a personal sense of otherness to one shared as a condition of being a human marginalized by power-conglomerated human systems. In other words, the process has been like an agonizing but edifying reconciliation between the slow-ebb of emotionally painful realizations and a flow of water under bridge-building insights. From the vantage point of the sprawling Smithsonian Institution complex, it has been a chance to grasp the juxtaposition of opposites – the expansive archives of cultural beauty, pleasure and privilege alongside cultural marginalization, pain, resistance and celebration.

In recognizing that the Smithsonian Institution’s complex of museums and landscape are coexistent with and fundamental to the realms of U.S. political power, the indigenous are situated
to become aware of both our historical disempowerment as well as our potential to shift power from a relativistic margin to full awareness and access to the privileges of an amalgamated citizenry. This epochal shift, I contend, will only be realized when the anthropological categories underlying power are fully exposed, deconstructed and dismantled. Otherwise, it is debatable whether access to space and power in representation will ever be shared evenly across the cultural spectrum – because the tools of our oppression (e.g. museums and censuses) are repeatedly sold to us as the itemographies of honor, respect, opportunity and reparation.

Whether or not this shift can or should be affected through the culturally specific museum experience, our performances and voices will affect changes in our material experiences. It is difficult to know whether true change can result from wider access to privileges. To engage with the very hegemonic infrastructure that anthropological government sciences and national museums initially made available to the select-public, we must feel empowered from within – not as a function of granted privileges. We can begin to dismantle historical alterity and hegemonic cultural infrastructure by speaking indigenously – using languages both arcane and mundane.

**Decolonizing Museology: Are Cultural Identity and Heritage Obsolete?**

Decolonizing geographies move to frame the concepts of culture-defining research from the perspectives of indigenous research methodologies, and they are a set of mirrored pathways in which to contextually hang reframed positivist discourses and research sciences of anthropology as the sites for dehumanization and panaceas for guilt. As the true vectors of inquiry are acts of self-knowledge and reflexivity, resistance narratives are notably parallel to and have possibly informed the self-reflexive position of philosophical anthropology, which has the potential to zoom outside of demographics to assume a relativist postulate that the human species and its known duration on earth can be a study object/subject apart from the lenses of “his”tory and
classification. From these frameworks one can begin to map and refrain old and new discursive spaces identifying who is and who is not human; specifically identifying how cultural institutions such as the Smithsonian employ tools of museum culture – tools of privilege – that enable or disable one’s sense of humanity. The conditions effect both how to view other humans as kin; allowing everyone to belong and healing our traumas through full engagement with intercultural reciprocity in research and display paradigms.

Cultural institutions, as the result and exercise of defining culture, exert tremendous identity-defining power – where identity is both referent and object. They are designed to empower their affiliated individuals to act as proponents of a particular set of principles and cultural heritage. These individuals exercise the power to influence perceptions of the chosen heritage fodder as universal and superior by using display preferences and labels as indicators. Cultural institutions, especially ones with complex hybrid structure like the museum/research culture of the Smithsonian Institution, are gristmills where people consume the grist of their “cultured selves” through complex, power-contextualized orientations and training. The training begins as culture-filters like class or inheritance and subsequently leads to gate-key relations whereby access and privilege are perpetually performed by and for the empowered and demonstrated as barrier landscapes to the segments of the public that are figuratively or materially marginalized.

When I unpacked the concept of how my sense of self (called identity) had been created and codified as a categorical construct, I began to realize that the origins, omnipresence and socio-effective activities of cultural institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution are neither benign nor accidental; they are megalith scale factories of cultural object reference. The promote signs used as weapons of hegemonic meaning to simultaneously empower and disempower by subtly deferring personal agency to a cultural authority. What importance do identity or heritage have to any individual person outside of the institutional context? Both are so intrinsically
referential that their significance only functions as a collective “minstrelsy” on/outside of one’s body – because heritage and identity both outline a lengthy semiological script describing a bulky immaterial object inside the consciousness. Baudrillard infers that identity and heritage are two corrupt applications of the singularity of culture; that in itself culture is a self-generating and non-referential form that does not need the self-questioning, labels, definitions or comparisons that cultural institutions apply to it:

Culture is a form of glory – it implies the notion of sovereignty. Identity is a poor value: there is always something vain and useless about demanding identity. It is an aftereffect [sic] of the colonisation of mental space and the failure of its decolonisation. Culture is a symbolic pact. Once it solidifies as a heritage, as power, as appropriation, as identity, once it becomes signature, that is, a material image of this power, it is all over. Finished. (Baudrillard 2007).

As I resonated with Baudrillard’s estimation of culture and derivative constructs, I began to re-assimilate all that has been co-opted from my lineages for cultural commodification through propaganda, market values and aesthetic values. I remembered the ritual spaces and their scripts: schools and museums – the “pledge of allegiance” and the “exhibits of the real” – respectively. At the Smithsonian Institution, these values are attributed to museum objects placed in a nationalized building and landscape that “belongs” to “a public” – whether student, professional or average citizen.

As such, artifacts and the cultures they represent are normalized as universal or marginalized as “ethnic” through the curatorial process – but museums cannot represent or contain the artisans’ creative impetus nor honor the cultural sacred uses and sacrifices imbued in some indigenous artifacts. Through a process of expeditionary gathering and stockpiling, those artifacts are dispirited and “cultureless.” Unless of course they are given as gifts and exhibited in a mutually agreed context. Without agreement, the use of objects to communicate identity and heritage are unfortunate reminders of a series of hegemonic commodification processes that communicate very little about why they were made, for what purpose and for whom. Going to a
museum, I feel the same way whether the object is a craft or a natural object such as a plant or rock. Through indigenous lenses, the spirit of the object behind a regular museum glass-case is partially in limbo. I can only say, there is a mixture of sadness about their journey, curiosity about their origins and admiration for the dignity with which they hold a space for meaning.

When the labels and displays speak to the concept of culture as heritage, they signify belonging or marginalization for the group or individual identity of the viewer. Correspondingly, at a certain scale the questionable concept of collective identity or collective memory becomes the inheritance of semiology and relations displaying a collective state of liminality, power or subjugation. Therefore sites that purvey heritage are also rallying points for a collective resistance to subjugation. The relative effectiveness of that resistance must arise from a thorough decolonization of the mind; because to resist, an individual’s projected identity would have to be comfortable existing in between states of authorization, belonging and marginalization to create sites of change. Culture belongs to everyone and no one, but when it is colonized as individual and collective heritage and housed in cultural institution like museums, many sites of relational power are shaped.

As scales are important in discussions of heritage and memory in museum culture, I also identify heritage as a tool of colonization that needs to be reevaluated for all its connotations of situated power. Colonization was and is the foremost tool of imperialistic design, but if, following Baudrillard, we can trace the real sites of colonization not on land but in the mind – we can assert that museums are incredibly powerful sites that construct meaning and commodify free cultures as heritage. The museum provides an idealized production and consumption space wherein individuals entrain perceptions of reality and identity-by-association that were placed there as a reference or barometer of power. Similar to an encyclopedia, curatorial classification labels and the context of object-reference displays lend the appearance of unbiased authoritative permanence.
Communities harmed by the many heritage-commodification practices of museum culture and government policies have forced a shift toward a recognition and actualized rights. This shift is manifest in the culturally specific museum, of which the Smithsonian Institution is a host and pioneer. I argued that museum culture of the Victorian period developed complex research-display mechanisms facilitating the institution’s historical role in establishing hegemony through the manipulation and control of indigenous ways of life in the United States. Museum culture is herein a representative heritage construct for the hegemonic placement of certain human subjects above the systems of scientific objectification they themselves created and whereby other humans were classified and displayed as subhuman. The rupture between artifact collections methods, governance objectives and the imbued power of representation comes to bear in the definitions and displays of cultural identity as heritage – herein identified as the key semiotic cues of museum culture.

The contemporary discourse about culturally specific museums taking place at the Smithsonian Institution, as the first home of American anthropology, is beginning to unravel how and why the practice of “race” categorization has long obscured certain heritage stories, defined “whiteness” by exclusion to construct the identities of new European immigrants and “non-white” citizens, and fostered race-determined policies. The corporate and government elite use these “biopower” constructs to regulate movement through space at respective scales of country, nation-state, community and most importantly as an invisible class imprint on personal existence. In the appropriation of naturalist science taxonomies, “race” contingent systems of classification were imposed on humanity. Evolution’s environmental stimuli and Darwin’s or Spencer’s mysterious internal stabilizing forces were measured via variation-contingent survival (measures of strength or fitness) of one culture/race with respect to another. Fitness or vigor as applied to human culture were xenophobic determinations or indices that assigned all cultural phenomena as products and predicaments to be weighted in descending order according to their
proximal approach to the idealized artifacts and mores of Anglo Saxon civilization.

Museums are the quintessential expression of a cultural imperative; echoing the biological imperative ascribed to the drive to reproduce, museum culture was the fecund offspring of western-male’s intellectual congress. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are noted as a time period when the culturally constructed institutions museums, libraries, churches, governments, schools, and universities began to define modern culture itself. Together with related sites such as department stores, public squares, malls, amusement parks, zoos, gardens etc. – these sites became regulatory institutions that keep culture in constant supply of self-perpetuating pedagogic and semiotic fodder generated within complex spatio-political relations.

These relations are generated within the institutions, fed to an emergent public and reflected back again as participatory engagement. The cyclic relations in question are imbued with conditional empowerment and disempowerment for disparate segments of the population separated not by mythical “race” constructs but by the experiences of disparity and socio-economic class.

Identity and heritage are both subject to census, rank-and-file demographic conditions accessed by skin color, “race,” gender and country of origin – all defined by politically potent anthropological constructs. Neither identity nor heritage belongs to any individual apart from the decision to embody a particular set of chosen constraints. I recognize that even the label “indigenous” can be a constraint if viewed as such. I choose it because it liberates me to speak about the necessary paradigm shifts – but it is not a container for my entire human experience. Perhaps, when a larger group of persons recognize something indigenous inside – of “belonging to each other” and to the Earth in interdependence – the label will be a rather benign word similar to “human.” But I hope it is never benign. Like becoming human, becoming indigenous is a quality of experience that has to be earned and performed as a sovereign cultural worldview and within a community of completion, respect and recognition – much like the citizen who has realized the privileges of citizenship through hundreds of years of meaningful struggle.

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Monticello.org, Home of Thomas Jefferson


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