



Smithsonian Institution

(Re)Presenting America: The Evolution of Culturally Specific Museums

A Smithsonian Institution Special Symposium

Wednesday, April 25, 2012, 9:30 am – 5:30 pm

**Rasmuson Theater
National Museum of the American Indian
4th Street and Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC**

Reception to follow in the Museum's Potomac Atrium, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

The National Museum of the American Latino Commission's report recommending the establishment of a Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino prompts debate concerning the value of "ethnic" or "culturally specific" museums. Thoughtful people ask whether the proliferation of museums dedicated to particular experiences or cultures contributes to the "balkanization" of the United States. Others observe that traditional museums have not represented our country's people and their achievements as fully as they should be. Ethnic/culturally specific museums, they note, provide different portals into what it means to be an American, and their programs provide depth and fullness of perspective, enriching our national narrative.

These are serious questions that the Smithsonian seeks to address in a comprehensive, insightful way. By presenting various facets of the existence and practices of "ethnic/culturally specific" museums at the Smithsonian and elsewhere, this special symposium advances a vital discussion of a challenging subject. It provides an important step toward understanding the history of museums in matters of race, the development of "ethnic/culturally specific" museums, and the development of a cogent philosophy on these museums.

Smithsonian Institution Special Symposium: (Re)Presenting America: The Evolution of Culturally Specific Museums

PROGRAM

- 9:30 am **Welcome** by Kevin Gover, Director, National Museum of the American Indian
- 9:35 am **Opening Remarks** by symposium moderator Ray Suarez, Senior Correspondent, PBS NewsHour
- 9:45 am **A Conversation with Joseph Henry, First Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution**
Richard Kurin, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, Smithsonian Institution
Dwane Starlin, enactor of Joseph Henry (director, Samuel Xavier Carnegie)
- 10:15 am **Race, Identity, and American Museums**
Clement Price, Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor, Rutgers University
- 10:45 am **Break**
- 11:00 am **Native Americans and the Anthropology Community**
David Hurst Thomas, Curator, Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York
- 11:30 am **Q&A session**
- 12:00 pm **Lunch break** (on your own)
- 1:30 pm **Panel: The Role of Ethnic/Culturally Specific American Museums**
Moderator: Ray Suarez, Senior Correspondent, PBS NewsHour
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Member of Congress
Lonnie Bunch, Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture
Philip Kennicott, Critic, *The Washington Post*
Konrad Ng, Director, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program
David Penney, Associate Director for Museum Scholarship, National Museum of the American Indian
- 2:45 pm **The Future of Diversity at the Smithsonian Institution**
Wayne Clough, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution
- 3:15 pm **Break**

- 3:30 pm **What Are You? Exploring Multiracial Identity with Kip Fulbeck**
Kip Fulbeck, artist, spoken word performer, and filmmaker
- 4:10 pm **Panel: A Work in Progress: Museums and the Multidimensional American Story**
Moderator: Claudine Brown, Assistant Secretary for Education and Access,
 Smithsonian Institution
Lawrence Pijaux, President & CEO, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute,
 Birmingham, Alabama
Helen Samhan, Senior Outreach Advisor, Arab American National Museum,
 Dearborn, Michigan
Beth Takekawa, Executive Director, Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific
 American Experience, Seattle, Washington
Carlos Tortolero, President, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, Illinois
- 5:25 pm **Closing Remarks**
Ray Suarez
- 6:00 pm **Reception** in the Potomac Atrium until 8:00 pm, with “live art” performance by Bunky
Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakama)